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ART. VI.—"CHARITABLE RELIEF."[1]—I.

IN a series of "Handbooks for the Clergy" it was well that a place should be found for one upon "Charitable Relief"; and the manual before us may be pronounced a very useful guide to that most difficult subject. The principles which it enunciates are generally correct; and though we may disagree with the author on certain points of detail, we feel sure that his views in the main are thoroughly sound.

Mr. Rogers writes with a considerable knowledge of his subject, gained from practical experience, as well as from a study of many authorities. In an appendix he has given a list of books "which will be found useful for those who are engaged in the practical administration of relief." This list might with advantage have been made longer. To it should certainly be added: "The Strength of the People," by Mrs. Bosanquet; "Methods of Social Advance," edited by Mr. Loch; "The Heart of the Empire"; and the recent "Report of the Committee upon Physical Deterioration."

In the preface the author states that his book has been written "to do something to enable the clergy to realize the extreme difficulty of the work of charity, and the necessity for study and training for success in any of its branches. . . . The day will come, I hope, when the clergy will realize the necessity of an education in social work as the result of a more scientific treatment of pastoral theology." This is a necessity to which we have frequently called attention. But an education surely implies teachers capable and willing to give it. No doubt in the recently-formed School of Sociology in London most excellent instruction could be obtained. But might it not also with advantage be found in our theological colleges? A study of this handbook should prove the absolute necessity for such instruction; it should also encourage men to qualify themselves to give it. And this qualification should not be regarded as necessary only for those who *instruct* the future clergy. It should be deemed necessary for every parish priest, for he is ultimately responsible, that those who work under his direction do their work *intelligently*. He must convince them that they are not dealing simply with individuals: they are dealing with individuals living in a very complex state of society. Hence it is essential that they should know something of the laws and principles which govern the welfare of society. The parish priest must

[1] "Charitable Relief," by the Rev. Clement F. Rogers, M.A. ("Handbooks for the Clergy"). London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1904.

encourage his workers to work in obedience to true and ascertained law. But how can he explain these laws unless he has himself made a careful study of them?

By no means the least of the merits of this book lies in its constant insistence upon this matter. The clergy should be able to teach principles. "Set free from the actual administration of relief and all the detailed work that it involves, they would be able to pursue their special work, first as learners and then as teachers. . . . If this was done, the Church would be sending out a constant stream, not only of workers in the cause of charity and relief of distress, but of men trained to do their duty in all the many parts of civic life" (pp. 174, 175).

The book is divided into eight chapters, the first being upon "The Christian Conception of Charity." In this chapter we have a very careful study of our Lord's principles and actions as a Reliever of suffering; and it is clearly proved that if the worker of to-day would follow His example "the moral factor, the part played by character and principle," must be his chief concern.

Christ's action is considered under seven heads: (1) "He worked with full knowledge." He possessed the requisite knowledge. Therefore it is our duty to obtain as much knowledge as possible. (2) "He worked for a cure." Jairus' daughter was not only raised: food was ordered for her—"the first step in an after-life of duty." The Samaritan did not bestow an alms and pass on; he gave immediate personal service; he co-operated with others; he made also provision for possible future contingencies. (3) Our Lord "always considered the effect of His action on others." This is most important, and it is often forgotten by the thoughtless distributors of charity. The man blind from his birth was cured "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Our Lord was chary in performing miraculous cures; He knew how often the bystanders were content with a mere surface impression. (4) He "never disregarded the structure of the society in which He lived." "He recognised the several functions of the law. . . . He would not arbitrate in the quarrel over the inheritance, nor did He rescue the robbers on the cross from the penalty due to their deeds." (5) "His charity was always personal." There is an interesting comment on the feeding of the five thousand: "Only when the numbers were too great had He recourse to organization, by which alone can then the personal element in well-doing be retained." (6) "Christ taught that the cure for the ills of life was a moral one." The spiritual help given was greater than the material aid. (7) "He realized the intimate con-

nection of religion and relief." "But He also realized the fatal effect of confusing these."

