

DARKEST INDIA

BY

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A SUPPLEMENT TO

GENERAL BOOTH'S

"IN DARKEST ENGLAND, AND THE WAY OUT.



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PREFACE

THE remarkable reception accorded to General Booth's "In Darkest England and the Way Out," makes it hardly necessary for me to apologise for the publication of the following pages, which are intended solely as an introduction to that fascinating book, and in order to point out to Indian readers that if a "cabhorse charter" is both desirable and practicable for England (see page 19, Darkest England) a "bullock charter" is no less urgently needed for India.

In doing this it is true that certain modifications and adaptations in detail will require to be made. But the more carefully I consider the matter, the more convinced do I become, that these will be of an unimportant character and that the gospel of social salvation, which has so electrified all classes in England, can be adopted in this country almost as it stands.

After all, this is no new gospel, but simply a resurrection, or resuscitation, of a too much

neglected aspect of the original message of "peace on earth, good will towards men," proclaimed at Bethlehem. It has been the glory of Christianity, that it has in all ages and climes acknowledged the universal brotherhood of man, and sought to relieve the temporal as well as the spiritual needs of the masses. Of late years that glory has in some degree departed, or at least been tarnished, not because the efforts put forth are less than those in any previous generation, but because the need is so far greater, that what would have been amply sufficient a few centuries ago, is altogether inadequate when compared to the present great necessity.

The very magnitude of the problem has struck despair into the hearts of would-be reformers, many of whom have leapt to the conclusion, that nothing but an entire reconstruction of society could cope with so vast an evil, whilst others have been satisfied with simply putting off the reckoning day and suppressing the simmering volcano on the edge of which they dwelt with paper edicts which its first fierce eruption is destined to consume.

Surely the present plan if at all feasible, is God-inspired, and if God-inspired, it will be certainly feasible. And surely of all countries under the face of the sun there is none, which more urgently needs the proclamation of some such Gospel of Hope than does India. That it is both needed and feasible I trust that in the following pages I shall be able to abundantly prove.

General Booth has uttered a trumpet-call, the echoes of which will be reverberated through the entire world. The destitute masses, whom he has in his book so vividly portrayed, are everywhere to be found. And I believe I speak truly when I say that in no country is their existence more palpable, their number more numerous, their misery more aggravated, their situation more critical, desperate and devoid of any gleam of hope to relieve their darkness of despair, than in India.

And yet perhaps in no country is there so promising a sphere for the inauguration of General Booth's plan of campaign. Religious by instinct, obedient to discipline, skilled in handicrafts;

inured to hardship, and accustomed to support life on the scantiest conceivable pittance, we cannot imagine a more fitting object for our pity, nor a more encouraging one for our effort, than the members of India's "submerged tenth."

Leaving to the care of existing agencies those whose bodies are diseased, General Booth's scheme seeks to fling the mantle of brotherhood around the morally sick, the destitute and the despairing. It seeks to throw the bridge of love and hope across the growing bottomless abyss in which are struggling twenty-six millions of our fellow men, whose sin is their misfortune and whose poverty is their crime, who are graphically said to have been "damned into the world, rather than born into it."

The question is a national one. This is no time therefore for party or sectarian feeling to be allowed to influence our minds. True for ourselves we still believe as fully as ever that the salvation of Jesus Christ is the one great panacea for all the sins and miseries of mankind. True we are still convinced that to merely improve a man's circumstances without changing the man himself

will be largely labor spent in vain. True we believe in a hell and in a Heaven, and that it is our ultimate object to save each individual whom we can influence out of the one into the other. True that among the readers of the following pages will be those whose religious creed differs from ours as widely as does the North Pole from the South.

But about these matters let us agree for the present to differ. Let us unite with hand and heart to launch forthwith the social life boat, and let us commit it to the waves, which are every moment engulfing the human wrecks with which our shores are lined. When the tempest has ceased to rage, and when the last dripping mariner has been safely landed we can, if we wish, with a peaceful conscience dissolve our partnership and renew the discussion of the minor differences, which divide, distract and weaken the human race, but *not till then*.

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PART I.—IN DARKEST INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

WHY "DARKEST INDIA?"

It is unnecessary for me to recapitulate the parallel drawn by General Booth between the sombre, impenetrable and never-ending forest, discovered by Stanley in the heart of Africa, and the more fearfully tangled mass of human corruption to be found in England. Neither the existence, nor the extent, of the latter have been called in question, and in reckoning the submerged at one tenth of the entire population it is generally admitted that their numbers have been understated rather than otherwise.

Supposing that a similar percentage be allowed for India, we are face to face with the awful fact that the "submerged tenth" consists of no less than *twenty-six millions of human beings*, who are in a state of destitution bordering upon absolute starvation! No less an authority than Sir William Hunter has estimated their numbers at fifty millions, and practically his testimony remains unimpeached.

Indeed I have heard it confidently stated by those who are in a good position to form a judgement, that at least one hundred millions of the population of India scarcely ever know from year's end to year's end what it is to have a satisfying meal, and that it is the rule and not the exception for them to retire to rest night after night hungry and faint for want of sufficient and suitable food.

I am not going, however to argue in favor of so enormous a percentage of destitution. I would rather believe, at any rate for the time being, that such an estimate is considerably exaggerated. Yet do what we will, it is impossible for any one who has lived in such close and constant contact with the poor, as we have been doing for the last eight or nine years, to blink the fact, that destitution of a most painful character exists, to a very serious extent, even when harvests are favorable and the country is not desolated by the scourge of famine.

Nor do I think that there would be much difficulty in proving that this submerged mass constitutes at least one-tenth of the entire population. No effort has hitherto been made to gauge their numbers, so that it is impossible to speak with accuracy, and the best that we can do is, to form the nearest feasible estimate from the various facts which lie to hand and which are universally admitted.

Let any one who is tempted to doubt the literal truth of what I say, or to think that the picture is overdrawn, but place himself at our disposal for a few days, or weeks, and we will undertake to show him, and that in districts which are as the very Paradise of India, thousands of cases of chronic destitution (especially at certain seasons in the year) such as ought to be sufficient to melt even a heart of stone !

CHAPTER II.

WHO ARE NOT THE SUBMERGED TENTH ?

BEFORE passing on to consider of whom the destitute classes actually consist, it will be well in a country like India to make a few preliminary remarks regarding the numbers and position of their more fortunate countrymen, who have employment of some sort, and are therefore excluded from the category.*

The entire population of British India, including Ceylon, Burmah, and the Native States amounts according to the Census of 1881 to about two hundred and sixty-four millions.

