

## CHAPTER IX.

PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS: POVERTY AND ITS  
CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE pauperism with which the State deals through a special legal machinery indicates "a worm gnawing at the core of England's rose." But the poverty which prevails is not to be measured by the number of persons who are recipients of relief and their dependants; the zone is much wider: it is a zone of darkness which presses against all that is most attractive in the outer aspects of our civilisation. A stranger surveying the chief thoroughfares, the terraces and villas and parks of our cities, or the towns and smiling homesteads in the neighbourhood of our railways, might suppose that the death of poverty had been swallowed up in an abundance of comfort. But he would soon find that he had looked on only one side of the picture. Even in rural districts, there are "in-

sanitary cottages with bad water and starvation food"; and, assuming that poverty means a scanty supply of the things which are necessary to maintain healthy vitality, the condition of masses congregated in the great centres of population would remind him of grim spectres that are ever flitting through our Vanity Fairs. The statistics of Mr Charles Booth have been often quoted. Sometimes their entire reliability is questioned. But they have not been disproved; they have not been shown to be exaggerated by observations and inductions as painstaking as those on which he builds. What are the results that he claims to have established? Taking only a general summary, they are the following. In London, the proportion of persons in the middle and upper classes is only 17 per cent of the inhabitants, whilst the proportion of persons shading from poverty down to absolute want (exclusive of all fairly employed and regular labour) over the whole city is 30 per cent. In thirty-seven districts, each of which contains more than 30,000 souls, and the total population of which is 1,719,000, the latter proportion varies from 40 per cent to 60 per cent.<sup>1</sup> No doubt, London is exceptional; but it is exceptional in its heights

<sup>1</sup> Life and Labour of the People in London.

as well as in its depths, and against the splendour of the heights the impression of the depths is terribly silhouetted. All who know the state of other cities are aware that in them approximations to the proportions in the capital reappear. The prospect, indeed, is not all gloom, and only gloom. There are "larks' notes ringing out of what seem to be ravens' croaks." In the most congested parts of the city there are peaceful homes, and among their denizens may be found beautiful illustrations of real nobility and genuine happiness. But so long as ratios like those referred to obtain, there is "an estate of sin and misery" the consciousness of which haunts the mind. Professor Huxley, who says that he has an abhorrence of sentimental philanthropy, protests, "If there is no hope of a large improvement of the condition of the greater part of the human family, I should hail the advent of some kindly comet which should sweep the whole affair away as a desirable consummation."

Now, the matter as to which the Church of Christ may examine itself is, How comes it that, having respect to the mission intrusted to it, to the call addressed to it to search out what is lost and driven away, to the enthusiasm of humanity that ought to burn and shine in it, this mass of poverty has been allowed to form and to grow

into such dimensions? Has "the gold become dim and the most fine gold been changed"? Has the age broken away from Christian ideals? If these ideals are still efficient, and the conscience is still true to them, how is it that the organised and disciplined fellowship in Christ cannot cast this demon of poverty out? The question is one an answer to which is to be sought only in the light of the Master's mind. By and by, we shall see what the Church has aroused herself to attempt and to do. Here, let it be merely emphasised that no graver issue can occupy Christian thought and tax the resources of Christian energy than that of the most effective ways and means of discharging the duty of Christianised civilisation to the circles on circles of under-fed, ill-clad, ill-housed human beings whose world is, and ever has been, a slum, quitted by them only when the summons to the unknown beyond reaches them, or when they are located in their purgatory, the workhouse.

