

The Church and the Poor.

A SERIES OF HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

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XII.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.—II.

DURING the first twenty-five years of the reign of George III. many Acts of Parliament having reference to the poor were passed, though none of them except that known as "Gilbert's Act" is of outstanding importance. In 1761 it was enacted¹ that a register be kept of all infants under four years of age who shall be in, or shall be brought to, any workhouse, hospital, or other place provided for the maintenance of the poor, or shall be under the care of the churchwardens and overseers. Six years later it was ordered² that all children under the age of six who shall be in any workhouses, etc., shall, within fourteen days, be sent into the country to a distance of not less than three miles from any parts of the cities of London and Westminster. By the same Act it is enjoined that in order to guard against all dangerous consequences which may arise to the said children from false parsimony, negligence, inadvertency, or the annual change of parish officers, five noblemen and gentlemen, inhabitants of each parish, shall be appointed and chosen, under the title of "Guardians³ of the Parish Poor Children." They are to be in office for three years, and are to visit and inform themselves fully of the condition of these children, and, in case of neglect, are to inform a Justice of the Peace, who is empowered to give such orders as he shall think proper. These Acts show a much more tender solicitude for

¹ By 2 George III., cap. 22. (This Act, like the following, was limited to the Metropolis.)

² By 7 George III., cap. 39.

³ Is this the first instance of the term in this connection?

the welfare of young children than was evinced some fifty years later, when, by the multiplication of factories, there was an enormously increased demand for child labour, a demand which the Guardians of those days did not hesitate to supply under conditions which it is impossible to condemn too strongly. In 1773 an Act¹ was passed "for the better regulation of lying-in hospitals," by which it was ordered that a licence must be obtained from the Justices in Quarter Sessions before such a hospital could be established. Also about this time² the Journeymen Tailors Act was so amended that the scale of wages was raised by about a third. The immediate cause of this was a rapid rise of food prices, occasioned to some extent by several deficient harvests, and producing not only discontent, but even disturbances among the poor.

It was in 1782 that "Gilbert's Act"³ was passed. This Act removed the duty of relieving the poor from churchwardens and overseers, whose duties were now restricted to collecting and accounting for the Poor Rate. For the future in all parishes which adopted the Act the entire management and control of the poor is delegated to "Visitors" and "Guardians," together with the Justices of the district. The Guardian for each parish is nominated by the parishioners and elected by the Justices;⁴ he is to receive a salary,⁵ and do all the duties of the overseer except collect the rate. The Visitor is also to be appointed by the Justices out of the number of the Guardians, and his authority in all matters connected with the workhouse is to be practically absolute. The two most important sections of the Act are the 29th and the 32nd. The 29th section enjoins "that no person shall be sent to the poorhouse except such as

¹ 13 George III., cap. 82.

² 8 George III., cap. 17. See Nicholl's "History of the Poor Law," vol. ii., pp. 71 *et seq.*

³ 22 George III., cap. 83. On this important measure, see Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 83 *et seq.*

⁴ The tendency to give more powers to the Justices is very apparent about this period.

⁵ He was thus very much in the position of the present relieving officer.

are become indigent by old age, sickness, or infirmities, and are unable to acquire a maintenance by their labour ; except such orphan children as are sent thither by order of the Guardians of the Poor." These classes could hardly be otherwise treated. But it was the 32nd section which ultimately proved so disastrous both to the welfare and the character of the poor. This section enjoined "that where there shall be in any parish, township, or place, any poor person or persons who shall be able and willing to work, but who cannot get employment, the Guardian of the Poor of such parish, etc., on application made to him by or on behalf of such poor person, is required to agree for the labour of such poor person or persons at any work or employment suited to his or her strength and capacity, in any parish or place near the place of his or her residence, and to maintain or cause such person or persons to be properly maintained, lodged, and provided for, until such employment shall be procured, and during the time of such work, and to receive the money to be earned by such work or labour, and apply it in such maintenance as far as the same will go, and make up the deficiency if any."