These I would divide into five classes—

- 1st.—The wealth and aristocracy of the country consisting of those who enjoy a monthly income of one hundred rupees and upwards per family. According to the most sanguine estimate we can hardly suppose that these would number more than forty millions of the population.
- 2nd.—The well-to-do middle classes, earning twenty rupees and upwards, numbering say seventy millions.
- 3rd.—The fairly well off laboring classes, whose wages are from five rupees and upwards, numbering say at the most one hundred millions.
- 4th.—The poverty stricken laboring classes, earning less than five rupees a month for the support of their families. These cannot at the lowest estimate be less than twenty-five millions.

5th.—The destitute and unemployed poor, who earn nothing at all, and who are dependent for their livelihood on the charity of others. These can hardly be less than twenty-five millions, or a little less than one-tenth of the entire population.

The two hundred and ten millions who are supposed to be earning regularly from five rupees and upwards per family, we may dismiss forthwith from consideration. For the time being they are beyond the reach of want, and they are not therefore the objects of our solicitude. At some future date it may be possible to consider schemes for their amelioration.

Indirectly, no doubt, they will benefit immensely by any plans that will relieve them of the dead weight of twenty-five million paupers, hanging round their necks and crippling their resources. But for the present we may say in regard to them, happy is the man who can reckon upon a regular income of five rupees a month for the support of himself and his family, albeit he may have two or three relations dependent on him, and a capricious money lender ever on his track, ready to extort a lion's share of his scanty earnings. And thrice happy is the man who can boast an income of ten, fifteen, or twenty rupees a month, though the poorest and least skilled laborers in England would reckon themselves badly paid on as much per week.

We turn from these to the workless tenth and to the other tenth who eke out a scanty hand-to-mouth existence on the borders of that great and terrible wilderness. But before enumerating and classifying them, there is one other important question which calls for our consideration.

CHAPTER III.

THE MINIMUM STANDARD OF EXISTENCE.

WHAT may reasonably be said to be the minimum scale of existence, below which no Indian should be suffered to descend? Fix it as low as you like, and you will unfortunately find that there are literally *millions* who do not come up to your standard.

Pick out your coarsest, cheapest grains, and weigh them to the last fraction of an ounce. Rigidly exclude from the poor man's bill of fare any of the relishes which he so much esteems, and the cost of which is so insignificant as to be hardly worth mentioning, and yet you will find legions of gaunt, hungry men, women and children, who would greedily accept your offered regimen to-morrow, if you could only discover the wherewithal for obtaining the same, and who would gladly pay for it with the hardest and most disagreeable description of labour.

Take for instance the prison diet, where the food is given by weight, and where it is purposely of the coarsest description consistent with health. That the quantity is insufficient to satisfy the cravings of hunger I can myself testify, having spent a month inside one of Her Majesty's best appointed Bombay prisons, and having noted with painful surprise the eagerness with which every scrap of my own coarse brown bread, that I might leave over, was claimed and eaten by some of my hungry, low-caste fellow prisoners!

The clothing and the blankets are also of the very cheapest description. Of course it must be remembered too, that the food and materials being bought in large quantities, are

obtained at contract prices which are considerably less than the usual retail rates in the bazaar. And yet notwithstanding these facts it costs the Bombay Government on an average Rs. $2\frac{1}{4}$ per month for each prisoner's food, and close upon Rs. 2 a year for clothing, besides the cost of establishment, police guard, hospital expenses and contingencies. Altogether according to the figures given in the Jail Report of 1887 for the Bombay Presidency, including all the above mentioned items, I find that the average monthly cost to Government for each prisoner is a little over Rs. 6 a head.

Now it is a notorious, though almost incredible, fact, that in many parts of India, men will commit petty thefts and offences on purpose to be sent to jail, and will candidly state this to be their reason for doing so. Many Government Officials will, I am sure, bear me out in this. Here we have men who are positively so destitute that they are not only prepared to accept with thankfulness the scanty rations of a jail, but are willing to sacrifice their characters and endure the ignominy of imprisonment and the consequent loss of liberty and separation from home and family, because there is absolutely no other way of escape ! In Ceylon the jail is familiarly known among this class as their "*Loku amma* " or "*Grandmother* " !

India has no poor law. There is not even the inhospitable shelter of a workhouse, to which the honest pauper may have recourse. Hence with tens of thousands it is literally a case of "steal or starve." I suppose that nine-tenths of the thefts and robberies, besides a large proportion of the other crimes committed in India, are prompted by sheer starvation, and until the cause be removed, it will be in vain to look for a diminution of the evil, multiply our police and soldiery as we will.

But I am digressing. My special object in this chapter is to show the minimum amount which is necessary for the subsistence of our destitute classes.

Another very interesting indication of the minimum cost of living in the cheapest native style, consistent with health, and a very moderate degree of comfort, is furnished by the experience of our village officers to whom we make a subsistence allowance of from eight to twelve annas per week. This with the local gifts of food which they collect in the village enables them to live in the simplest way, and ensures them at least one good meal of curry and rice daily, the rest being locally supplied.

Here is the account of one of our Native Captains as to how he used to manage with his allowance of eight annas a week. I have taken it down myself from his own lips.

“When in charge of a village corps, I received with others my weekly allowance. When I was alone I used to get 10 annas, and when there were two of us together we got eight annas each. This was sufficient to give us one good meal of kheechhree (rice and dal) every day, with a little over for extras, such as firewood, vegetables, oil and ghee.

“We had two regular cooked meals daily, one about noon and the other in the evening. Besides this we also had a piece of bajari bread left over from the previous day, when we got up in the morning.

“For the morning meal we used to beg once a week uncooked food from the villagers. They gave us about eight or nine seers, enough to last us for the week.

"It was a mixture of grains, consisting ordinarily of bajari, bhavtu, kodri, jawar and mat. These we got ground up into flour. It made a sort of bread which is known as Sângru and which we liked very much. With it we would take some sâg (vegetables) or dâl. This was our regular midday meal.

"Including the value of the food we begged, the cost of living was just about two annas a day for each of us. We could live comfortably upon this.

"The poorer Dkars in the villages seldom or never get kheechhree (rice and dal). They could not afford it. Most of them live on "ghens" (a mixture of buttermilk and coarse flour cooked into a sort of skilly, or gruel) and bhavtu or bajari bread, or "Sângru." The buttermilk is given to them by the village landowners, in return for their labour. They are expected for instance to do odd jobs, cut grass, carry wood, &c. The grain they commonly get either in harvest time in return for labour, or buy it as they require it several maunds at a time. Occasionally they get it in exchange for cloth. Living in the cheapest possible way, and eating the coarsest food, I don't think they could manage on less than one annas' worth of food a day."