For, the Church is not to be a mere Lady Bountiful, with a countenance always beaming with good nature, and helping all and sundry in a random and inconsiderate manner. Benevolence must be made a study. It should be regarded as a science; in its practical forms, it should be an art. There is nothing more necessary than a care-

ful investigation into the causes and the roots of poverty, a discrimination of the persons who appeal to sympathy, and of the methods by which poverty may be reached in its causes rather than temporarily relieved in its manifestations. The distribution of charity at present is indescribable. It is said that, apart from the donations of individuals which cannot be estimated but which represent an enormous sum, charitable societies of Great Britain expend between ten and eleven millions sterling annually,<sup>1</sup> and that in London alone four millions are given away, the greater part being devoted to the relief of distress and to purposes of charity.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of all the work done and all the gifts bestowed, there remain the great percentages of the insufficiently supplied. The impression is widespread, and is not unwarranted, that much of the liberality which is elicited is "flung to the winds like rain," that much tends to form habits of thought and of feeling which degrade the character, sap the spirit of self-respect, and the faculty of self-help; which, instead of constituting a leverage for the uplifting of the person (the only permanent benefit), make the relief of the hour the harm and injury of the life; which, by reason of the overlapping of

<sup>1</sup> Mulhall's Dictionary of Statistics, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Loomis, Modern Cities, p. 45.

agencies and of the absence of concerted plans and intelligent principles of action, demoralise the poor; that thus and therefore any gains realised are not commensurate to the expenditure of money and strength on the securing of these gains. Let benevolence try its ways. Let Churches more wisely consider the poor. It is part of their business; let them give more heed to it, as being not a luxury but a business. More attention should be given by the clergy, and by the membership of Churches, to social topics, and to the principles and methods of finance, as they bear on the support of the weak by the strong. One thing is most urgently demanded—viz., the focussing of charities, their organisation, co-ordination, or subordination on well-regulated lines. In large cities, an object-lesson in this direction has been given by the establishment of societies aiming at a more efficient direction of efforts for the relief of distress, and at the repression of mendicity. These societies have already done good work; the value of their service will increase in the measure of their ability to harmonise the many and confused expressions of philanthropy, and to make their influence more thoroughly helpful in the reduction of poverty.

If the parochial system were more fully realised, if the principle of locality were made more

effective, the National Churches would possess the most favourable of opportunities for co-operating in a grand national movement to stub up the roots of the upas-tree of poverty. Would that they rose to the height of this opportunity! How miserably petty and inferior seem many causes which bulk largely in the ecclesiastical view, when set against the facts of those spheres of sunken life as to which an English prelate recently remarked, "Unless they are carefully considered, they will generate a tornado which, when the storm clears, may leave a good deal of wreckage behind!"<sup>1</sup>

But the great problem of poverty cannot be dissociated from the features of social life. Hereafter, reference will be made to economic and industrial conditions which, in the opinion of many, are chiefly responsible for the evil deplored. At present, let us consider some of the habits and circumstances with which it connects.

By universal consent, a melancholy prominence must be given to intemperate indulgence in alcoholic liquors. The fatal lines of this indulgence are not written on the so-called working classes only. They are legible in all classes. But among

<sup>1</sup> The Bishop of Winchester, quoted in 'Social and Present-Day Questions,' p. 11.

those on the lower side of the social scale the ravages are most glaring; they are presented in their coarsest and most revolting aspects, and in their most ruinous consequences, so far as these can be traced. What the exact percentage of poverty directly attributable to intemperance may be, there is no need to discuss. Mr C. Booth, after a careful investigation of 4000 cases "which were representative of all the poor in the districts from which they were drawn and not only of those who apply for relief," gave only 14 as the percentage due to drink and its attendant thriftlessness. Even if this were the whole truth of the matter as to the entire poverty of the kingdom, the statement would be sufficiently serious. But he reminds us that, in this estimate, he has regarded drink as only "a principal cause." "As a contributory cause," he adds, "it would no doubt be connected with a much larger proportion."<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to make a sharp division between principal and contributory cause. It has been proved in the most conclusive manner by the testimony of judges, of guardians of the poor, of prison authorities, of experts in the treatment of the insane, by the evidence of Commissioners

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Labour of the People in London*, vol. i. pp. 147, 148. 1600 of the 4000 cases belonged to the lowest class of labourers and to those who are chronically in want.

and Commissions, by reports innumerable, that by far the larger amount of the wretchedness, the squalor, the crime, the vice, in city and in rural districts, is traceable to drink as the cause that is in or behind all occasions and contributions.

