

PART II.—DELIVERANCE.

CHAPTER I.

A STUPENDOUS UNDERTAKING.

Such, then, is a brief and hurried survey of Darkest England, and those who have been in the depths of the enchanted forest in which wander the tribes of the despairing Lost will be the first to admit that I have in no way exaggerated its horrors, while most will assert that I have under-estimated the number of its denizens. I have, indeed, very scrupulously striven to keep my estimates of the extent of the evil within the lines of sobriety. Nothing in such an enterprise as that on which I am entering could worse befall me than to come under the reproach of sensationalism or exaggeration. Most of the evidence upon which I have relied is taken direct from the official statistics supplied by the Government Returns; and as to the rest, I can only say that if my figures are compared with those of any other writer upon this subject, it will be found that my estimates are the lowest. I am not prepared to defend the exact accuracy of my calculations, excepting so far as they constitute the minimum. To those who believe that the numbers of the wretched are far in excess of my figures, I have nothing to say, excepting this, that if the evil is so much greater than I have described, then let your efforts be proportioned to your estimate, not to mine. The great point with each of us is, not how many of the wretched exist to-day, but how few shall there exist in the years that are to come.

The dark and dismal jungle of pauperism, vice, and despair is the inheritance to which we have succeeded from the generations and centuries past, during which wars, insurrections, and internal

troubles left our forefathers small leisure to attend to the well-being of the sunken tenth. Now that we have happened upon more fortunate times, let us recognise that we are our brother's keepers, and set to work, regardless of party distinctions and religious differences, to make this world of ours a little bit more like home for those whom we call our brethren.

The problem, it must be admitted, is by no means a simple one; nor can anyone accuse me in the foregoing pages of having minimised the difficulties which heredity, habit, and surroundings place in the way of its solution, but unless we are prepared to fold our arms in selfish ease and say that nothing can be done, and thereby doom those lost millions to remediless perdition in this world, to say nothing of the next, the problem must be solved in some way. But in what way? That is the question. It may tend, perhaps, to the crystallisation of opinion on this subject if I lay down, with such precision as I can command, what must be the essential elements of any scheme likely to command success.

SECTION I—THE ESSENTIALS TO SUCCESS.

The first essential that must be borne in mind as governing every Scheme that may be put forward is that it must change the man when it is his character and conduct which constitute the reasons for his failure in the battle of life. No change in circumstances, no revolution in social conditions, can possibly transform the nature of man. Some of the worst men and women in the world, whose names are chronicled by history with a shudder of horror, were those who had all the advantages that wealth, education and station could confer or ambition could attain.

The supreme test of any scheme for benefiting humanity lies in the answer to the question, What does it make of the individual? Does it quicken his conscience, does it soften his heart, does it enlighten his mind, does it, in short, make more of a true man of him, because only by such influences can he be enabled to lead a human life? Among the denizens of Darkest England there are many who have found their way thither by defects of character which would under the most favourable circumstances relegate them to the same position. Hence, unless you can change their character your labour will be lost. You may clothe the drunkard, fill his purse with gold, establish him in a well-furnished home, and in three, or six, or twelve months he will once more be on the Embankment, haunted by delirium tremens, dirty, squalid, and ragged. Hence, in all cases where a man's own character and defects constitute the reasons for his fall, that character must be changed and that conduct altered if any permanent beneficial results are to be attained. If he is a drunkard, he must be made sober; if idle, he must be made industrious; if criminal, he must be made honest; if impure, he must be made clean; and if he be so deep down in vice, and has been there so long that he has lost all heart, and hope, and power to help himself, and absolutely refuses to move, he must be inspired with hope and have created within him the ambition to rise; otherwise he will never get out of the horrible pit.

Secondly : *The remedy, to be effectual, must change the circumstances of the individual when they are the cause of his wretched condition, and lie beyond his control.* Among those who have arrived at their present evil plight through faults of self-indulgence or some defect in their moral character, how many are there who would have been very differently placed to-day had their surroundings been otherwise? Charles Kingsley puts this very abruptly where he makes the Poacher's widow say, when addressing the Bad Squire, who drew back

“Our daughters, with base-born babies,
Have wandered away in their shame.
If your misses had slept, Squire, where they did,
Your misses might do the same.’

Placed in the same or similar circumstances, how many of us would have turned out better than this poor, lapsed, sunken multitude?