One of our European Officers, Staff Captain Hunter, who has lived in the same style for about four years among the villagers of Goojarat, and who has been in charge of some 30 or 40 of our Officers, confirms the above particulars. He says that on two annas a day it is possible to live comfortably, but that one anna is the minimum below which it is impossible to go in order to support life even on the coarsest sorts of food.

He tells me that the weavers have assured him that when husband and wife are working hard from early to late, they cannot make more than four annas profit a day by their weaving, since the mills have come into the country and then they have to pay a commission to some one to sell their cloth for them, or spend a considerable time, travelling about the country finding a market for it themselves. A piece of cloth which would fetch nine rupees a few years ago, is now only worth three and a half or four rupees.

Bearing in mind, therefore, the above facts, I should consider that if India's submerged tenth are to be granted, even nothing better than a "bullock charter," the lowest fraction which could be named for the minimum claimable by all would be one anna a day, or two rupees a month for each adult. As a matter of fact, I have no hesitation in saying, that there are many millions in India who do not get even half this pittance from year's end to year's end, and yet toil on with scarcely a murmur, sharing their scanty morsel with those even poorer than themselves, until disease finds their weakened bodies an easy prey, and death gives them their release from a poverty-stricken existence; which scarcely deserves the name of "life."

CHAPTER IV.

WHO ARE THE SUBMERGED TENTH ?

By classifying and grading the various orders that constitute Indian Society according to their average earnings, and by considering their minimum standard of existence, I have sought to prepare the way for a more careful investigation of those who actually constitute the Darkest India, which we are seeking to describe. I have narrowed down our inquiry to the fifty millions, or whatever may be their number, who are either absolutely destitute, or so closely on the border-land of starvation as to need our immediate sympathy and assistance.

Strictly speaking it is with the former alone, the absolutely destitute, numbering as I have supposed some twenty-five millions, that we are at present concerned I have, however, found it impossible to exclude some reference to the poverty-stricken laboring classes, earning less than five rupees a month for the support of each family, inasmuch as they are probably far more numerous than I have supposed, and their miseries are but one degree removed from those of the utterly destitute. Indeed we scarcely know which is the most to be pitied, the beggar who, if he has nothing, has perhaps at least the comfort that nobody is dependent on him, or the poor coolie who with his three or four rupees a month has from five to eight, or more, mouths to fill ! *Fill* did I say ? They are *never* filled ! The most that can be done in such cases is to prolong life and to keep actual starvation at bay, and that only it may be for a time !

Nevertheless, I have restricted the term "Submerged Tenth" to the absolutely destitute, whom I now proceed to still further analyse.

In doing so I have been obliged to include several important classes who happily do not exist in England, or who are at any rate so few in number, or so well provided for, as not to merit special attention. I mean the beggars, the destitute debtors, and the victims of opium, famine, and pestilence, without whom our catalogue would certainly be incomplete.

Including the above we may say that the Indian Submerged Tenth consist of the following classes :—

- I. The Beggars, excluding religious mendicants.
- II. The out-of-works,—the destitute, but honest, poor, who are willing and anxious for employment, but unable to obtain it.
- III. The Houseless Poor.
- IV. The Destitute Debtors.
- V. The Victims of Famine and Scarcity.
- VI. The Victims of Pestilence.
- VII. The Vicious, including
 - (a) Drunkards.
 - (b) Opium eaters.
 - (c) Prostitutes.
- VIII. The Criminals, or those who support themselves by crime.

They are alike in one respect, that if they were compelled to be solely dependent upon the proceeds of their labor, it would be impossible for them to exist for a single month.

It is these who constitute the problem which we are endeavouring to solve. Here is the leprous spot of society on which we desire to place our finger. If any think, that it is not so big as we imagine, we will not quarrel with them about its size. Let them cut down our figures to half the amount we have supposed. It will still be large enough to answer the purpose of this inquiry, and should surely serve to arrest the attention of the most callous and indifferent ! About its existence no one can have the smallest doubt, nor as to the serious nature of the plague which afflicts our society. As to the character of the remedy, there may be a thousand different opinions but that a remedy is called for, who can question ?

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGGARS.

ONE of the chief problems of Indian Society is, that of beggary. India is perhaps the most beggar-beridden country to be found. Nor would it be possible under present circumstances to pass any law forbidding beggary. In the absence of a poor-law, it is the last resource of the destitute.

True it is a plague spot in society and a serious reflection both on our humanity and civilisation, to say nothing of our religious professions, to tolerate the continued existence of the present state of things.

And yet I see no reason why the problem should not be firmly and successfully handled in the interests alike of the beggars themselves and those who supply the alms.

A short time ago I was visiting a Mahomedan gentleman in the Native quarter of Bombay. It was in the morning before he went to business, and I happened to hit upon the very time when the beggars made their usual rounds. I should think upwards of fifty men and women must have called during the few minutes that I was there. In fact it seemed like one never-ending string of them reaching down both sides of the street. Some sang, or shouted, to attract notice; others stood mutely with appealing eyes, wherever they thought there was a chance of getting anything. Many received a dole, while others were told to call again. I could not but be struck by the courteous manner of my host to them, even when asking them to pass along.

On the opposite side of the road some food, or money, I forget which, was being distributed to a hungry crowd by another hospitable merchant. Evidently the supply was limited, and it was a case of first come first served. The desperate struggle that was going on amongst that little crowd of some fifty or sixty people was pitiful to behold.

Now the present system, while better than nothing, is fraught with many serious objections, with which I am sure my Indian readers will agree.

1. The weakest must inevitably go to the wall. It is the strong able-bodied lusty beggar who is bound to get the best of it in struggles such as I have above described, although he is just the one who could and ought to work and who least needs the charity. He is able also to cover more ground than the weak and sickly. To the latter the struggle for existence is necessarily very severe, and while needing and deserving help the most they get the least.
2. This unsystematic haphazard mode of helping the poor is bound to be attended with serious inequalities : while some get more than is either good, or necessary, others get too little, and for the majority even supposing that on two or three days of the week they succeeded in getting a sufficiency, the chances are that on four or five they would not get nearly enough. It would be interesting to know the total amount of food thus distributed and the number of mouths that claim a share.