Messrs Rowntree and Sherwell, in their admirable treatise on the temperance problem, shew that the sum expended on alcoholic beverages in the United Kingdom in the year 1899—viz., £162,163,474—is equal to nearly one and a half times the amount of the national revenue, or to all the rents of all the houses and farms in Great Britain and Ireland. “Two-thirds of this amount,” they further point out, “are spent by the working classes, who constitute approximately 75 per cent of the population! That is to say, more than £108,000,000 must have been spent by 30,400,000 persons (representing 6,080,000 families) belonging to the working classes. In other words, every working-class family spent on an average in 1899 £17, 15s. 3d., or 6s. 10d. per week, on alcoholic liquor, which, assuming the average income of a working-class family to be 35s. per week, is equal to nearly one-fifth of the entire family income.”<sup>1</sup> The state-

<sup>1</sup> *The Temperance Problem and Social Reform*, pp. 9, 10.

ment is appalling. For, we must remember that these families include women and children; they include also very many families of strictly sober members; they include likewise the aged and the infirm. And, if deductions covering these elements are made, what a huge quantity of drink must be consumed day by day, night by night, by the residuum! Who can calculate all that this involves? In a vast multitude of instances, the money consumed on drink must be taken from that absolutely required for the necessities of vigorous existence. Having regard to this criminal waste, what wonder need be felt that devilry and misery meet us everywhere! What wonder that there is such a mass of persons whose vitality is low, whose constitution, physical and moral, is feeble; that sodden faces, brutalised countenances, manhood and womanhood in which the mark of the beast has all but obliterated the image of God, and childhood wan and weary and weeping bitterly, linger everlastingly about the purlieus of the city!

Let us pass from the region of statistics. The impatience which Carlyle once expressed, when figures as to intemperance were arrayed in his hearing, is intelligible. "Sir," exclaimed the Prophet, "I desire to hear nothing more on that

disgraceful subject." Disgraceful it is, and unspeakably sad. The question with which we are concerned is, What can be done to arrest the hæmorrhage to which it points?

In 1845 De Quincey alluded to "the most remarkable movement in society which history perhaps will be summoned to record—that which in our own days has applied itself to the abatement of intemperance."<sup>1</sup> The language is somewhat inflated, but the movement glanced at signalised an awakening of the Christian conscience to the magnitude of a waste and an iniquity which had been allowed to assume portentous dimensions. Something must be done to check the desolations of alcohol. What could it be? Men and women pondered the issue. All honour let us accord to those who, notwithstanding the derision with which their efforts were greeted by society, and the icy coldness with which they were viewed in Church courts and by churchmen, toiled on, puzzling over the issue, and doing what they could to arouse their generation to the sense of the sin lying at its door. To them may be applied the words of Hegel concerning heroes: "They derived their purpose and vocation not from the calm conservative course

<sup>1</sup> De Quincey's Works, vol. xi. p. 146. The movement originated in 1826.

of affairs, but from a concealed fount, from that inner spirit which, impinging on the surface of the world as on a shell, shivers it to pieces, because it is another and quite foreign force; they were men who seemed to draw their life-impulses from themselves, and whose influence produced new conditions that appeared as their work. Yet they had really no consciousness at starting of the great ideas they were helping to unfold, often being plain practical men with an insight into the needs of the time—what indeed was waiting for development—the very truth needed for their age and already found in the womb of time.”<sup>1</sup> The pioneers of the temperance cause were plain practical men. They were not idealists, though they helped to unfold great ideas. They had no political designs. They had no elaborate programmes. The first article of their union was, “Stop drinking, for your own sake or for your neighbours’ sake, and thus work towards the abatement of intemperance.” A simple creed, the product of simple, earnest minds! But, as the movement which they originated spread, objects of effort multiplied. The traffic in drink came more fully into view. The politician, critical, but often sympathetic, emerged on the scene. Richard Cobden expressed a widespread senti-

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of History*, Introduction.

ment when he declared that temperance reform was at the root of all reform.