In the next section we have some excellent thoughts suggested by St. Paul's great chapter on "Charity" (1 Cor. xiii.). Three characteristics are noted: its providence, its unselfishness, its moral strength. To the lack of these three qualities the mass of distress is due. "Improvidence is due to a narrow outlook in time." When work is plentiful there is freedom in spending. Few parents can resist the temptation of sending their children out as early as possible, and to earn the maximum wage at once. Apprenticeship, with small wages, means looking ahead. "Selfishness is due to a narrow outlook in area." Attention is drawn to the way in which the money kept by the husband for "personal spending" is usually wasted. Very rarely is any of it saved against a "rainy day." "Moral failure" is the cause of much distress. Under this head we must place drunkenness, prostitution, bad management, and the weak indulgence of children.

Chapter II. deals with the "Nature of Distress," which is briefly described as a disease (of the social body), and which, like disease in the physical sphere, is often, though not always, due to *moral* causes. Thus, the causes of the disease, whatever they may be, must be discovered, and as far as possible removed. Even their discovery is often difficult, and means a great expenditure of time and thought. But unless we are prepared to expend these, we had far better leave the work alone.

Mr. Rogers might here have drawn attention to what is doubtless one of the greatest of all the obstacles to the cure of this social disease—viz., the inefficiency of those who are officially chosen to deal with it. Among the great number of men and women elected to fill the office of "Guardian of the Poor" there are many experts—many who by study and personal investigation have qualified themselves to fill that most responsible office; but these are, we fear, but a small proportion, and so long as Guardians are chosen by present methods they will continue to be so. The great majority of Guardians have a similar effect to what we might imagine a body of entirely unskilled doctors would have. They are dealing with a disease which they have not studied scientifically—which they do not understand. The result of their action is too often to spread and intensify, rather than to remove, the disease. We are glad to notice that in Chapter V. our author speaks strongly upon recent evil developments in Poor Law administration, and asserts that, simply through the ignorance of many Guardians, we are in danger of returning to the disastrous conditions which existed in the

early part of last century. When men are granted medical diplomas by popular suffrage, and because they promise a liberal distribution of drugs free of charge—the analogy with the present system of outdoor relief is not a far-fetched one—we shall then see the rates of death and disease rise, as the rates of pauperism are rising at the present time.

Mr. Rogers deals severely, but not too severely, with the *misuse* of charity; with the "overlapping," due to ignorance of what other workers are doing, and especially with the evils of the "voting" system, by which applicants for any particular charity are successful, not because their case is the most needy or most deserving, but because they have obtained the greatest number of votes.

He passes on to speak of the carelessness with which letters of recommendation are given, even by the clergy. "In business circles a recommendation from a clergyman is (except in the case of boys) worse than useless; it is assumed that the bearer of it is someone who has lost his character, and to whom the writer desires to give another chance" (p. 27). He then shows how, when charity is given or recommended by the clergy to undeserving cases—that is, through want of knowledge, which means neglect of careful investigation—the harm done affects not only the donor or the recipient: it affects the reputation of the Church as a whole. "When lying or imposture are rewarded, discredit is brought upon the institution through whose representatives this has been effected."

The next subject treated by the author is a painful one, but we are glad that he does not hesitate to speak plainly. "It is difficult for people who have been brought up as those who undertake charitable work have been to realize the untruthfulness of the majority of uneducated people" (p. 32). We must remember that to accept statements, whether made by word of mouth or by begging letters, without investigation is actually to encourage untruthfulness; it is, therefore, to do an injury to the community, whose welfare consists in mutual truthfulness, the essential condition of mutual trust.

This untruthfulness does not consist always in deliberate lying; much more frequently it consists in a *suppressio veri*—*e.g.*, neither the whole income nor all the possible sources of help are confessed. People do not own that they have relatives who could and ought to help; they do not say what they are receiving from other charitable agencies. This is one chief reason for combination in charitable work. A great part of the poverty—indeed, of the low moral tone—of the "slums" is due to the great number of thoughtless and untrained "mission" workers, frequently belonging to

different "causes" or agencies, working independently of each other, and actually fostering both pauperism and deception by thoughtless and indiscriminate giving.