Many of this crowd have never had a chance of doing better; they have been born in a poisoned atmosphere, educated in circumstances which have rendered modesty an impossibility, and have been thrown into life in conditions which make vice a second nature. Hence, to provide an effective remedy for the evils which we are deploring these circumstances must be altered, and unless my Scheme effects such a change, it will be of no use. There are multitudes, myriads, of men and women, who are floundering in the horrible quagmire beneath the burden of a load too heavy for them to bear; every plunge they take forward lands them deeper; some have ceased even to struggle, and lie prone in the filthy bog, slowly suffocating, with their manhood and womanhood all but perished. It is no use standing on the firm bank of the quaking morass and anathematising these poor wretches; if you are to do them any good, you must give them another chance to get on their feet, you must give them firm foothold upon which they can once more stand upright, and you must build stepping-stones across the bog to enable them safely to reach the other side. Favourable circumstances will not change a man's heart or transform his nature, but unpropitious circumstances may render it absolutely impossible for him to escape, no matter how he may desire to extricate himself. The first step with these helpless, sunken creatures is to create the desire to escape, and then provide the means for doing so. In other words, give the man another chance.

Thirdly : *Any remedy worthy of consideration must be on a scale commensurate with the evil with which it proposes to deal.* It is no use trying to bail out the ocean with a pint pot. This evil is one whose victims are counted by the million. The army of the Lost in our midst exceeds the numbers of that multitudinous host which Xerxes led from Asia to attempt the conquest of Greece. Pass in parade those who make up the submerged tenth, count the paupers indoor and outdoor, the homeless, the starving, the criminals, the lunatics, the drunkards, and the harlots—and yet do not give way to despair! Even to attempt to save a tithe of this host requires that we should put much more force and fire into our work than has hitherto been exhibited by anyone. There must be no more philanthropic tinkering, as if this vast sea of human misery were contained in the limits of a garden pond.

Fourthly : *Not only must the Scheme be large enough, but it must be permanent.* That is to say, it must not be merely a spasmodic effort coping with the misery of to-day; it must be established on a durable footing, so as to go on dealing with the misery of to-morrow and the day after, so long as there is misery left in the world with which to grapple.

Fifthly : *But while it must be permanent,* it must also be *immediately practicable.* Any Scheme, to be of use, must be capable of being brought into instant operation with beneficial results.

Sixthly : *The indirect features of the Scheme must not be such as to produce injury to the persons whom we seek to benefit.* Mere charity, for instance, while relieving the pinch of hunger, demoralises the recipient; and whatever the remedy is that we employ, it must be of such a nature as to do good without doing evil at the same time. It is no use conferring sixpennyworth of benefit on a man if, at the same time, we do him a shilling'sworth of harm.

Seventhly : *While assisting one class of the community, it must not seriously interfere with the interests of another.* In raising one section of the fallen, we must not thereby endanger the safety of those who with difficulty are keeping on their feet.

These are the conditions by which I ask you to test the Scheme I am about to unfold. They are formidable enough, possibly, to deter many from even attempting to do anything. They are not of my making. They are obvious to anyone who looks into the matter. They are the laws which govern the work of the philanthropic

reformer, just as the laws of gravitation, of wind and of weather, govern the operations of the engineer. It is no use saying we could build a bridge across the Tay if the wind did not blow, or that we could build a railway across a bog if the quagmire would afford us a solid foundation. The engineer has to take into account the difficulties, and make them his starting point. The wind will blow, therefore the bridge must be made strong enough to resist it. Chat Moss will shake ; therefore we must construct a foundation in the very bowels of the bog on which to build our railway. So it is with the social difficulties which confront us. If we act in harmony with these laws we shall triumph ; but if we ignore them they will overwhelm us with destruction and cover us with disgrace.

But, difficult as the task may be, it is not one which we can neglect. When Napoleon was compelled to retreat under circumstances which rendered it impossible for him to carry off his sick and wounded, he ordered his doctors to poison every man in the hospital. A general has before now massacred his prisoners rather than allow them to escape. These Lost ones are the Prisoners of Society; they are the Sick and Wounded in our Hospitals. What a shriek would arise from the civilised world if it were proposed to administer to-night to every one of these millions such a dose of morphine that they would sleep to wake no more. But so far as they are concerned, would it not be much less cruel thus to end their life than to allow them to drag on day after day, year after year, in misery, anguish, and despair, driven into vice and hunted into crime, until at last disease harries them into the grave?

