

The Church and the Poor.

A SERIES OF HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

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IX.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BETWEEN the death of Queen Elizabeth and the beginning of the "Industrial Revolution," there stretches a period of about 150 years. It cannot be said, I think, that the Church (as a corporate body) took a prominent, or even an adequate, part in the relief of the poor during this period; though doubtless there were, as I shall show, individual leaders of the Church who, at various times, did take a deep and real interest in the welfare of the poor, and who gave liberally to their support.¹ If our task could be discharged by simply relating what the Church did for the relief of the poor during this age, then a very brief treatment of it might be sufficient. But those who have studied history know that any particular age can only be adequately explained by careful reference to the age which preceded it. Consequently the age of the "Industrial Revolution" (in which we may be said to be still living) cannot be understood without at least some conception of the conditions which existed in the age we are now considering.² It is, then, as being necessary to explain present conditions and present difficulties, that we must primarily study the measures which were taken on behalf of the poor during the seventeenth, and the first half of the eighteenth,

¹ The immense number of charities for the benefit of the poor founded by various individuals during the seventeenth century proves that the spirit of charity was then very much alive. A glance into the origin of existing parochial charities—to say nothing of the great number of those which have been lost—will prove how large a proportion of these date from this period.

² On this epoch as "a period of preparation" see Meredith, "Economic History of England," pp. 181 *et seq.* Also during this period, as I shall show, our present Poor Law became consolidated; the principles upon which, to some extent, it is still administered became fixed.

century. I say "primarily" because I do not wish my readers to think that a study of this particular age is in itself unfruitful ; on the contrary, if we study it carefully, we may learn some extremely valuable lessons from it. This is especially true of the period covered by the reigns of James I. and Charles I.

These two reigns were, so far as our subject is concerned, extremely like the previous reign in one respect, and extremely unlike it in another. In them, as during the time of Elizabeth, we find that the care of the poor had largely passed into the hands of authorities which were only ecclesiastical so far as this, that the churchwardens of the parish were *ex officio* associated¹ in the administration of the Poor Law of that date. On the other hand, there was this great dissimilarity : the reign of Elizabeth was one of active *legislative* development, while during the reigns of James I. and Charles I., we find that it was rather an improved *administration* of the law than the making of any great changes in the law itself that was the chief object of the Central Authority.

The most important of all the Acts relating to the poor passed during the reign of Elizabeth was that of 1601,² which established the principle, "that property must be chargeable for the relief of poverty" and "that the security of the one is endangered by the extremity of the other."³ It appears that it took some considerable time before the various provisions of this Act came into general operation. It is one thing for a Central Authority to order that machinery requisite for a variety of purposes shall be set up, and also for this Authority to give powers to Justices and other local authorities ; it is another thing to set this machinery working satisfactorily in all the various parts of the kingdom,⁴ especially when we remember how slow

¹ With the overseers.

² 43 Elizabeth, cap. 21. See Nicholls' "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., pp. 189 *et seq.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁴ Nicholls states (p. 245) that "there were places in which no rate was made for twenty, thirty, and even forty years after the passing of this Act." He quotes from a pamphlet of 1622, which complains of there being parishes in which there had been no collection for the poor for seven years.

were the means of communication in those days compared with those we now possess.

Some of the most important provisions of this Act deal with the duties of overseers and with the powers entrusted to them. These officials were not appointed for the first time in 1601, but they were then first empowered to make and collect the rates requisite for carrying out their duties. They, together with the churchwardens of the parish, were henceforth¹ those actually responsible for seeing that the various provisions of the Poor Law were properly carried into effect. Here it will probably be well to remind ourselves of the actual ecclesiastical condition of England at this time. As Sir G. Nicholls says, "The great bulk of the people belonged to the Established Church, and they regarded it as an essential part of the government, parochial as well as general."² Hence, from a religious, as well as from an ecclesiastical, point of view, not only the churchwardens, but also the overseers would represent both the people and the Church in a way in which they do not any longer represent them. Not only those who administered the law, but also Parliament which made the law, may consequently be considered to have expressed the views generally held in the Church at that time as to the proper treatment of the poor.