3. Of course in the case of any rise in the price of grains, the position of the beggar is specially painful, as it is upon him that the weight of the scarcity first falls.
4. Again the present system is a distinct encouragement to fraud. It is impossible for the givers of charity to know anything about the characters of those to whom they give. Thus much of their generosity is misapplied, and the most pitiable cases escape notice, either because they have not so plausible a tale, or because they have not the requisite "*cheek*" for pushing their claims.
5. While the generous are severely taxed, the less liberal get off scot free. They cannot give to all and therefore they will give to nobody. Some beggars are frauds, therefore they will help none. They have been taken in once, therefore they do not mean to be taken in again.
6. Finally the Indian army of beggars is continually increasing, and will sooner or later have to be dealt with. Private charity will soon be unable to cope with its demands, and humanity forbids that we should leave them to starve.

I return therefore to the question, can we not seize this opportunity, in the common interests of both beggars and be-begged, for dealing vigorously with the difficulty, and for mitigating it, if we cannot at one stroke entirely remove it?

I am very hopeful that this can be done, and that now is the time to do it. Let us move as cautiously as you like. Let us limit the experiment to a certain area, or to

certain classes of beggars. But in any case I think we may fairly view the problem in a spirit of hopefulness.

Roughly speaking the beggars may be divided into four classes :-

- (a) The blind and the infirm.
- (b) Those who take them about and share the proceeds of their begging.
- (c) The able bodied out-of-works, and
- (d) The religious mendicants.

Passing over the last of these for obvious reasons, I would confine myself to the first three classes. But I must not anticipate. The scheme for their deliverance is fully described in a later portion of this book, and for the present I would only say that they constitute a very important section of India's submerged tenth and no plan would be perfect that did not take them fully into account.

It is true that this does not form a part of General Booth's original scheme. But the reason for this is patent. In England vagrancy is forbidden. There is a poor law in operation and there are work-houses provided by the State. In India there is nothing of the kind, save a law for the compulsory emigration of European vagrants, who are deported by Government and not allowed to return. For Natives there is no choice save the grim one between *beggary*, *starvation*, and *the jail*. To obtain the shelter of the last of these they must leave their family, sacrifice their liberty, and commit some offence. Therefore the honest out-of-works are driven by tens of thousands to lives of beggary, which too often pave the way for lives of imposture and crime.

That the problem is capable of being successfully solved, if wisely handled, has been proved by the Bavarian experiment of Count Rumford quoted by General Booth in an appendix to his book. True that in that case the Government lent their authority, their influence and the public purse to the carrying out of the Count's plan of campaign.

This we do not think that public opinion would permit of in India, even if Government should be willing to undertake so onerous a responsibility. Nor do I believe that there is any necessity for it. The circumstances are a good deal different to those in Bavaria, and will be better met by the proposals which I have elsewhere drawn up.

Anyhow it is high time that something should be done, and that on an extensive scale and of such a drastic nature as to deal effectually with the question.

I can easily imagine that some may fear lest in dealing with the system we should wound the religious susceptibilities of the people. Begging has come to be such a national institution and is so much a part and parcel of the Indian's life and religion, that any proposal to extinguish the fraternity may cause in some minds positive regret. To such I would say that we do not propose to *extinguish* but to *reform*, and with this one hint I must beg them, before making up their minds, to study carefully the proposals detailed in Chapter VII of Part II.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE OUT-OF-WORKS."

I SHOULD question whether there is a single town or country district in India which does not present the sad spectacle of a large number of men, willing and anxious to work, but unable to find employment. Moreover, as is well known, they have almost without exception families dependent upon them for their support, who are necessarily the sharers of their misfortunes and sufferings. There is one district in Ceylon, where deaths from starvation have been personally known to our Officers, and yet the country appears to be a very garden of Eden for beauty and fertility.

In the early years of our work I remember begging food from a house, and learning afterwards that what they had given us was positively the last they had for their own use. Needless to say that it was hastily returned. During the same visit a cry of "Thief, thief!" was raised in the night. We learnt next morning that the robbery had been committed by a man whose wife and child were starving. It consisted of rice, and the thief was discovered partly by the disappearance of the suspected person, and partly by the fact that in his house was found the exact quantity which had been stolen, whereas it was known that on the previous day he had absolutely nothing whatever in his house! He had left it all for his starving wife and child, and had himself fled to another part of the country, probably going to swell the number of criminals or mendicants in some adjoining city.

I quote these instances as serving to show the impossibility of judging merely from outside appearances in regard to the existence or non-existence of destitution of the most painful character, which it is often to the interest of the local landlords to whitewash and conceal. It is only on looking

under the surface that such can in many cases be discovered. It has been the actual living among the people that has made it possible for us to obtain glimpses of their home life, such as could not otherwise have been the case.

But let me enumerate a few of the classes among whom the Indian "Out-of-works" are to be found. I do not mean of course to imply that the entire castes, or tribes, or professions, referred to, constitute them. Far from it. A large proportion are comparatively well off, and though entangled almost universally in debt, are included among the 210 millions with whom we are not now concerned. None the less it will be admitted, I believe, that it is from these that the ranks of destitution are chiefly recruited. I call attention to this fact, because it helps in a large measure to remove the religious difficulty which might at first sight appear likely to stand in the way of our being commissioned by the Indian public to undertake these much-needed reforms. They are almost without exception of either no caste, or of such low caste, that religiously speaking they may justly be regarded as "no man's land." The higher castes and the respectable classes are mostly able to look after themselves, and will not therefore come within the scope of our scheme.

And yet on the threshold of our inquiry we are confronted with an important and increasing class of "out-of-works" who are being turned out of our educational establishments, unfitted for a life of hard labour, trained for desk service, but without any prospect of suitable employment in the case of a great and continually increasing majority. I do not see how it will be possible for us to exclude or ignore this class in our regimentation of the unemployed. Certainly our sympathies go out very greatly after them. But

beyond registering them in our labour bureau, and acting as go-betweens in finding employment for a small fraction of them, I do not see what more can be done. However, the majority of them have well-to-do relations and friends to whom they can turn, and except in cases of absolute destitution will not fall within the scope of the present effort.

Passing over these we come to the poorest classes of peasant-proprietors who, having mortgaged their tiny allotments to the hilt, have finally been sold up by the money-lender. Add to these again the more respectable sections of day-laborers. Then there are the destitute among the weavers, tanners, sweepers and other portions of what constitute the low-caste community. Out of these take now the case of the weaver caste, with whom we happen to be particularly familiar, as our work in Gujarat is largely carried on among them. Since the introduction of machinery, their lot has come to be particularly pitiable. In one district it is reckoned that there are 400,000 of them. Previous to the mills being started, they could get a comfortable competence, but year by year the margin of profit has been narrowed down, till at length absolute starvation is beginning to stare them in the face, and that within measurable distance.