I am under no delusion as to the possibility of inaugurating a millennium by my Scheme; but the triumphs of science deal so much with the utilisation of waste material, that I do not despair of something effectual being accomplished in the utilisation of this waste human product. The refuse which was a drug and a curse to our manufacturers, when treated under the hands of the chemist, has been the means of supplying us with dyes rivalling in loveliness and variety the hues of the rainbow. If the alchemy of science can extract beautiful colours from coal tar, cannot Divine alchemy enable us to evolve gladness and brightness out of the agonised hearts and dark, dreary, loveless lives of these doomed myriads? Is it too much to hope that in God's world God's children may be able to do something, if they set to work with a will, to carry out a

plan of campaign against these great evils which are the nightmare of our existence?

The remedy, it may be, is simpler than some imagine. The key to the enigma may lie closer to our hands than we have any idea of. Many devices have been tried, and many have failed, no doubt; it is only stubborn, reckless perseverance that can hope to succeed; it is well that we recognise this. How many ages did men try to make gunpowder and never succeeded? They would put saltpetre to charcoal, or charcoal to sulphur, or saltpetre to sulphur, and so were ever unable to make the compound explode. But it has only been discovered within the last few hundred years that all three were needed. Before that gunpowder was a mere imagination, a phantasy of the alchemists. How easy it is to make gunpowder, now the secret of its manufacture is known!

But take a simpler illustration, one which lies even within the memory of some that read these pages. From the beginning of the world down to the beginning of this century, mankind had not found out, with all its striving after cheap and easy transport, the miraculous difference that would be brought about by laying down two parallel lines of metal. All the great men and the wise men of the past lived and died oblivious of that fact. The greatest mechanics and engineers of antiquity, the men who bridged all the rivers of Europe, the architects who built the cathedrals which are still the wonder of the world, failed to discern what seems to us so obviously simple a proposition, that two parallel lines of rail would diminish the cost and difficulty of transport to a minimum. Without that discovery the steam engine, which has itself been an invention of quite recent years, would have failed to transform civilisation.

What we have to do in the philanthropic sphere is to find something analogous to the engineers' parallel bars. This discovery I think I have made, and hence have I written this book.

SECTION 2.—MY SCHEME.

What, then, is my Scheme? It is a very simple one, although in its ramifications and extensions it embraces the whole world. In this book I profess to do no more than to merely outline, as plainly and as simply as I can, the fundamental features of my proposals. I propose to devote the bulk of this volume to setting forth what can practically be done with one of the most pressing parts of the problem, namely, that relating to those who are out of work, and who, as the result, are more or less destitute. I have many ideas of what might be done with those who are at present cared for in some measure by the State, but I will leave these ideas for the present.

It is not urgent that I should explain how our Poor Law system could be reformed, or what I should like to see done for the Lunatics in Asylums, or the Criminals in Gaols. The persons who are provided for by the State we will, therefore, for the moment, leave out of count. The indoor paupers, the convicts, the inmates of the lunatic asylums are cared for, in a fashion; already. But, over and above all these, there exists some hundreds of thousands who are not quartered on the State, but who are living on the verge of despair, and who at any moment, under circumstances of misfortune, might be compelled to demand relief or support in one shape or another. I will confine myself, therefore, for the present to those who have no helper.

It is possible, I think probable, if the proposals which I am now putting forward are carried out successfully in relation to the lost, homeless, and helpless of the population, that many of those who are at the present moment in somewhat better circumstances will demand that they also shall be allowed to partake in the benefits of the Scheme. But upon this, also, I remain silent. I merely remark that we have, in the recognition of the importance of discipline and organisation, what may be called regimented co-operation, a principle that will be found valuable for solving many social prob-

lems other than that of destitution. Of these plans, which are at present being brooded over with a view to their realisation when the time is propitious and the opportunity occurs, I shall have something to say.