As an example of this, and as an explanation of provisions which still exist in many parishes at the present time, we may notice an Act passed in the seventh year of James I.³ This Act deals with the application of money given for the apprenticing of poor children. It states that much money has been given for this purpose, and that more is likely to be given, and its object is to encourage "other well-disposed people" to bestow "money to the same good and godly purposes";⁴ therefore it enacts that "all money so given shall for ever continue to be used for such purposes only, and that corporations in cities and

¹ Until 1782, when "Gilbert's Act" restricted their duties to collecting the rate and accounting for it.

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

³ 7 James I., cap. 3.

⁴ An instance of the truth that the Poor Law was originally intended to supplement private charity. See Leonard, "English Poor Relief," p. 137.

towns corporate, and in parishes and towns not corporate, the parson or vicar, together with the constables, churchwardens and overseers of the poor for the time being, 'shall have the nomination and placing of such apprentices and the finding and employment of all such moneys as are so given for the continual binding forth of such apprentices.'"¹ This Act, as I have already stated, shows, first, the exceedingly close co-operation of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities at that time; and, secondly, it reveals why to-day the vicar of an ancient parish is frequently a trustee (indeed, often chairman of the trustees) of charities for apprenticeship and other purposes.

Another Act of the same year is an additional proof of this co-operation. This Act² is "for the due execution of divers Laws and Statutes heretofore made against Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars, etc." It orders Houses of Correction to be provided in every county by a certain date, and if not provided by this date every justice of the county is to be fined £5; also a general search is to be made for undesirable persons, and "the constables and tithing men" are to give an account upon oath in writing and under the hand of the minister of every parish"³ what disorderly persons they have apprehended. All this goes to prove not only how active, but, indeed, how efficient local organization was becoming.

We have now entered upon the period when the relations between the Crown and the people were such that Parliaments assembled only to be prorogued, and when it was practically impossible to pass legislative measures of any kind. Indeed, between 1610 and 1624 this seems actually to have been the case. When Parliament met in this latter year, the first Act⁴ it passed was one for "erecting of Hospitals and Working-houses for the Poor." I mention this Act for this reason, because although the arrears of legislation must have been enormous, so keen apparently was public opinion at the time

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

² 7 James I., cap. 4. Its provisions deal mainly with administration.

³ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

⁴ 21 James I., cap. 1. It makes perpetual 39 Elizabeth, cap. 5.

in regard to the poor, that the very first Act passed after fourteen years of silence had reference to a question connected with them.

Throughout these two reigns, and especially during the long intervals which elapsed between the summoning of successive Parliaments, the Privy Council¹ became in effect the supreme administrative authority in all matters connected with the relief of the poor; and the various "Orders" which were issued by the Council at this time should be carefully studied, that is, if we are to understand how the poor were dealt with during this period.² These "Orders" were both local and general; they sometimes had reference to particular difficulties in particular districts; at other times they were general regulations applying to the whole kingdom. On the whole, these Orders in Council were wisely drawn up, and they show not only a knowledge of the needs of the poor at the time, but as a rule they meet these needs in a very satisfactory way. Some of the difficulties with which these Orders deal may be noticed: first, they frequently call the attention of the local authorities, the Justices of the Peace, etc., to the remissness with which they were administering the law, and they threaten punishment if it is not put into force. Secondly, they often issue temporary regulations in reference to the sale of corn at a cheap price in times of famine following bad harvests, and they also order that there shall be a supply of grain to the poor. Thirdly, they command that in times of scarcity the local authorities shall provide work for the workers.³ In those days a bad harvest,

¹ "It seems . . . that the Crown claimed a sort of supplemental right of legislation to perfect and carry into effect what the spirit of existing laws might require . . . as well as . . . a sovereign power which sanctioned commands beyond the legal prerogative, for the sake of public safety" (Hallam's "Constitutional History," vol. i., p. 237).

² "On the Work of the Privy Council in regard to the Relief of the Poor." See Leonard, "English Poor Relief," chap. viii., "Parliament and the Privy Council."