If it were once clearly recognised in any neighbourhood that perfect truthfulness and a complete revelation of all the facts connected with a case was an essential condition of the bestowal of charity, the effect upon the moral character of the neighbourhood would be enormous. People do not realize that in the community (the social body) the presence of one moral disease gives a liability, as in the physical body, to attacks of other diseases. Drink, and impurity, and idleness, and untruthfulness, and poverty, which abound in some neighbourhoods, are not unrelated. They form a *complication* arising from a low state of moral health. It is surely our duty to demand from people purity, sobriety, and truthfulness before we relieve their poverty.

In the last section of this chapter the *nature* of the inquiries to be made before relief is given is carefully considered. Too great stress can hardly be laid upon this part of the work, for if we are to do good, and not evil, we must act upon the fullest knowledge available; and, while we have no right to pry into another person's concerns, it must be clearly recognised that when once charity is asked, the right to withhold any information about themselves or their circumstances which may assist us in helping them in the best and wisest way, must be surrendered. Such information should, of course, be treated as confidentially as possible, and it should certainly not go beyond the knowledge of those who are responsible for coming to a decision in granting or refusing help; but it *must* be in their possession.

It is in the obtaining and sifting and weighing of evidence that the really expert worker is of such value upon "relief committees." It is by carelessness in these matters that so much harm is done; and this carelessness generally proceeds either from idleness or ignorance. Mr. Rogers gives many valuable hints upon how this work should be done, and at the end of his book he prints two specimen "case-sheets," showing how the particulars of every case should be entered. If these are properly used the information which a relief committee needs can be seen at a glance.

The next chapter is upon "The Cure of Distress," which, as Mr. Rogers wisely says, must be the *object* of our efforts; in other words, we must not be content to help people *in* their difficulties, we must try to help them *out of them.* The great instrument for cure is *character;* money may be likened to a useful temporary medicine, but the real cure in sickness arises from the doctor's advice and the strengthening of the patient's constitution. If only people would but remember

that the bestowal of charity is often like the giving of an opiate!

For a permanent cure what do those in distress really most often need? Suppose we can impart to them forethought and initiative, perseverance and temperance, shall we not have done them a far greater service than if we bestow upon them some material gift, which perishes rather than increases in the using? May not these moral powers, as Mr. Rogers suggests, be "the things which are within," of which we are "to give alms"? But we cannot impart what we do not possess. Hence, character—the sum of these moral qualities—is the primary qualification for the charitable worker.

Of course, the worker must learn to judge whether any particular case is one which admits of permanent cure by the aid of private charity. It is both foolish and cruel to "potter" with a case which ought at once to have been referred to the Poor Law. To do otherwise is only to raise false hopes, besides wasting time and money, both of which might have been usefully expended upon other cases.

Upon one point we venture to differ very strongly from Mr. Rogers. He thinks that when help is given it should always be given "in cash." "For the wife is the natural provider of the family, and knows best what is needed, and where to buy." Has Mr. Rogers read the recent report upon "Physical Deterioration," where it is shown that a large proportion, even of the deserving poor, seem to have little knowledge or judgment of how to lay out their money so as to procure, for a given sum, the greatest return in nourishing and sustaining food? No doubt there are cases in which money may be given, but we believe that in the majority of cases help in kind, if given with discretion and at regular and stated intervals, is likely to prove more useful.

Two other points in this chapter claim attention: (1) The way in which people, who might be "helpable" if left to a trained worker, are ruined by the interference of "kind ladies," who, by the thoughtless bestowal of doles, enable them to "muddle along," instead of compelling them to use initiative and self-help. (2) The absolute necessity for all the workers in any district having complete knowledge of each other's action. I well remember a certain slum in which, by the exercise of the greatest care, we were gradually raising people to a position of comparative respectability. Then there appeared signs of deterioration, and we discovered that certain ladies with large means, which they bestowed liberally, had begun to invade it. In a single winter the results of the efforts of years of strenuous work were practically destroyed.

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