I have quoted at length the exact words of the Act because, in view of subsequent developments, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this section.¹ In fact, together with the so-called "Speenhamland Act," it was the chief cause of the terrible rise in pauperism and of a large amount of the undoubted deterioration in character which certainly took place in the very poor during more than half a century after it became law. Its principle was bad, and its results nothing less than appalling. It has been unreservedly condemned by practically every expert either in the Poor Law or in dealing with poverty. The labourer was made certain of employment. He was made "certain of receiving either from the parish or the employer sufficient for the maintenance of himself and his family . . . he

¹ "It was the first great inroad on the old system of Poor Law, and had in the end the worst possible effects" (McCulloch, quoted by Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, "The English Poor Law," p. 20).

is made secure without the exercise of care or forethought. Could a more certain way be devised for lowering character and destroying self-reliance?"¹

It is true that the adoption of "Gilbert's Act" was voluntary, but no less than 924 "parishes" actually adopted it.

We must pass to the period which stretches from about 1785 to the end of the reign of George III. This is undoubtedly a period during which events happened and developments occurred which had far more than an ordinary or average effect upon the religious and economic future condition of the poorer classes of the community. First, let us remind ourselves very briefly of certain outstanding events which took place. The Seven Years' War, which ended in 1763, left this country with a National Debt of £138,565,430. Ten years later the American War broke out, and lasted for eight years. This war added no less than £121,000,000 to the Debt. There were considerable repayments during the short intervals of peace; but the wars which began with the French Revolution in 1793 and closed with the Battle of Waterloo added again no less than £601,500,343 to the Debt; so that in 1816 this stood at £900,436,000, the annual charge for which was £33,000,000.² I recall these figures because I want to make quite clear what taxation meant in those days. Then, it must be remembered that the national wealth was at that time very small in comparison with what it is to-day. Even so lately as 1842 a penny on the income tax produced only £700,000, whereas in 1909-10 it produced £2,691,422, or more than four times the amount. It is, I think, generally admitted that any large increase of taxation weighs heavily upon the poor—so to speak, it filters down to them. We must therefore try to realize what this increase of taxation, necessitated by the

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 90; see also Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 21: "The self-reliance of a large part of the working classes was thus undermined."

² These figures are taken from the tables in *Whitaker's Almanack*. Sir G. Nicholls states (*op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 161) that "in the last three years of the war—1813, 1814, 1815—the amounts raised altogether exceeded a hundred millions annually."

increase in the National Debt incurred by war, meant to the poor.¹

I must also again refer briefly to the instability in the price of corn (and so of bread) during this period, and to the very considerable rise in its price which took place. The average price of the quarter of wheat between 1785 and 1794 (an interval of peace) seems to have been about 49s. 9d.; but between 1794 and 1801 it was 87s.² In the spring of 1796 it was above 100s., and in June of 1800 it was 134s., while in the spring of 1801 it rose to 156s. 2d.³ A rapid fluctuation in prices always hits the poor more hardly than the rich, because they are compelled to buy in small quantities, and cannot take advantage of a cheap market. Then, during this period there began those great fluctuations of trade which, with alternations of much and little employment, have ever since that time weighed heavily upon the workers. So long as our foreign trade was comparatively small, so long as both the population of the country and its wealth either remained stationary or grew but slowly, and so long as the needs of the population within the country were the chief market for either agricultural produce or manufactured goods, the fluctuations of industry were comparatively small. But with the Industrial Revolution, with the growth of a great overseas trade, with the dependence of industry upon foreign markets, which were liable to be closed, as well as upon foreign supplies of raw material, which were liable to be stopped in time of war, the conditions of industry entirely changed.

In an excellent chapter on "Government and the Wage-Earning Classes,"⁴ during this period, Meredith states that "a period of anarchy"—for as such he regarded the one before us, so far as the welfare of the poor was concerned—"can be created

¹ "As late as 1834 half the labourer's wages went in taxes" (Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 107).

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 130.

³ These figures are quoted in Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 129, from Tooke's "History of Prices."

⁴ "Economic History of England," pp. 261 *et seq.* This chapter should be carefully studied.