Two points present themselves for consideration. One, the personal duty of Christian man or woman as to the use of intoxicating drinks as beverages; the other, the action of the citizenship, or of the State, with regard to the traffic in such drinks.

All, of course, are of one mind in condemning the abuse. And, in respect of that which constitutes the abuse, there has been in recent years a marked progress in feeling. The convivialism that was general in the upper and middle classes not a century ago is now impossible. Ministers of State do not make speeches after imbibing a bottle of port wine. Gentlemen do not drink after dinner until they can drink no longer. The toper in whose blood alcohol is always swirling is now a marked person in any circle of well-bred persons. Polite society insists that its members shall not offend the unwritten law of sobriety; and, whilst on festive occasions costly and various wines are circulated, there is no pressure to partake of them. Any excess is regarded as a misdemeanour, and the declination to partake is not criticised. A public opinion has been created which, laying hold of the classes, has gradually developed this change of habits; and it

is argued that temperance among the masses will be most effectually promoted in the same way. Not, that is, by drastic measures of repression, but — as the consequence of better education, better homes, and increased self-respect—by the uprising of a sentiment which will stigmatise intemperance as a disgrace to the intemperate and an outrage on the community.

So far this contention may be allowed. But the question remains, Whether one of the most potent allies in promoting the condemnation of the abuse which is desired would not be the example, on a large scale, of abstinence from even the use of intoxicants? Those whose position is clearly defined have a freedom of hand and voice which others cannot have. To many they may seem to be intense, even fanatical; nevertheless, they force attention, and their persistency, their earnestness, sustains the movement which otherwise might lag. A strong temperance sentiment, with a distinct platform, permeating the working classes, would be an immense influence in uniting their ranks against their most deadly foe.

The platform need not be that all use of strong drink is sinful. Very few can adopt a position so extreme. But many may and do accept another position, which is intelligible,

which is the expression of a genuine Christian spirit, and which may be held in perfect charity with others who do not accept it—the position that, in view of the temptations to which multitudes are exposed, of the misery and shame associated with the quaffing of ardent spirits, it is expedient, in the exercise of Christian liberty, to forego a right to the use, not merely, perhaps not at all, for personal safety, but rather for the sake of others, so that the protection and helpfulness of the covenant of Christian brotherhood may be more effectually realised, and the protest against indulgences which lead to intemperance may be emphasised. On the matter of personal duty, every man must be fully assured in his own mind, interpreting his attitude not by mere likings or dislikings, but by the law of the spirit of the life in Christ Jesus. Intemperate speech on the part both of abstainer and of non-abstainer should be avoided; all judging this rather that they should “strive in offices of love to lighten each other’s burden in their share of woe.”

The traffic in spirituous liquors, and the licensing laws by which this traffic, as a monopoly, is controlled, are part of the most urgent and difficult subjects of the day. It is admitted by

persons of all shades of political opinion that some fresh legislation is called for. The points in which both the majority and the minority reports of the Royal Commission on Licensing Laws are agreed may be fairly held to express the moderate yet earnest British mind. And they are such as these: That the present law needs to be "consolidated and simplified"; that the licensing authority needs to be reconstituted, and its powers to be at once more fully defined and amplified; that beer-houses and fully licensed public-houses should be subjected to more watchful review, should be more strictly regulated, and their number should be greatly reduced; that sales of intoxicants to children should be forbidden; that the closing of houses on Sunday should be extended; that powers of arrest for drunkenness should be increased, with penalties to be imposed on those who, knowing of the drunkenness, allow any one to remain on the premises; that habitual drunkenness should be treated as persistent cruelty, subjecting the culprit to the law of the land, and entitling wife and children to separation and protection. All who acknowledge the necessity of some reform may be regarded as in substantial unanimity thus far. But the differences appear when any practical measure is proposed. Governments are