³ Leonard, *op. cit.* (p. 148), quotes as follows from an Order in Council: "This being the rule by w^{ch} both the woolgrower, the clothier and merchant must be governed. That whosoever had a part of the gaine in profitable times since his Ma^{ty} happy raigne must now in the decay of Trade . . . beare a part of the publicke losses as may best conduce to the good of the publicke and the maintenance of the generall trade."

and especially two or three poor harvests in succession, meant a famine, because there was not then, as now, the means of procuring a supply of corn from other countries. In 1621 and 1622 there were two exceptionally bad harvests, which led to very serious disturbances in different parts of the country. Another matter upon which the Council uttered proclamations was upon the necessity of the country gentlemen dwelling at home upon their estates instead of living luxuriously in London about the Court. Two reasons were stated for this proclamation: (1) Because of "inconveniencies which of necessity must ensue by the absence of those out of their countries upon whose care a great and principall part of the subordinate government of this realme doth depend"; (2) because the King "was perswaded that by this way of reviving the laudable and ancient housekeeping of this realme the poore and such as are most pinched in times of scarcity and want will be much releevd and comforted."¹

We must now pass to the reign of Charles I. In this reign, as in the previous one, so far as the care of the poor is concerned, we find much more attention paid to the administration of the existing law than any effort to enact new laws. This is only what we might expect when we remember that during the greater part of this reign the action of Parliament as a legislative body was practically dormant. Three years after Charles came to the throne (in 1628) an Act² was passed dealing with parish apprentices and parish labour. The object of this Act was to prevent parish officers—churchwardens and overseers—binding children as apprentices except as a means and for the purpose of better relieving the poor. From this it seems as if some of these parish officers had been tempted "to use the poor-rates to establish manufactures with a view to profit by pauper labour."³ Though it was only three years since he had ascended the throne, this was the third Parliament which Charles had summoned, and this was the last Act which this

¹ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

² 3 Charles I., cap. 5.

³ Nicholls' "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., p. 251.

particular Parliament passed. Upon its dissolution Charles tried the experiment of governing without any Parliament at all. But whatever other evils ensued, it cannot be said that the poor suffered in consequence of this decision. On the contrary, during the next few years their welfare seems to have been studied with more than ordinary solicitude. In 1630 the King issued a very important Commission "for putting in execution the laws relating to the poor."¹ Among the commissioners were Abbot, then Archbishop of Canterbury, and Laud, who, within three years, was to succeed him. The Commission went very thoroughly to work, different commissioners undertaking different districts. Immediately after the appointment of the Commission there was issued a very general "Book of Orders,"² or rather of "Orders" and "Directions." The "Orders" come first, and indicate what must be the method of administration; the "Directions" command that existing Statutes, such as those for the repression of begging, for binding of apprentices, and for the provision of work and of relief, shall be enforced. There can, I think, be no doubt that during the ten years which followed the issue of this Book of Orders³ we find (for that period) an exceptionally thorough and, on the whole, wise administration of the laws relating to the poor. The experience is a proof of what a small but able and earnest body of men at the head of a widespread organization may do to make that organization thoroughly efficient. The real difficulty in connection with all schemes for the welfare of the poor, whether these refer to large or small areas, is generally

¹ Nicholls' "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., p. 252.

² See Leonard, *op. cit.*, pp. 158 *et seq.*; Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 254 *et seq.* Sir George Nicholls draws attention to the similarity between the objects of the Commissions of 1630 and those of 1834—"to prevent a lax or faulty action on the part of the local authorities, and to secure an effective administration of the law throughout the country."

³ As an indication of the conception of the scope of the Poor Law at the time the title of this Book of Orders is interesting: "Orders and Directions, together with a Commission, for the better administration of Justice, and more perfect Information of his Majesty how and by whom the Law and Statutes tending to the Relief of the Poor, the well ordering and training up of Youth in Trades, and the Reformation of Disorders and disordered Persons are executed throughout the kingdom."

found to consist in maintaining the efficiency of those upon whom ultimately the actual work devolves. Scheme after scheme, each excellent in itself, has failed in various periods because there was wanting at the centre that administrative zeal which demanded efficient work at the extremities.

In dealing with this period Miss Leonard makes two statements which are extremely interesting: ¹ first, she holds that "there are grounds for believing that never since the days of Charles I. have we had either so much provision of work for the able-bodied, or so complete a system of looking after the more needy classes when they were suffering from the effects of fire, pestilence, and famine." She also holds that "at this time the history of the poor is more distinctly connected than usual with the history of the nation as a whole." The second statement to which I refer is as follows: "The personal government of Charles I. has been more associated with the exaction of Ship Money than with attempts to enforce a system which has much in common with the socialistic schemes with which we are familiar on paper, yet these eleven years are remarkable for more continuous efforts to enforce socialistic measures than has been made by the central Government of any other great European country."²

I have found it somewhat difficult to estimate the amount of private charity given during the period with which we are dealing; but that in certain directions it was very considerable I think there can be no doubt. It seems to have been especially rich in the way of endowed charities of various kinds. For instance, about this time a large number of almshouses (commonly known as "hospitals") seem to have been founded in various parts of England.³ These were maintained by private liberality, though some of them were controlled by municipal

¹ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

² Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 164. Miss Leonard believes that "Abbot and Laud, Wentworth and Falkland, Dorchester and Wimbledon were the members of the Council most closely connected with this policy" [towards the poor].