. . . by suddenly creating new conditions to which law and custom cannot adapt themselves with sufficient rapidity." These "new conditions," he believes, "were unduly prolonged in England from two causes—first, by the coincidence of a philosophic movement opposed to intervention, and, secondly, by a strange dearth of socio-political talent." ¹

When the Industrial Revolution arrived, England was, at least theoretically, under a system of industrial law which dated from the times of Elizabeth—a system entirely unsuited to the new conditions of trade. In practice the system had absolutely broken down, though it was not until 1813 that the wages clauses of the "Statute of Artificers" were repealed, and it was only in 1814 that its apprenticeship clauses were so; while as late as 1799 and 1800 severe laws were passed penalizing combinations of workmen.² It must be open to serious doubt whether those who urged the principle of free competition realized how little fitted this principle was to adjust economic, and consequently social, difficulties satisfactorily.

The effects of the new conditions of industry upon the physical health of the people must not be forgotten; and physical health, especially to the poor, is an asset of enormous value. Agriculture had, until this time, been the chief industry of the workers; but with the advent of the factory system, for many of these indoor employments now took the place of outdoor labour. Machinery introduced nervous strains and monotonies, the effects of which were not then clearly appreciated.³ The results of child labour in factories was often terrible. Children had before then been exploited, but child labour had not been sold wholesale to third persons for wages and keep. Under the old apprenticeship system at least something of home and family life was preserved, and in those days children would not be set to plough, or dig, or work a heavy hand-loom. But now Poor Law officials sent pauper children into the factories to watch

¹ Meredith, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

² *Ibid.*

³ It is only those who have an intimate knowledge of the working classes who can realize this to-day. I had more than abundant evidence of this when working among the shoe operatives.—W. E. C.

machinery from twelve to sixteen hours a day.¹ Was this because people were really less humanitarian? Not entirely, because at this time, especially when we remember the even reckless distribution of outdoor relief, we have evidence of a certain amount of at least sentimental humanitarianism. But there seems to have been little conception of a real justice due to the workers, and even less of any true science of social life; and certainly there could have been no idea of the inevitable results of unwise legislation upon the characters of the poor. A very brief consideration of the laws made on behalf of the poor during this period will show that there was no clear conception of what were their real needs, and what would have been best for their permanent welfare, and for that of the community.

Unfortunately, during this period, again, the Church gave absolutely no lead as a corporate body. Individuals, especially among the Evangelicals, and small societies, like the so-called "Clapham Set," were, as I showed in the last chapter, doing excellent work in dealing with individual cases of distress, and even with certain classes of sufferers, and in certain confined areas of activity. But if there was a want of "socio-political" talent, there was an even greater absence of any socio-ecclesiastical effort. There was no attempt to apply the broad fundamental principles of Christianity either towards guiding the development of society upon right lines, or towards extirpating the social evils which year by year were growing greater, and therefore more unmanageable. To take a single example: what evidence is there of any really serious and self-sacrificing effort to supply the spiritual needs of the rapidly increasing numbers of the poor who were congregating more and more closely in the great manufacturing towns? I can find very few cases of new churches being built between 1750 and 1820 in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, or Sheffield. When churches were erected they were usually pew-rented, and in which the poor were generally relegated to obscure corners and to uncomfortable benches. Had it not been

¹ Engels, "Condition of the Working Class," pp. 141 *et seq.*, 167, 171 *et seq.*, 193.

for the labours of John Wesley and his many co-workers, there would have been but little preaching of the Gospel to the poor. Fortunately, this preaching was often of a very practical nature.¹

I have already drawn attention to "Gilbert's Act," by which both the self-reliance and self-effort of the working classes were so greatly weakened. By an arrangement proposed by the Berkshire Justices in 1795,² the evils arising from supplementing low wages by a grant from the Poor Rate were still further accentuated. The Justices had met for the purpose of "rating wages." They declared that, owing to the increased cost of living, the poor required still more help than they were already receiving; but they further declared that, instead of regulating wages according to statute, they would recommend farmers and others to raise wages in proportion to the cost of the loaf of bread and according to the size of the workman's family; and also that, when the workman failed to earn the prescribed amount by his own labour and that of his family, he should be paid the balance out of the Poor Rate.³ This arrangement, which was widely adopted throughout the South and West of England, was nicknamed the "Speenhamland Act." It brought into full force the fatal "Allowance System," which in succeeding years proved so disastrous both to the moral and the economic welfare of the workers, which, by Gilbert's Act, had already been seriously impaired. It inevitably kept down wages. It meant not only a contribution to the labourer, but also to the employer, who supplemented the starvation wages he gave his men by a contribution paid by other ratepayers. Upon the labour the effect was very evil. "It removed every incentive to saving . . . it made him careless and indifferent, encouraged improvident marriages, and produced an artificial increase of population which was bound to engender fresh masses of poverty."⁴

¹ For examples of this see the previous chapter.