afraid to submit bills to Parliament. They have usually burnt their fingers in doing so. Either they have not satisfied the more ardent, or, in the attempt to do this, they have offended the more cautious; and there are so many platforms claiming to be considered that they have run the gauntlet of an unsparing criticism. They have been brought always into collision with a compact body organised for opposition to any course which threatened to interfere with the interests of the trade. For, the "Wine, Spirit, and Beer Association" is enormously strong; so strong that Lord Rosebery has gone so far as to say that "if the State does not soon control the liquor traffic, the liquor traffic will control the State."

In these circumstances, what is the patriotic, the magnanimous, attitude of Christian citizenship? Without presuming to dogmatise, it seems to be, the closing of the ranks over such proposals as commend themselves to the largest number of those who desire a real and substantial social reform. Division only creates the opportunity for such as oppose all reform, and postpones indefinitely the prospect of any satisfactory legislation. Prohibitionists, local vetoists, and threefold optionists, may well resolve to hold their flags in reserve, and in the

meantime join with moderate men, who are doubtful as to these flags, in securing what all can agree to press now. Nor need they manifest an undue pertinacity on such an issue as the compensation of licence-holders when the licence, for no alleged fault, is taken away. If the legal right is not asserted; if, in consideration of the conditions and expectations which have grown up under the educative influence of law, an allowance is made, as a matter of grace and expediency, not of right; if this allowance is not made good by any taxation, but simply out of the trade itself; it does look like stubbornness to reject a compromise by which the co-operation of many good and true men is assured. Half-way measures are sometimes obnoxious to those who are whole-hearted in the advocacy of views which they conscientiously hold; but it is a gain to get half-way: the half must be reached before the whole way is travelled; and the refusal to act with others unless all that is contended for is granted will prevent the attainment of even the half-way; will keep the matter where it has been for years—unsettled, and every attempt at a settlement frustrated.

Now, the recommendations of Lord Peel and the minority of the Royal Commission on Licensing form the basis of a new national movement

in furtherance of temperance reform. They differ from the recommendations of the majority in several important respects. They are more definite. They are less encumbered by restrictions and reservations. They give more power to the licensing authority. They are tentative, allowing the experience of a period of seven or five years to guide as to further action. They deny any legal right to compensation; they contemplate an allowance to the publican whose licence would cease, under the arrangement by which "on" licences would be reduced in the ratio of 1 to 750 in towns, and 1 to 400 in country districts, for so much of the seven years' or five years' period of whose gains he is deprived, but this not from a public rate, only out of a fund raised by an annual levy on the other licence-holders. At the end of the seven years, or, in Scotland, the five years, no allowance would be made; the number of "on" drinking-houses would be reduced by more than a half; and a fuller revision of the licensing system in the light of the knowledge obtained would be possible. In support of this scheme, might not reformers, whatever their peculiar positions in the army of reform may be, join hands and agree to make common cause? If all that every one desires is not interpreted in it, much that every one desires

is; and the united front, in behalf of a measure that is not associated with what politicians might designate fads, would go far in carrying the measure through the parliamentary ordeal. There is wisdom in the advice lately tendered by the Bishop of Newcastle, "Not to be discouraged and discountenanced if a measure which may be carried does not come up to all expectation, but to make the best of what is possible and practicable, and then, when this has been tested and tried, to go on to something else which may seem to be a farther advance in the same direction."