³ "Probably there were nearly as many of these in existence then as there are to-day, in spite of the fact that our population has increased sixfold" (Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 207).

and other public authorities. Then quite a number of pre-Reformation foundations had passed into the hands of the Corporations of various towns, and here and there we come across a pre-Reformation hospital which, having passed by purchase into private hands, had by its purchaser been returned to its original use or purpose.¹ Among donors of endowed charities for the poor we find four Archbishops of Canterbury—Grindal, Abbot, Laud, and Whitgift. One favourite method of giving charity was to provide sums of money for binding poor children as apprentices; Archbishop Laud gave money to apprentice ten poor boys at Reading. Another method of charity was to provide means whereby work might be given to the unemployed.² Of course a "workhouse" in those days was literally what its name signifies. Archbishop Abbot founded a workhouse at Guildford, and in many other places money was freely given for this purpose. Yet another method of charity was to lend money to young men to enable them to set up in business for themselves.³ If we were to search into the origin and history of many existing charities and into the history of yet more which have either been diverted from their original purpose or unfortunately have been altogether lost, we should find that a very considerable portion of these dated from the first half of the seventeenth century. This is especially true of such charities as consisted in giving away small sums of money on particular Sundays or Feasts (generally after hearing a sermon), or in the distribution of loaves of bread. One point in estimating the condition of the poor at this time must not be forgotten, namely, that considering the sign or number of the population of England in those days, the proportion of such charities as I have named was very much greater than it is at the present time. We have only to think of the population of London and

¹ Miss Leonard gives several instances (*op. cit.*, p. 209).

² This seems to have been a method of helping the poor specially favoured in the first half of the sixteenth century.

³ These sums were lent either interest free or at a low rate. From 6 to 12 per cent. was the ordinary rate for money lent in business at that time.

other towns in those days, and then to remember that very many of our existing charities were then available in order to see that this was so. Regarded from the legal point of view, a wide chasm to-day separates the merely poor from the pauper or person in aid of statutory relief. In the seventeenth century this chasm was far narrower.¹ We have only to investigate the distribution of corn in times of scarcity and of work when trade was bad to find out how difficult it is to determine how much of either was voluntary and how much was effected under legal compulsion.

The period of the Civil War was naturally one of very considerable social disorganization, though actually this was not nearly so great as might have been expected; that it was so comparatively small is a proof of the excellence of the local administration existing when the war broke out.² Had this been less perfect, the disorganization must have been far more serious. Undoubtedly the poor did suffer to a very considerable extent during the progress of the war.³ People who had been accustomed to give considerable sums in charity were no longer able to do so. Funds which had been devoted to the poor now went to pay the expenses of the war—in fact, many of the gentry of the kingdom were practically ruined. The Justices of the Peace who had been responsible for the administration of the Poor Law were now engaged in raising troops for King or Parliament; and the overseers, instead of collecting rates for the support of the poor, were busy collecting money to pay the soldiers. As examples of the disorganization which ensued, the following instances may be cited: At Christ's Hospital in London there were in 1641 no less than 900 children; in 1647

¹ In those days "all classes were relieved because poor relief was originally part of a paternal system of government under which the rulers regarded the maintenance of the usual prosperity of every class as part of their duties" (Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 203).

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 265, who quotes the "Memoirs of Colonel Ludlow."

³ *E.g.*, from fluctuations in the price of wheat, which was 52s. a quarter in 1625, but rose to 76s. and 80s. in 1649; in 1653 it was 35s. 6d.; in 1659 it was 66s. 6d.

there were only 597 ; at St. Thomas's Hospital in 1641 more than 1,000 patients were relieved ; in 1647 the number had fallen to 682. From the former hospital there were serious complaints of the diminution of contributions for the support of the charity.¹ The laws relating to the poor were also badly administered because, as we have already noticed, those who were responsible for seeing to their administration were otherwise engaged. If this was the case, we need not be surprised that, even when charitable funds were available, these were sometimes corruptly applied.