To the above we may add again the various gipsy tribes, who have no settled homes or regular means of livelihood. Finally, there are the non-religious mendicants, the religious ones being considered as not coming within the scope of our present effort, being provided for in charitable institutions of their own.

Representatives of nearly all the above abound in our cities, and when both town and village destitutes come to be reckoned together, I do not think it will be too serious a view to take of their numbers, to reckon the absolutely workless as numbering at least 25 or 26 millions.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOMELESS POOR.

ON this question I do not propose to say much, not because there is not much that could be said, but because in a climate like India it is a matter of secondary importance as compared with food. The people themselves, are comparatively speaking indifferent to it. The "bitter cry" of India if put into words would consist simply of "Give us food to fill our stomachs. This is all we ask. As for shelter, we are content with any hovel, or willing to betake ourselves to the open air. But food we cannot do without."

And yet, looked at from the point of view either of a moralist, a sanitarian, or a humanitarian, the question is one which calls for prompt consideration and remedial action. For instance, according to the last Government census, the average number of persons inhabiting each house in the city of Bombay is no less than 28. The average for the entire Presidency is six. But then it must be remembered that the great majority of the houses of the poor in the agricultural district consist of one-roomed huts, in which the whole family sleep together.

In the cities the overcrowding has become so excessive, and the accommodation available for the poor is so inadequate, costly and squalid, as to almost beggar description. Considerations of decency, comfort and health are largely thrown to the winds. A single unfurnished room, merely divided from the next one by a thin boarding, through which everything can be heard, will command from five to thirty rupees a month, and even more, according to its position, in Bombay.

The typical poor man's home in India consists as a rule of a single-storeyed hut with walls of mud or wattle, and roof of grass, palm-leaf, tiles, mud, or stones, according to the nature of the country. One or two rooms, and a small verandah, are all that he requires for himself and his family.

In the cities the high price of the land makes even this little impossible. Take for instance Bombay. Here the representative of the London lodging-house is to be found in the form of what are called "chawls," large buildings, several storeys high, divided up into small rooms, which are let off to families, at a rental of from three rupees a month and upwards. Very commonly the same room serves for living, sleeping, cooking, and eating. There being as a rule no cooking place, the cheap catthen "choola" serves as a sufficient make-shift, and the smoke finds its exit through the door or window as best it can.

For hundreds, probably thousands, in every large city, even this poor semblance of a home does not exist. Those who manage somehow or other to live on nothing a month, cannot certainly afford to pay three rupees, or even less, for a lodging. Whilst, no doubt, many of the submerged tenth are not absolutely houseless, inasmuch as they are often able to share the shelter of some relation or friend, it cannot be doubted that a very large percentage of them might say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests," but we "have not where to lay our heads."

Of the homeless poor there are two classes. The more fortunate find shelter in those of the Dharamsalas, Temples and Mosques which contain provision for such purposes. It must be remembered, however, that a large number of such institutions are reserved for certain favored castes, and are not therefore available for the out-caste poor. For the rest, the uncertain shelter of verandahs, porticoes,

market-places, open sheds, and, in fine weather, the road-way, esplanade, or some shady tree, have to suffice.

As already said, I am quite willing to admit that this question of shelter for the poor is of secondary importance as compared with that of their food-supply. And yet is it nothing to us that millions of the Indian poor have no place that they can call "home," not even the meagre shelter of the one-roomed hut with which they would gladly be content? Is it nothing to us that superadded to the sufferings of hunger, they have to face the sharp and sometimes frosty air of the cold weather with scarcely a rag to their backs, and no doors, windows, or even walls to keep off the chilly wind? Is it nothing to us that in the rainy season they have to make their bed on the damp floor or ground, though to do so means a certain attack of fever? Is it nothing to us that under such circumstances the houseless poor should be converted into a dismal quagmire in which moral leprosy, more terrible than its bodily representative, should thrive and propagate itself? Certainly if the Indian destitute are to have a "bullock charter" granted to them, it will be necessary that it should sooner or later include suitable and decent shelter as well as food.

True, the problem is a vast one, but this is no reason why it should be looked upon as insoluble, or left to grow year by year still vaster and more uncontrollable.

What we propose ourselves to undertake in this direction will be found elsewhere (see Part II Chapter VI). It must be remembered, moreover, that if our efforts to deal with the workless masses in finding them employment, should prove successful, this will in itself help to remove much of the existing evil. And by directing labor into channels where it can be the most profitably employed, we shall help to disembarass those channels which have at present got choked up with an excess of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAND OF DEBT.

ONE of the darkest shadows on the Indian horizon is that of debt. A drowning man will snatch at a straw, and it would surely be inhuman for us to find much fault with the unhappy creatures who constitute the submerged tenth for borrowing their pittance at even the most exorbitant rates of interest in the effort to keep their heads above water.

I have no desire here to draw a gloomy picture of the Indian Shylock. In some respects I believe him to be a decided improvement on his European and Jewish representative. It was only a short time ago that I read a blood-curdling description of the London money-lender, which put any Indian I have ever come across altogether into the shade.

Nevertheless, Shylock flourishes in India as perhaps in no other country under the sun. His name is Legion. He is ubiquitous. He has the usual abnormal appetite of his fraternity for rupees. But strange to say he fattens upon poverty and grows rich upon the destitute. Whereas in other regions he usually concentrates his attention upon the rich and well-to-do classes, here he specially marks out for his prey those who if not absolutely destitute live upon the borderland of that desolate desert, and makes up by their numbers for what they may lack in quality. He gives loans for the smallest amount from a rupee and upwards, charging at the rate of half an *anna* per month interest for each rupee, which amounts to nearly 38 per cent. per annum. As for payment, he is willing to wait. Every three years, a fresh bond is drawn up including principal and interest. Finally, when the amount has been sufficiently run up, what-

ever land, house, buffalo, or other petty possessions may belong to the debtor are sold up, usually far below their real value.

I remember one case, which came before me when I was in Government service, where the facts were practically undisputed, in which a cultivator was sued for 900 rupees, principal and interest, the original debt being only ten rupees worth of grain borrowed a few years previously. Ultimately it was compromised for about 100 rupees. This is by no means an exceptional case.

Of course it may be said in favour of the money-lender that he is obliged to charge these high rates, to cover the extra risk, and that as a rule, he is generally prepared to forego half his legal claim when the time for payment comes. I am aware also that the subject has long occupied the earnest attention of Government, and that in some parts of the country enactments have been introduced, for the relief of poor debtors. But these are only local and the evil is universal. A judicial Solon is sadly needed who shall rise up and boldly face the evil. The extortions of usurers have led to revolutions before now, and it seems high time for an enlightened Government to do something on a large scale for the abatement of the evil, if only by an absolute refusal to enforce any such usurious contracts.