Apart from legislative action, much remains to be done in the way of providing counter-attractions to the existing public-house. The charm of the public-house is largely owing to its being a place where men can congregate, gratifying their social instincts, and breaking the dull monotony of their life. If we would save men from the dangerous, we must supply the wholesome and really recreative sociality. Do as we will, to many the superior place, with the superior entertainment, will have no charm. Those who have toiled in the endeavour to reach persons who frequent the smaller drinking-houses, and to give them a better variety for their leisure hours, know how disappointing the toil is. The men most wanted prefer to smug in their old haunts. But

some are curable; and there is the prevention which is better than cure. One of the main objects of effort is, by the power of a purer taste, still more of a higher affection, to keep the manhood and the womanhood of our cities from the associations of the house licensed for drink, and to provide amusements and interests which can make existence richer and brighter. People's palaces, cafés, clubs, &c., render an important service. There is a touch of fine satire in the excellent proposal of Messrs Rowntree and Sherwell to hand over the whole profits of the liquor traffic in a locality to a central State authority, and to make an annual grant from this authority for the establishment and maintenance of recreation centres, whose primary object shall be to counteract the influence of the drink traffic—the *sole* benefit which a locality shall receive from the profits of the traffic.<sup>1</sup>

In the forefront of the circumstances of poverty is the nature of the houses in which the poor live their life. There can be no doubt that the wretched dwelling, with all its attendant features, is largely a consequence of intemperance; but there can be no doubt also that it is largely a cause of intemperance. Where food is insuf-

<sup>1</sup> The Temperance Problem and Social Reform, p. 590.

ficient, where squalor reigns, where the atmosphere is vitiated and unwholesome, the craving to get out, to realise some additional sensation, some fuller life, leads to the only appreciated source of the desired stimulus. And a reckless unconcern for all except the gratification of the moment is a concomitant of habitual poverty. What can be expected of those whose rearing and whose residence are in garrets, or cellars, or fetid dens — places in which all that protects the modesty of woman, that educates the higher qualities of man, that supplies the necessities of healthful existence, is only conspicuous by its absence? The only result to be looked for from such surroundings is short, sunless, stunted, degraded lives—starvation scarcely kept at bay—rounded by a pauper's or a criminal's grave.

Let us review for a moment or two the housing of the lower, the more seamy, side of the population. Glasgow, as described by Sir James Bell and Mr Paton, will serve as our illustration. First, there is thrown on the canvas the common, or the model, lodging-house, in which yearly 10,000 persons find a shelter — “the hotel of the very poor, where mingle persons of all nationalities, who have fallen from all ranks, and from positions of independence and responsibility, tramps, tinkers, labourers, sweeps, thieves, and thimble-

riggers; with low moral tone, and habits and sometimes language unclean.”<sup>1</sup> There, at a rate not exceeding 6d. a night, sleep, and feed as best they can, these motley companies of the wandering and weary of foot. Next, the impression on which the eye rests is that of “the farmed house,” taking the place of the furnished house of the better circumstanced citizen. In the wynds, lanes, and back properties of the city it is to be found: its rooms “fitted out with a bed or beds, some bedding, a table, two or three chairs, a grate, a kettle, a pot, and a little crockery,” let at rents varying from 4s. a-week and upwards.<sup>2</sup> Next, comes the one-roomed house, the subject of Mr Bright’s graphic picture on the occasion of his rectorial address to the University of Glasgow. More than 30,000 dwellings with one room exist in the city, occupied by upwards of 100,000 citizens, paying on an average a rent of 2s. weekly—“miserable dens tenanted for the most part by a class almost as migratory as that in the lodging-houses.”<sup>3</sup> Finally, the eye rests on “the ticketed house,” having not more than three apartments, which, by the Police Act of 1866, the authorities have power to enter in order to measure its cubic contents.