² On May the 6th. See Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 131 *et seq.*; also Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 22.

³ The exact scale is given by Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 131, 132.

⁴ Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 21. Probably as the result of Gilbert's Act and the "Speenhamland Act," the expenditure for the relief

Still further measures towards increasing the amount of out-relief, and also towards the ease with which it could be obtained, were taken by two Acts of Parliament, one of which was passed in 1796¹ and the other in 1815. By the first of these any Justice is empowered at his discretion to give out-relief to any industrious poor person for a month, and any two Justices may continue the order for another month, and "so on from time to time, as the occasion may require." By the second Act² a single Justice may give this relief for three months, and two Justices for six months. Sir George Nicholls rightly regards these Acts as evidently contributory causes to the large increase of poor relief given at this period. He also believes that owing to the wide separation in "social position and habits of life" between the ordinary Justice and the ordinary applicant for relief, the Justices as a body were far less qualified to deal with the real wants of the poor than were the class of men from whom the overseers had generally been chosen.³

Thus, from a variety of causes—from unwise legislation; from a great increase of taxation; from a very considerable fluctuation of, and, to some extent, a very serious rise in, prices; from the wider acceptance of the principle of *laissez-faire*, which sanctioned the unlimited exploitation of the poor, and especially of the children of the poor, an exploitation to which the manufacturers were more and more tempted as trade further and further expanded—from all these various causes the condition of a large proportion of the workers became steadily worse and worse.⁴

In 1817 Mr. Curwen moved for a Committee of the House of Commons to examine into the present state of the Poor Law and into the way in which it was administered. The motion was

of the poor rose from an average of £2,004,238 in 1783-85 to £4,267,965 in 1801. (There are no intermediate returns.)

¹ There were really two Acts passed in the same session—viz., 36 George III., caps. 10 and 23. ² 55 George III., cap. 137.

³ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 154.

⁴ "If one thing is certain about the first half of the nineteenth century . . . it is the misery and want of the mass of Englishmen" (Meredith, *op. cit.*, p. 261).

warmly supported by Lord Castlereagh, who stated that the subject was of the utmost importance for both the safety and prosperity of the country. "The present system," he said, "not only went to accumulate burdens on the country which it could not continue to bear, but to destroy the true wealth of the poor man, the capability of making exertions for his own livelihood; for if pecuniary relief went on with the laxity which now prevailed, and all the cunning of uncultivated minds was to be diverted to the means of escaping from labour and enjoying the fruits of the labours of others, a national calamity might be said to be overtaking us by a double operation—in the increased burdens imposed upon the country and the diminution of the industry from which its resources were derived."¹ The Committee was appointed, a lengthy and, to some extent, a valuable Report was issued, but the actual legislation which resulted consisted of two "Vestry Acts" and a small amendment in the "Law of Settlement."

But though little was accomplished, it is clear that the subject was engaging the attention of a very considerable number of thoughtful people. One proof of this is in the agitation which was beginning in regard to the conditions under which young people and children were employed. The first of the long series of "Factory Acts," that known as the "Health and Morals Act," was passed in 1802, though Professor Dicey is probably correct in saying that this Act "was not suggested by any general principle, but by the needs of the moment."² An epidemic had broken out in Manchester, and had caused many deaths among the apprentices—mostly pauper children sent by the Guardians from the South of England—in the cotton mills. The Act did not go far: it enjoined that the rooms of factories should be washed with quicklime and water twice a year; that each apprentice should receive two suits of clothes; that apprentices should not work more than twelve hours a day; and that not more

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 168, 169. A synopsis of the Report of the Committee, issued in July, 1817, is given by Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 171 *et seq.*

² "Law and Opinion in England," pp. 108 *et seq.*

than two should sleep in one bed. Unfortunately, no measures seem to have been taken to see that the Act was enforced, and it became little more than a dead letter.¹