But I have only mentioned the subject, because it plays a specially important part in the present depressed condition of the submerged masses. In the following pages I hope among other things to be able to cast some rays of light into this valley of the shadow of debt, if not of death.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAND OF FAMINE.

ANY review of Darkest India would be incomplete without some mention of the widespread and calamitous famines which periodically devastate the country and which re-appear from time to time with terrible certainty.

In a country where so large a proportion of the population is agricultural, and where the poor are almost entirely paid in kind, the failure of a single crop means the most terrible scarcity and privation for those who even in time of plenty live at best but a hand-to-mouth existence. And when the failure is repeated famine faces the poverty-stricken masses, and they are frequently swept off by thousands.

In the terrible Madras famine of 1877 to 1878, several millions perished, in spite of the relief works and charitable agencies which hastened to their assistance. When the census of 1881 came to be taken, it was found that in this part of India, instead of the population having largely increased, as was everywhere else the case, there had been a diminution of two per cent as compared with the census of 1871.

It may be said that such famines are not frequent and we are thankful to admit that this is so. Yet scarcely a year passes without some part of India suffering severely from partial droughts. Only last year hundreds of poor starving wretches, crowded into Bombay from Kattiyawar, and were for weeks encamped on the Esplanade, an abject multitude, dependent on the charity of the rich. And yet it was "no famine" that had driven them hundreds of miles from their homes, but "*only* a scarcity."

At the same time famine prevailed in the Ganjam District to an extent which would probably have been utterly discredited, had not the Governor of Madras proceeded personally to the spot, and reported on the terrible state of affairs. No less than 30,000 persons were thrown upon Government for their support. In the same year through a fortnight's delay in the break of the monsoon, there were grain riots at Trichinopoly and Tanjore, several merchants stores being broken into, through a rise in the price of food. Happily a subsequent fall of rain averted the impending calamity, prices fell and order was restored.

Now to deal radically with famines it is necessary to meet them half way, and not to wait till they are upon us in all their stupendous immensity. It must be remembered that, as in the above instances, the present condition of things is such, that the mere threatening of famine is sufficient to send up the prices of food at a bound, to famine rates.

The chief victims of famine are the very classes who have been here described as constituting the "submerged tenth." In ordinary times "the wolf" is always "at the door" but at these calamitous periods there is no door to keep him out, and he is master of the situation. Now General Booth's scheme proposes to deal with him promptly and remove him to such a safe distance, as shall make his inroads almost impossible.

By leaving these destitute classes in their present miserable condition, we prepare for ourselves a gigantic and impossible task when the evil day of famine at last overtakes us. By facing the difficulty at the outset, and meeting it midway, we make our task much easier. Time is in our favour. True, the people are hungry, but they are not dying. We can afford to let them drift a few weeks, months, or even years longer, while we are putting our heads and hearts to-

gether to devise for them some way of deliverance commensurate with the immensity of their needs. But to resign oneself to the present condition of things as inevitable seems to me almost as heartless as to fold our hands helplessly at a time of absolute famine. To deafen our ears to the immediate distresses of the submerged tenth may be less criminal in degree but not in kind.

To those who feel paralysed by the vastness of the problem I would say "Study General Booth's Way Out and the adaptation of it to India which I have endeavoured to sketch in the following pages."

Here at least is a plan, perhaps not a perfect one, but still definite, tangible and immediately possible. Improve upon it as much as you like. Help us to remedy its defects by all means. But whatever you do, don't stand by as an indifferent spectator. Put your own individual shoulder to the wheel. Help us with your sympathy, prayers and substance to make the effort, and should failure ensue, you will at least have the satisfaction of realising that you have helped others to make an honest determined effort for dealing with a gigantic evil that involves the welfare, if not the existence of millions.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAND OF PESILLENCE.

HAPPILY a description of English destitution does not call for any reference to plagues, such as those which annually or at least periodically, devastate India, and that with such certainty that their presence has come to be regarded, almost with indifference, as a matter of course, or at least of necessity. Indeed we suppose that some would even look upon it as a Divinely ordained method for reducing the population. True, that in Europe the matter is regarded in a very different light. Public opinion has made its voice heard. Medical science has exerted itself, and not in vain. The laws of sanitation are better known, and are enforced upon the entire community by severe legal enactments. And above all, Christianity has taught the rich to say of the poor "He is my brother," and to provide for him the medical care and attention that would otherwise not be within his reach.

What is possible in Europe is no doubt possible in India. Much has already been done, and our Government is fully awake to the importance of the subject, and will be able, year by year, to institute further improvements in this respect.

With this, however, we are not directly concerned. My object in referring to the subject is to point out—

1. That it is almost invariably from among the submerged tenth, with whom we propose to deal that these fearful plagues usually have their origin. Pestilence may indeed be said to take up its abode among them. Destitution is as it were the egg from which pestilence is hatched. There are brooding seasons when it may for a time disappear from

sight. But it is there all the same and we know it. If we are to eradicate the evil, we must deal effectually with its cause. And this is the special object of General Booth's scheme.

True; it may be possible to keep this deadly enemy at bay by multiplying our hospital fortresses and putting into the field medical legions armed with the latest discoveries of science. But the requisite paraphernalia is too expensive for a country like India, and who does not know that well-fed bodies, and healthy homes are better safeguards against disease than all the most costly medicines that could be provided by the British pharmacopœia? If therefore we are able to deal radically with destitution we shall at the same time strike an effective blow at the pestilences which are at present such a scourge to India

2. Again I would like to remind my readers of another fact, and in this aspect of the question, all classes of the community are bound to be interested. If pestilence begins its deadly work among the destitute, it can never be reckoned on to stop there. Indeed pestilence may be regarded as *Nature's revenge* on society for the neglect of the poor. Once the cholera fiend has broken loose, it is impossible to tell whom he is going to select for his victims. The rich, the fair, the learned, the young, the strong, are often the first objects of his attention. He manifests a reckless disregard of social position. The distinctions of caste and rank, of beauty or learning, are not for him. And even as I write he may be preparing his invisible hordes of bacilli for fresh invasions, more terrible than those that have ever swept down from the mountains of Afghanistan. While we are spending millions upon strengthening our North-Western Frontiers against a foe who may never exist, save in our imagination, can we dare to neglect the more terrible enemy

who defies all Boundary Commissions, who overleaps the strongest fortresses, and who laughs to scorn the largest cannon that ever capped our walls ?