<sup>1</sup> Glasgow: Its Municipal Organisation and Administration, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 193, 194.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

If these contents do not exceed 2000 cubic feet, they are entitled to state the number of feet, and the number of sleepers allowed in the house according to the prescribed measurement, on a ticket or plate fixed to the door. There are 25,000 such ticketed houses in various districts, and "the inspected population forms an army of at least 60,000, in which are the bulk of the socially dangerous elements."<sup>1</sup>

Great improvements have recently been effected. The Police Act of 1890 gave the police commissioners authority, on the report of the medical officer, the sanitary inspector, and the master of works, to declare any house or part of a house to be unfit for human habitation, and to affix an order that after a given date it shall cease to be inhabited, the proprietor being allowed a right of appeal to the sheriff. Hundreds of dwelling-houses have by the exercise of this authority been closed; large portions of streets have been demolished; and, instead of the former insanitary tenements, new blocks with airy courts and passages and all modern appliances have been erected. The Glasgow corporation justly claims "to have accomplished a great work in lengthening and strengthening the

<sup>1</sup> Glasgow: Its Municipal Organisation and Administration, pp. 195, 196.

life of the poor and making their condition more bearable, if we cannot say enjoyable.”<sup>1</sup>

But the shadows are still long and dark. The population in many parts of our cities is too dense, and the rate of mortality is, therefore, high. Especially is this true of the infantile mortality. Glasgow has been referred to. In illustration of the death-rate among children, let us refer to Liverpool, of which it has been said, justly or unjustly, that “it is the most unwholesome place for little children in the whole country.” In the report of the medical officer of health for 1890, it is stated that “the range of mortality is from 105 per thousand in the district where it is the lowest up to 260 per thousand in the district where it is the highest.” Allowing an annual death-rate of 100 per thousand to be unavoidable, it will be seen that in some districts (and these are the poorest) there is a vast amount of preventable mortality. An investigation into the circumstances of upwards of 1000 consecutive deaths, in quarters in which infantile death was excessive, brought out that “in 21 per cent the families might be described as extremely and exceptionally dirty; in 18 per cent the mothers went out to work, leaving the

<sup>1</sup> Glasgow: Its Municipal Organisation and Administration, p. 199.

infant in the custody of others, frequently in the custody of another child who could give it no proper attention; about 11 per cent of the total were living in dwellings unfit for human habitation; in upwards of 25 per cent, and these are the cases where the mortality appears to be highest, the parents were markedly intemperate." The results thus ascertained as to Liverpool are indicative of results which, though not perhaps to the same extent, have been ascertained as to other cities. Without the sufficiency of warmth, food, air, of things bright and grateful, which nature demands, all life is pathetic; but most pathetic is child-life. Merry often is the romp of the gutter child, playing in the foul precinct of its home as blithely as the more favoured and fortunate; but he or she who plays is the one who has survived: how many are taken after having only begun to be! how many, pinched and wan, remind us of the lines—

"They are weary ere they run.

They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory  
Which is brighter than the sun!"<sup>1</sup>

Good houses, with good environments, for all workmen, and especially for the poor, at a

<sup>1</sup> The Cry of the Children, by E. B. Browning.

charge which will allow a sufficient margin for things requisite to vigorous life—this is a problem of the day. High ground-rents, along with the price of labour and material, and the amount needing to be written off for deterioration of property, make it one difficult to solve. Three kinds of agency aiming at its solution may be noticed.

1. Those who have visited the Greater Britain beyond the western and the southern seas have been led to contrast the comfort and independence of the working classes, able through the aid of building and land societies to purchase and own their homes, with the condition of their brethren in the old Fatherland. Building and dwelling societies do not build: they make advances, repayable by instalments, on real property in land or in house, to their members. There are thousands of such societies in the United States. By means of the facilities that they offer, more than 50,000 workmen in the city of Philadelphia own the houses in which they live. In Australia also, a large percentage of workmen, by the same aid, enjoys the same privilege. Birmingham gave a lead in the United Kingdom in 1847; and, at this date, building societies in England can be numbered by many hundreds. Unfortunately, in the earlier

period of the movement, some societies were not sufficiently safeguarded, and their failure, besides discrediting the cause, frequently involved their members in serious losses.