The progress of what may be termed "humanitarian legislation" was extraordinarily slow.² The next Act of the kind was not passed until 1819. By this children were not to work in factories under the age of nine, and those between nine and sixteen were not to work more than twelve hours a day, exclusive of an hour and a half for meals. In 1825 a partial half-holiday was ordered on Saturdays. In 1831 night work was prohibited for persons under twenty-one; also, for those under eighteen, the working day was not to exceed twelve hours, nor on Saturdays to exceed nine hours. Woollen factories were apparently not touched by legislation until 1833, when work in these was prohibited for persons under eighteen between 8.30 p.m. and 5.30 a.m. This Act restricted the working time of children between nine and thirteen to forty hours a week, and those of young persons between thirteen and eighteen to sixty-eight hours. In silk factories children might still be admitted under nine, and those under thirteen might work ten hours a day.

Another most serious disability under which the workers then suffered was due to the Combination Act,³ which forbade all combinations of workmen, whether temporary or permanent whose object was to obtain an advance of wages or fix the terms of employment. The Act made it a crime to assist in maintaining men on strike; it also imposed a penalty upon combinations among masters either for the reduction of wages or for an increase in the hours or quantity of work. Behind the Combination Act stood the whole law of conspiracy; "from these two," Dicey says, "any artisan who organized a strike or joined a trade union was a criminal, and liable on conviction to imprisonment; the strike was a crime, the trade union was an unlawful association."⁴ Of course, as an individual, a workman could go where

¹ Factory inspectors were not appointed until 1833.

² See Dicey, *op. cit.*, p. 106 (where the official numbers of the various Acts are given), and also pp. 187 *et seq.*

³ 40 George III., cap. 106; see Dicey, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 96. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

he liked and try to make the best bargain he could ; but neither directly nor indirectly could the pressure of numbers be brought to bear upon either employers or other workers.

Let me say once more that, as my chief object is to enable my readers to see how the evils and difficulties of the present have grown out of the mistakes of the past, I am much more anxious to explain the spirit and tone which existed towards the working classes at the beginning of the nineteenth century than to dwell upon particular evils, at any rate no further than this is necessary to elucidate my argument. The first thirty years of the nineteenth century were a period of "legislative quiescence."¹ It was a time when the "Old Toryism" was dominant alike in Church and State. There was not merely strong objection to any kind of legislative interference ; there was a positive dread of this. The excesses of the French Revolution had not been forgotten. Even statesmen of very considerable ability were averse to reform, lest reform should lead to the undermining of old institutions whose stability was regarded as essential for the national welfare. As Professor Dicey says : "In England the French Revolution worked nothing but evil ; it delayed salutary changes for forty years, and rendered reforms, when at last they came, less beneficial than they might have been, if they had been gradually carried out as the natural result of the undisturbed development of ideas suggested by English good sense and English love of justice."²

After the close of the war with France, trade, population, and the national wealth increased even more rapidly than hitherto. The changes which had been taking place for more than half a century now proceeded at an accelerated pace. The large towns grew larger, and the manufacturing districts became more and more populous. At the same time the national and civic institutions became less and less able to meet the needs of the age. Parliament became even less representative of the people. It was still actually representative of England as it was before

¹ On this subject see Dicey, *op. cit.*, Lecture V., pp. 70 *et seq.*

² Dicey, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

the Industrial Revolution began, for the great majority of the members were still either landed proprietors or the nominees of these. The Church became more and more incapable of doing the work which urgently needed to be done. Many of the northern parishes were of immense area, over which formerly a sparse population had been scattered in tiny hamlets. What could the clergy do when there poured into these huge parishes great hordes of workers, so that the population within them multiplied many times over? When we compare the immense efforts made by the Church to-day to meet the needs of new populations,¹ with the almost absolute want of effort evinced under similar circumstances a hundred years ago, we cannot wonder that the people lapsed into indifference—indeed, almost into heathenism.