3. Finally there is one very sad shade in this part of our picture of darkest India. If on the one hand pestilence may be said to somewhat thin the ranks of the destitute by decreasing the number of mouths requiring to be fed, it must be remembered on the other hand that it continually recruits them both by sweeping away so many of the bread-winners, and by frequently paralysing many of those who are left, and preventing them from earning what they otherwise might. How often do we hear of even public institutions having to be closed, and of thousands being thrown out of work by the panic which ensues at such times.

I have sought to confine myself to a matter-of-fact description of this gloomy subject, and to avoid anything that could be construed into mere sensationalism. And yet deaf must be the ears, and hard must be the hearts, that can be insensible to the cries of agony that yearly ascend from thousands and tens of thousands of homes. In a recent Government report, I find that from cholera alone in one year there were reported no less than 300,000 deaths ; and yet the year was not remarkable for any exceptional outbreak. Still more terrible and regular are the ravages of the various malarial fevers, that sweep away millions yearly to a premature grave, often just in the prime of life, when they are most needed by the country. That a very large percentage of these deaths are directly connected with destitution, and that pestilence frequently but finishes the work commenced by months and years of starvation, is too notorious to require proof. It is a melancholy picture, and yet without it our review of Darkest India would be necessarily incomplete.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WHITE ANTS OF INDIAN SOCIETY.

HITHERTO our description of the Submerged Tenth has concerned those who may be styled principally the children of misfortune, and who in their struggle for existence have resort to means which are indeed desperate in their nature, but against which no moral objection can be raised.

General Booth next calls attention to another great section of the Submerged Tenth who have found a temporary shelter or asylum in the temple of Vice,—those who either trade upon the sins of society, or are the miserable victims of those sins. The unlawful gratification of the natural appetites has ever been the snare by which millions have been deluded to damnation. If it were possible to combat this tendency in human nature by mere legal enactments, it would have been done long ago. But though much has been done in this way to hold vice in check, and to prevent it from openly parading itself in public as it otherwise would, yet it has chiefly been by the chains of religion that the monster has been bound, and even his legal shackles have mostly been manufactured at the anvils of the religious public. Take for instance the wholesale prohibition of intoxicating liquor by the Mahommedan religion, or again the strong Temperance movement that has more lately been established among Christians. The former has no doubt accomplished what would never have been done by means of legal enactments, while the latter has first educated the public on the Temperance question and has thus prepared the way for prohibitory legislation of a more stringent character.

In dealing with this portion of the Submerged Tenth there can be no doubt that the religious and moral appeals of the Salvation Army Officers will serve to stimulate and enforce wholesale reformation. By substituting the attractions of our public meetings, we shall do much to counteract those of the liquor den and other factories of pollution and destitution,—for it is as such that we may regard the places where drunkards, opium-eaters, prostitutes, fornicators, and the other hideous satellites of Vice are manufactured wholesale, whether with or without the shelter of a license. A large proportion of those who are engaged in vice as a trade openly profess to do so as a means of subsistence, and because it enables them to eke out what is in nine cases out of ten but a scanty subsistence, and what is almost invariably accompanied by the most terrible penalties Nature can inflict on those who outrage her ordinances. Many are heartily sick of the trade, but can see no way of escape. In dealing with destitution we shall open for these a door of hope. The deserters from the ranks of those who trade in vice will help us to deal more effectively with those who still cling to the profession on account of its profits.

In dealing with the panders to the vices of society we shall largely diminish the numbers of its victims. It has been said that sinning is very much a matter of temptation, and in reducing those temptations, as we believe General Booth's scheme will largely tend to do, we shall be able to reduce in quantity, if we cannot hope to cause altogether to cease, the frightful holocaust of human victims that is annually offered up at this dark shrine.

(a) *The Drunkards.*

I will take the question of the Drunkard first, for it is itself a prolific root of all kinds of evil. The gradual breaking up of religious restraints, the increasing facilities for

obtaining at smallest cost the most fiery and dangerous liquors, the added suffering entailed on any drinking habits that may be formed by the tropical heat of India, all serve to accentuate the gravity of the evil in this country. Add to this a consideration of the distressing poverty, the chronic hunger, the dull monotony, unrelieved by hope of amendment, in which myriads of the people of India fight out the battle of life; reflect how these must crave for the boon of forgetfulness and eagerly grasp at the wretched relief which drunkenness may bring. Nor can we throw the responsibility altogether upon the individual, if it be true that prior to contact with Western nations, the Hindoos were largely a temperate and even an abstinent people. We are in an especial manner bound to consider whether there can be found any alleviation or remedy for a disaster which, if we have not actually created, we have at least suffered to spring up unheeded and unchecked in our very midst.

It is notorious that the large cities of India are crowded with shops of the kind thus described by Mr. Caine, late M. P., in his "Picturesque India":

"The wide and spacious shops in front of which are strewn broken potsherds, and whose contents are two or three kegs and a pile of little pots, are the liquor-dealer's establishments. The groups of noisy men seated on the floor are drinking ardent spirits of the worst description absolutely forbidden to the British soldiers, but sold retail to natives at three farthings a gill."

Mr. Caine goes on to say that in the city of Lucknow, with a population of some 300,000 inhabitants, there were in 1889 thirty distilleries of native spirits and 200 liquor-shops. The Government exchequer receipts from spirits in the North-West Provinces amount to nearly £600,000, having doubled themselves during the last seven years. This means that in round numbers £1,000,000 worth of native spirits is sold in these provinces per annum.

Now consider first that as a rule with rare exceptions a native of India who uses the fiery country liquors drinks for no other purpose than to become intoxicated. They are manufactured with a view to this, and not as in Europe to provide a thirst-quenching potation. Mr. Caine says; "The people of India, unlike other people, only drink for the purpose of getting drunk, and if we make them drunken we destroy them more rapidly than by war, pestilence and famine."

Nothing is clearer than that a rapidly increasing multitude in this country, once remarkable for its sobriety and thrift, are rushing headlong into the disastrous vice of intemperance and its attendant horrors, almost without check. Something must be done. We cannot cold-bloodedly abandon them to a gospel of despair.