2. Philanthropy, too, has taken the practical form of rearing or improving homes for the poor. In London alone, nearly five millions sterling, including the Peabody gift, have been thus spent, and a sum of one and a half million has been recently left for this object. One of the most interesting developments of benevolence in this direction is that which is associated with the name of Octavia Hill, a lady whose zeal has been always balanced by a rare practical wisdom. She purchased inferior and insanitary houses, gutted them, put them in good order, abolished professional factorage, and organised a staff of voluntary collectors, who, whilst receiving the rent each month or week, became also the friends and advisers of the family. Her desire was to infuse more light, more beauty, more sweetness of life into the houses. Her example and service were infectious: many tenements in Great Britain, on the Continent, in America, in whose ordering her ideas with modifications have been carried out, contain those who have ample reason to call her blessed.

3. But the third of the agencies alluded to is the State. In some quarters, a demand has been loudly articulated that the civic society shall undertake "the compulsory construction of healthy artisans' and agricultural labourers' dwellings in proportion to the population." Now, much has been done, and well done, by corporations, such as Glasgow, in the erection of houses on approved plans and having rents fixed at moderate rates — rates that do little more than cover the interest of the outlay and the unavoidable tear and wear. The experiment has been hitherto fairly successful, and an object-lesson in the right way of house-building has been given. It is obvious, however, that municipal action must be cautiously and prudently organised. The houses that it erects must be provided "only in places where they can be built at a fair profit"; and there are always the risks of change in the suitability of localities and of deteriorated values. But for the State, the Government of the country, to become the capitalist, or to advance the capital necessary for providing sufficient and good lodging for all in the several districts of the country, is one of the impracticable points in the socialist programme. The most that, in existing circumstances, it can do is to authorise and enable

municipalities, on certain conditions, to obtain loans for building, extended over long periods; and, in the interests of all the citizenship, as well as in those of the working class, the money spent on good houses is well-spent money. The bad house in the close slum is a hotbed of disease. The good house in the good situation means increase of strength to those whose labour is essential to wealth, and is a gain, from a sanitary point of view, to the community.

In connexion with housing, two desiderata are pressed. The one is decentralisation—by procuring areas at some distance from the city and erecting on them cottage-homes, or houses of another type than the barrack-tenement, thus providing fresh air for the inmates, and relieving the congestion of residential city districts. And the other—the accompaniment of this—is cheap and easy transport for workmen. That these objects are desirable, none will doubt. To some extent they have been already realised, and to a still greater extent they could be realised. But, whilst many might avail themselves of the facilities thus offered, the temporary nature of employment and the complications as to shifts of labour must prevent the mass of labourers from moving so far afield. Good houses near the scenes of toil, with all possible helps to healthy life, and with such

supervision as, without unduly interfering with liberty, shall ensure that the houses are well kept and maintained, are an urgent necessity; and to meet this necessity should be one of the first obligations of citizenship.

But, when all is said that can be said as to better houses and environments, it must be recollected that the essential element in the problem is—the better people for the house. The dwelling is, undoubtedly, a most important auxiliary to happy and righteous living. It is absolutely indispensable to wellbeing. But the home is more than the house. The best of houses may be the worst of homes; the worst of houses may yet have something at least of the air of a home. For, the home includes the character of the inmates, their mutual and reciprocal service and kindness, relations sweetened by affection and sympathy, gentle dispositions, manners promotive of purity in thought and action. Where these things are and abound, the humblest fireside is transformed into a holy place: in the peasant's hut, in the one- or two-roomed habitation, there can be heard "the melodies of the everlasting chime." This may seem to many merely a part of an old song; but the old songs are often the interpretation of the truest feeling. Anyhow, it indicates the special sphere of the Christian

Church and its ministry. The Church associates itself with all that tends to uplift and complete humanity, with every endeavour to give additional zest and brightness to life. But the province that is peculiarly its own is the building up of manhood in moral vigour and in spiritual elevation. It looks to the home more than the house; its ideal is the family united in "keeping the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."