There are still here and there in England undivided parishes of from twenty to forty thousand people, but in these we generally find a large staff of clergy at work. A hundred, even sixty, years ago there were parishes where two clergymen were working amid similar populations. Then, if neither Parliament nor the Church proved themselves equal to meeting the new conditions, the municipalities showed themselves even less able to do so. Their general inefficiency and the corruption which was rife in their management had become bywords. The Commission which was appointed in 1833 to inquire into the circumstances of the 246 towns which claimed to exercise municipal privileges reported that they found overwhelming evidence of widespread inefficiency and corruption. They state that "it has become customary not to rely on the Municipal Corporations for exercising the powers incident to good municipal government"; and "in a large number of cases vacancies in the privileged bodies were filled, not by open election, but by co-optation by the surviving members; and among 246 towns, only 28 were in the habit of publishing accounts."²

I must now turn to consider briefly the work of two social

¹ *E.g.*, in East London-over-the-Border.

² Jenks, "English Local Government," pp. 182, 183.

reformers which began during this period. Robert Owen and Thomas Chalmers were probably as widely different both in their characters and their convictions as it is possible for two men to be, but both stand head and shoulders above their contemporaries for two reasons: First, both saw clearly that far-reaching measures of reform on behalf of the workers were absolutely necessary; secondly, both were guided in their labours to effect these reforms by clear, definite, and comprehensive principles. Apart from these two points of likeness, the two men represent two entirely different schools of thought. Indeed, so far as modern "social work" is concerned, they may be regarded as the pioneers of methods which are generally, though sometimes wrongly, set against each other in dealing with the problems of poverty. Robert Owen¹ laid the chief stress upon "circumstances." He believed that social reform, in the fullest sense of the term, must come primarily, if not almost exclusively, through improving the circumstances of the workers. On the other hand, Chalmers believed in first attacking the problem of character; instead of beginning by doing much for the people, he would commence by appealing to them to make every effort to help themselves. Owen was not only a Radical of the Radicals: he is at least one of the fathers of modern Socialism;² while Chalmers was in many respects intensely Conservative. The representatives of both these leaders are with us to-day, and unfortunately are, at least to some extent, divided into separate, if not positively antagonistic, camps in the warfare against poverty and its attendant evils.

For our present purpose we need not go back farther into Owen's history than the time when he took over the management of the New Lanark Mills on the Clyde. There he found some thirteen hundred workpeople and their families, and some

¹ There is a good account of Robert Owen's career in the "Dictionary of National Biography"; also a more brief but illuminating sketch of his work and opinions in Mrs. Webb's "Co-operative Movement in Great Britain," pp. 12 *et seq.*

² Bishop Westcott speaks of "the paternal socialism of Owen." Of course, the term "socialism" had not been coined at the time of which I write.

four to five hundred pauper apprentices. Both the economic and the moral condition of these people was extremely bad. Drunkenness was terribly common, and what is usually more specifically termed "immorality" was rife. Owen began by raising the wages of the workers, reducing the hours of labour from seventeen to ten per day, and prohibiting the employment of children under ten years old. He provided free education, free amusements, cheap provisions, and good cottages for the workers. Even his own partners prophesied financial ruin from these experiments, but the actual result was a profit on the mills of £160,000 in four years. In 1816 he urged the House of Commons to limit all work in factories to ten and a half hours a day, to forbid the employment of children under ten, and to institute half-time for those under twelve years old.¹ He proposed a national system of free and compulsory education, the establishment of free libraries, and that public bodies should undertake the housing of the poor. In all this Owen was the true progenitor of the so-called "Socialistic legislation" which has been passed during the last forty years. Very largely because he failed to get the Government to sympathize with his schemes, he founded his Communities of Voluntary Associates, and through them became the real father of the Co-operative Movement. Owen's Socialism and his Co-operation can hardly be separated, for he states that while he believed "in unrestrained co-operation on the part of all for every purpose of human life," he wished "it to be understood that the ultimate object of all co-operative associations, whether engaged in trading, manufacturing, or agricultural pursuits, is community in land."²

I need not enter into Owen's later life and work, which certainly did not fulfil the promise of his earlier years. He became more and more antagonistic to religion, and certainly his strongly anti-religious bias lost him many friends. In judging Owen we must remember the presentation of Christianity

¹ Owen was largely instrumental in the passing of the Factory Act of 1818.

² Upon Owen's social views, see Mrs. Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 17 *et seq.*

current at the time—how extremely narrow and individualistic and altogether “other-worldly” it generally was. Had Christianity been expressed to him early in life as it was afterwards taught by Maurice and Westcott, would he have been so entirely out of sympathy with it as he ultimately became?