One curious example of the straits to which local administrators were put from want of funds, and of a strange device to remedy this want, is afforded by a suggestion from the burgesses of Great Yarmouth. These suggested that the spoils of Norwich Cathedral might be used for the relief of the poor ; they petitioned Parliament to "be pleased to grant vs such a part of the lead and other vseful materialls of that vast and altogether vseles Cathedrall in Norwich towards building of a works house to employ our almost sterued poore," etc.² It was the able-bodied poor, those out of work, who apparently suffered most severely from the effects of the war. Some effort does seem to have been made to supply the needs of the impotent and of the children, but there was no replenishing of the public "stocks"—*i.e.*, of raw material, which, before the war, were maintained by various local authorities, and by means of which those poor who were able to work could do something towards earning a living. In fact, never again has this particular means of assisting the poor been used to the same extent as it was during the period preceding the Civil War.

I now turn to the reign of Charles II. In the year 1662 an Act was passed³ which, from its far-reaching consequences upon the poor (some of which consequences exist at the present time),

¹ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

² Leonard, *op. cit.*, pp. 273, 274. "Part of the proceeds of Lichfield Cathedral seem actually to have been granted to the poor of Stafford" (*ibid.*, p. 274).

³ 14 Charles II., cap. 12.

demands more than a passing notice. I refer to that known as the "Settlement Act," the cause of which was stated thus, that "by reason of some defects in the law, poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavour to settle themselves in those parishes where there is the best stock, the largest commons or waste to build cottages, and the most woods for them to burn and destroy; and when they have consumed it, then to another parish, and at last become rogues and vagabonds, to the great discouragement of of parishes to provide stocks, where it is liable to be devoured by strangers."¹ The Act provided that any person or persons coming to settle in a parish in any tenement under the value of ten pounds might be removed into the parish where they were "last legally settled." Such a law had long been in force against vagabonds and beggars, but this Act enormously widened its scope. The Act, so it is said, was carried through Parliament mainly by the aid of the members for London and Westminster, and its chief object was to prevent a continually increasing number of poor people settling in those cities. The actual consequences of the Act were probably not foreseen by the country members; had they been so it would not have been passed. As Sir George Nicholls truly says: "A fuller consideration of its provisions at the time might have shown . . . that to remove persons from a parish in order to prevent their becoming chargeable might end in practically restricting them through life to their place of birth, destroying the incentives to independent effort, and perpetuating a low state of civilization. We now know that such have, to a great extent, been the consequences of this measure, notwithstanding the frequent emendations which it has received."²

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 280. On the Act of Settlement see "The English Poor Law System," by Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, pp. 9 *et seq.*, who write: "It is an uncontested and incontestable fact that this important Act, of which the consequences were so serious, was pushed through all the stages of legislation without affording either Parliament or public opinion time for discussion, merely because the representatives of London and a few wealthy landlords were desirous of lessening the burden of their own poor rates."

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

Both the causes and the results of this Act still remain with us to a great extent at the present time. The greater part of the money raised for the maintenance of the poor is still raised parochially ; hence it is still to the advantage of every " parish " to have as few poor to support as possible. If the charge for the poor had been a national instead of a parochial charge, no doubt every trace of the " Law of Settlement " would long ago have disappeared.¹ As it is, though very greatly modified, the law still remains ; and the consequences are still perceptible in the tenacity with which many, especially of the agricultural, poor still cling to the parish in which they were born. Yet experience has taught us that, especially in times of bad trade, the mobility of labour is a condition at which we ought to aim. Labour should be able to follow trade, as trade will follow conditions most advantageous to its development and success. Cheapness of materials, facilities for transit, local demands, as well as a supply of suitable labour, all help to govern the choice of the situation of any particular trade. To do anything towards tying a man down to the place in which he was born is to hinder his efforts towards self-improvement. It discourages self-effort, the one thing above all others which those who seek the welfare of the poor would foster and increase.

At the time of which we are speaking there was evidently in the minds of those charitably disposed a strong feeling in favour of providing work for the poor at the cost of the community.² Sir Matthew Hale, the eminent Judge, published a work in which, besides advising that children shall be instructed in trade or work, he very strongly recommends that a sufficient number of workhouses shall be built in which a sufficient stock of

¹ It should be clearly understood that by the Settlement Act "the whole of the labouring classes throughout the country were subjected to a restriction which had previously been applied only to the idle and impotent" (Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 285).