What is the outward and visible form of the Problem of the Unemployed? Alas! we are all too familiar with it for any lengthy description to be necessary. The social problem presents itself before us whenever a hungry, dirty and ragged man stands at our door asking if we can give him a crust or a job. That is the social question. What are you to do with that man? He has no money in his pocket, all that he can pawn he has pawned long ago, his stomach is as empty as his purse, and the whole of the clothes upon his back, even if sold on the best terms, would not fetch a shilling. There he stands, your brother, with sixpennyworth of rags to cover his nakedness from his fellow men and not sixpennyworth of victuals within his reach. He asks for work, which he will set to even on his empty stomach and in his ragged uniform, if so be that you will give him something for it, but his hands are idle, for no one employs him. What are you to do with that man? That is the great note of interrogation that confronts Society to-day. Not only in overcrowded England, but in newer countries beyond the sea, where Society has not yet provided a means by which the men can be put upon the land and the land be made to feed the men. To deal with this man is the Problem of the Unemployed. To deal with him effectively you must deal with him immediately, you must provide him in some way or other at once with food, and shelter, and warmth. Next you must find him something to do, something that will test the reality of his desire to work. This test must be more or less temporary, and should be of such a nature as to prepare him for making a permanent livelihood. Then, having trained him, you must provide him wherewithal to start life afresh. All these things I propose to do. My Scheme divides itself into three sections, each of which is indispensable for the success of the whole. In this three-fold organisation lies the open secret of the solution of the Social Problem.

The Scheme I have to offer consists in the formation of these people into self-helping and self-sustaining communities, each being a kind of co-operative society, or patriarchal family, governed and disciplined on the principles which have already proved so effective in the Salvation Army.

These communities we will call, for want of a better term, Colonies. There will be—

- (1) The City Colony.
- (2) The Farm Colony.
- (3) The Over-Sea Colony.

THE CITY COLONY

By the City Colony is meant the establishment, in the very centre of the ocean of misery of which we have been speaking, of a number of Institutions to act as Harbours of Refuge for all and any who have been shipwrecked in life, character, or circumstances. These Harbours will gather up the poor destitute creatures, supply their immediate pressing necessities, furnish temporary employment, inspire them with hope for the future, and commence at once a course of regeneration by moral and religious influences.

From these Institutions, which are hereafter described, numbers would, after a short time, be floated off to permanent employment, or sent home to friends happy to receive them on hearing of their reformation. All who remain on our hands would, by varied means, be tested as to their sincerity, industry, and honesty, and as soon as satisfaction was created, be passed on to the Colony of the second class.

THE FARM COLONY.

This would consist of a settlement of the Colonists on an estate in the provinces, in the culture of which they would find employment and obtain support. As the race from the Country to the City has been the cause of much of the distress we have to battle with, we propose to find a substantial part of our remedy by transferring these same people back to the country, that is back again to “the Garden!”

Here the process of reformation of character would be carried forward by the same industrial, moral, and religious methods as have already been commenced in the City, especially including those forms of labour and that knowledge of agriculture which, should the Colonist not obtain employment in this country, will qualify him for pursuing his fortunes under more favourable circumstances in some other land.

From the Farm, as from the City, there can be no question that large numbers, resuscitated in health and character, would be restored to friends up and down the country. Some would find employment in their own callings, others would settle in cottages on a small piece

of land that we should provide, or on Co-operative Farms which we intend to promote; while the great bulk, after trial and training, would be passed on to the Foreign Settlement, which would constitute our third class, namely The Over-Sea Colony.

THE OVER-SEA COLONY.

All who have given attention to the subject are agreed that in our Colonies in South Africa, Canada, Western Australia and elsewhere, there are millions of acres of useful land to be obtained almost for the asking, capable of supporting our surplus population in health and comfort, were it a thousand times greater than it is. We propose to secure a tract of land in one of these countries, prepare it for settlement, establish in it authority, govern it by equitable laws, assist it in times of necessity, settling it gradually with a prepared people, and so create a home for these destitute multitudes.

The Scheme, in its entirety, may aptly be compared to A Great Machine, foundationed in the lowest slums and purlieus of our great towns and cities, drawing up into its embrace the depraved and destitute of all classes; receiving thieves, harlots, paupers, drunkards, prodigals, all alike, on the simple conditions of their being willing to work and to conform to discipline. Drawing up these poor outcasts, reforming them, and creating in them habits of industry, honesty, and truth; teaching them methods by which alike the bread that perishes and that which endures to Everlasting Life can be won. Forwarding them from the City to the Country, and there continuing the process of regeneration, and then pouring them forth on to the virgin soils that await their coming in other lands, keeping hold of them with a strong government, and yet making them free men and women; and so laying the foundations, perchance, of another Empire to swell to vast proportions in later times. Why not?