Thomas Chalmers's¹ first parish was Kilmany, near Dundee, where there was no Poor Rate. He had previously acted for a short time as assistant minister in a border parish near Hawick, where the Poor Law was established. Through a near relation, with whom he frequently stayed, he also had opportunities of watching the Poor Law at work at Kingbrompton, in Somersetshire. Kilmany and Kingbrompton were in many respects similar parishes: in each the population was between 700 and 800; but in Kilmany the relief of the poor cost under £20 a year, while in Kingbrompton it cost £1,260. A careful comparison of the results upon the poor—upon their characters as well as upon their economic condition—made a deep impression upon Chalmers. In 1815² he became the minister of the Tron Church in Glasgow, a parish with 11,000 people. His first task there was to visit and note the circumstances of every family. He found that at least two-thirds of the people had cast off even the very form and practice of religion. The poverty was terrible; but his first suggestion, after gaining an intimate knowledge of its conditions, was that the parish should cut itself off from sharing in the compulsory assessment for the poor, and that all the relief given should be obtained from voluntary sources. But it was not at the Tron Church, but in the new parish of St. John's, containing 10,000 people, in the poorest part of Glasgow, and of which he became, in 1819, the first

¹ An excellent little book giving a brief life of Chalmers and many valuable excerpts from his writings—“Problems of Poverty, Selections from the Economic and Social Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D.,” by Henry Hunter—has recently been published. Mr. Neville Masterman's “Chalmers on Charity” should also be read.

² When he was thirty-five years of age (he was born in 1780). In 1807 he published his first book, “An Inquiry into the Extent and Stability of National Resources.”

minister, that Chalmers worked out his system for raising the poor from poverty and degradation. From a collection at an evening service attended by only the poor, and amounting to about £80 a year, Chalmers provided all the money really needed for every case of distress. His method was to divide the parish into 25 districts, each containing 50 families, or about 400 people. Over each district was placed a deacon, who, pending investigation and obtaining the relief necessary, was empowered to give temporary assistance. Of course, the most careful investigation was made into the circumstances of every applicant for relief. Chalmers's four rules of procedure should be remembered: (1) Having ascertained destitution, if possible, stimulate the industry of the applicant, and see what more he might earn; (2) improve his economy, and see what the things are upon which he might save; (3) seek after his relatives, and see what they will give; (4) make the case known among the neighbours, and see whether the necessity may not be got over by a joint effort of liberality.

Every penny that Chalmers could save from funds devoted to relief he expended upon education. Thus the money which was saved by teaching people thrift was actually devoted to their permanent improvement. At St. John's he had about forty small Sunday-schools in various parts of the parish, which were filled by workers going round and soliciting the attendance of the children.¹

Though a man of the strongest religious convictions, and with the firmest belief in the power of Christianity to raise human nature, Chalmers should yet, I think, be placed among those who approached the social problem primarily from the humanitarian point of view, rather than among those who, like Maurice and Westcott, found their chief inspiration in a deeply reasoned Christian philosophy of man and of society. I do not think that with Chalmers the theological interest was paramount in the

¹ Chalmers's ministry at St. John's lasted only four years. In 1823 he became Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews. He died in 1847, quite suddenly, during an Assembly of the Church.

same way that it was with the two leaders I have mentioned. To Maurice and Westcott poverty was rampant, and men, women, and children were oppressed and degraded *because* the divine relationships which should exist in society had been disregarded, and because the true nature of man had been forgotten. To Chalmers Christianity was rather the greatest of all instruments for building up character, for enabling each individual to become what he should be. In Chalmers's theology, at any rate as applied to the problem of poverty, there seems to linger at least a trace of eighteenth-century utilitarianism. Where Chalmers was truly great—and here among social reformers he has had few equals—was in his knowledge of how to deal with human nature. He knew the tendency of men to lean upon external help, and he knew that this meant deterioration of character. Consequently his great aim was to teach them self-respect issuing in self-effort. He believed, and innumerable instances have proved him to be right, that when we can encourage people to do the best that is in them, not only their economic, but their moral, health has generally been regained.