² I know no more striking example of the difficulty with which the lessons of history are learnt and of the ease with which they are forgotten than the many demands to provide work for the poor at the public expense. Many of these demands have been made in quite recent times. Cf. Reports of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (1909), Part I., p. 87.

materials shall be provided, and where the poor shall be set to work. He gives two reasons for this: Firstly, that no man will have a need to beg or steal when he may get his living better by working; secondly, that "no man will be so hurtful to the public as to give to those who beg, and thereby to encourage them, when he is sure they may gain their living by working." He also states that "by this means the wealth of the nation will be increased, manufactures advanced, and everybody put into a capacity of eating his own bread." So firmly was the worthy judge convinced of the value of his ideas that he commends his plan as "a debt which we owe to our nature as men, a work highly necessary to us as Englishmen, and our first duty as Christians."¹

I have given these long extracts because they reveal to us the ideas upon both political economy and Christian philanthropy of one of the best representatives of that age. But increased experience has taught us that, not only from the point of view of the political economist, but from that of the practical worker for the permanent welfare of the poor, Sir Matthew Hale's ideas are hopelessly wrong. The public provision of work leads to the theory of "the right to work," which by its consequences, wherever it has been tried, is now condemned by practically every real friend of the poor.

The reign of Charles II. is remarkable for the attempts which were made during its course to "protect" certain trades in the interest of home industries with (it was stated) the object of benefiting the workers, though there is also evidence to prove that the interests of the landed gentry were not forgotten. I have no intention of entering upon a question much debated at the present time further than to point out that, among other projects tried in those days, efforts were made to prevent the importation of goods free of duty, "to the great detriment of the kingdom and the non-employment of the poor."²

There is little that calls for our notice during the short reign

¹ Quoted by Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 288, 289.

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

of James II., except that it was already found necessary to amend the ill-considered "Law of Settlement," which, owing to its pressure upon the poor, was constantly being evaded. During this reign and that of William and Mary various attempts were made to prevent new-comers from being in a parish for forty days unknown to the authorities, and so obtaining a legal settlement. In one Act¹ it was ordered that every person upon coming into a parish must give a notice of this fact in writing to the overseers or churchwardens; and when this was found insufficient, it was ordered that the churchwarden or overseer was to read the notice of the person's or persons' arrival publicly on the next Lord's Day immediately after Divine Service. This was probably to afford all the parishioners an opportunity of demanding the ejection of a newcomer "should their officers be remiss or over-indulgent."²

During the reign of William and Mary we meet with a difficulty which was, sooner or later, bound to arise in connection with the relief of the poor, considering who those were who bestowed it. This difficulty arose largely from the practically unlimited powers of churchwardens and overseers. An Act passed in 1691 draws attention to the fact that "these frequently upon frivolous pretences (but chiefly for their own private ends) give relief";³ also that those who have obtained relief, "being entered into the collection bill, do become after that a great charge upon the parish, notwithstanding the occasion or pretence of their receiving collection (or relief) oftentimes ceases, by which means the rates of the poor are daily increased." It is then ordered that a book is to be kept in every parish in which the names of all persons "receiving collection" are to be registered. Then "yearly, in Easter week, or oftener if necessary, this book is to be produced to the parishioners in vestry, and the names of all persons receiving relief are to be called over, and the reasons for their receiving relief examined, and a new list is

¹ 3 William and Mary, cap. 11.

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

³ Section 11 of 3 William and Mary, cap. 11. .

to be made and entered of such persons as shall be thought fit to receive collection."

Here it is evidently quite clearly laid down that relief is a parochial charge, whose object is the welfare of the parishioners, towards which each, voluntarily or compulsorily, contributes. Its right application is the interest of all the parishioners ; therefore it is their responsibility to see that this is effected. The relics of this old custom are found in hundreds of ancient parishes to-day, where at the Easter Vestry meeting an account of those charities which belong to the parish, and over which the Vicar and churchwardens have supervision, are produced for the inspection and ratification of the parishioners.

In my next article I hope to deal with the condition and relief of the poor in the first half of the eighteenth century—that is, up to the time of the first beginnings of the Industrial Revolution.