(b) *The Opium Slaves.*

Darker still perhaps is the dreadful night, and more sickening the miasma, which lies around the opium creeks, multiplying and increasing and slowly sucking down into their slimy depths thousands upon thousands of those who dare to seek momentary relief from sorrow in its lethal stream. Mr. Caine thus describes an opium den in Lucknow —

"Enter one of the side rooms. It has no windows and is very dark, but in the centre is a small charcoal fire whose lurid glow lights up the faces of nine or ten human beings, men and women, lying on the floor. A young girl some fifteen years of age has charge of each room, fans the fire, lights the opium pipe, and holds it in the mouth of the last comer, till the head falls heavily on the body of his or her predecessor. In no East-end gin palace, in no lunatic or idiot asylum, will you see such horrible destruction of God's image in the face of man, as appears in the countenances of those in the preliminary stage of opium drunkenness. Here you may see some handsome young married woman, nineteen or twenty years of age, sprawling on the ground, her fine brown eyes flattened and dull with coming stupor,

and her lips drawn convulsively back from her glittering white teeth. Here is a young girl sitting among a group of newly arrived customers ringing some romance. As they hand round the pipes there is a bonny little lad of six or seven watching his father's changing face with a dreadful indifference

" At night these dens are crowded to excess, and it is estimated that there are upwards of twelve thousand persons in Lucknow enslaved by this hideous vice. An opium set is the most hopeless of all drunkards. Once, in the clutches of the fiend, everything gives way to his fierce promptings. His victims only work to get more money for opium. Wife, children, home, health, and life itself are sacrificed to this degrading passion "

If twelve thousand for Lucknow be a fair estimate, can we put the figures for the whole country at less than 100,000 ?

Still there is a deeper depth. In the same city, says Mr Caine, there are ninety shops for the sale of Bhang and Churras. " Bhang," says the same writer, " is the most horrible intoxicant the world has ever produced. In Egypt its importation and sale is absolutely forbidden, and a costly preventive service is maintained to suppress the smuggling of it by Greek adventurers. When an Indian wants to commit some horrible crime such as murder, he prepares himself for it with two annas' worth of Bhang."

(c) *Prostitution.*

In the all but impenetrable shades and death-breathing swamps of this social forest, lie and suffer and rot probably not less than one hundred thousand prostitutes. Multitudes of these are dedicated to such a life in childhood, given over to it, in some cases by their parents and not unfrequently kept in connection with the temples. Thousands are searched for and persuaded and entrapped by old women, whose main business it is to supply the market. We know of at least one village where beautiful children, who have been

decoyed or purchased from their parents by these prostitute-hunters, are taken to be reared and trained for the profession. In Bombay there is actually a caste in which the girls are in early childhood "married to the dagger," or, in other words, dedicated to a life of prostitution. In some of the cities old men are employed as touts to secure customers for the women, who remain in their haunts, thus seducing and leading into vice crowds of lads and young men who might otherwise have escaped.

Such suffering, shame, cruelty, and wreckage belong to this crime that one's heart bleeds to think of the tens of thousands doomed, not by their own choice, but by the wicked greed of unnatural parents or the crafty cunning of wicked decoys to such a gehenna, without the least power to extricate themselves from its torment and its shame.

With so much pity left upon the earth to weep over human woes, with so much courage still to hack and hew a path through grim forests and morasses of suffering, there must, and shall, be found "a way out."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CRIMINALS.

THE most recent report of the Indian Government informs us that there are now no less than 737 Jails in British India (exclusive of Native Territory), with an average population of 75,922 prisoners. In the course of last year in the Bombay Presidency alone no less than 76,000 criminals were convicted, while 152,879 were placed on trial before the various courts. In the whole of India the number of annual convictions amount to upwards of one million, while the number who appear before the Court are at least twice as numerous. Again, there are also immense numbers of offences committed yearly, in which the Police are unable to get any clue, the offenders having succeeded in eluding altogether the vigilance of the Law. For instance a celebrated outlaw has only recently been apprehended in Central India after several years of successful and daring robbery, arson, mutilation and murder. Indeed in many parts of India there are predatory tribes and communities of thieves who have to be perpetually under Police surveillance, and who are brought up from their infancy to thieving as a profession.

We desire to plead the cause of the voiceless multitude who occupy our Indian Jails. The fact that they are voiceless,—that they have no means of voicing their claims, their wrongs and their rights (for they, too, *have* rights), only adds to their danger. How can a criminal hope for redress? What chance has he of being heard? Who will listen? What advocate will plead his cause? Ah, if he happen to be rich, it is true, he will have many friends! But as a rule the criminal is poor. Often he has to choose

between crime and starvation. For himself he might prefer to starve, but the sight of his emaciated wife and aged parents,—with whom, criminal though he be, he is as a rule ready to share his last crust,—the clamour of his hungry children, all this drives him to desperation and to a life of crime. He can only give voice to his sorrows and his needs by some fresh act of lawlessness. Hence the occasional outbursts of mutiny, and the murders of jail warders, which from time to time reach the newspapers and shock the public ear.

And here I would desire to call attention to the fact that though crime must be vigorously dealt with and punished, at the same time the tendency of punishment is not to *reform*, but to *harden*. Who does not know that the *worst criminals* are those who have been *longest in Jail*? Instead of *getting better* they *grow daily worse*,—more adept in committing crime and eluding detection,—more careless as to its consequences.

Equally futile would be the offer of a wholesale pardon. A singular illustration of this occurred in 1887, when in honour of Her Majesty's Jubilee in the Bombay Presidency alone, no less than 2,463 prisoners were released out of a total of 6,087. Yet the Government report goes on to show that within a few months of their release the Jails were fuller than ever!

What, then, is to be done? Punishment hardens the criminal, pardon encourages crime, while the hearts of the offenders remain the same!

Here steps in the Salvation Army. Its methods and meetings, however distasteful to the educated and refined, have a special attraction for these dangerous classes. Its Officers are accustomed to handle them with superhuman

love and patience, as well as with a tact and adroitness such as has often elicited the admiration and praise of those who have no sympathy with our creed or ways of work.

We have all over the world fearlessly invaded these criminals in their lowest haunts and dens, in the teeth of the warnings of the Police; we have braved their fiercest fury when, urged on by publicans, maddened with drink, misled by all sorts of infamous lies, and winked at or patronised by the Police and Magistrates, they have wreaked on us the utmost cruelties. We have invariably weathered the storm, though often at the cost of health and even life itself. And in the end as a rule the Roughs, Criminals and Dangerous Classes have become our warmest friends and vigorous supporters. From amidst them we have rescued and reformed some of the noblest trophies of Divine grace. This has been done all over the world. It has been done in India and Ceylon. In a later part of this book we have given a glimpse of this most interesting and important portion of our work. Independent witnesses testify to its reality. Government officials assure us of their warmest sympathy, and in not a few cases aid us with their influence and subscriptions. In Ceylon the Government has treated us most handsomely, throwing open their prisons for our Officers to visit and hold meetings among the prisoners, assisting us in the expenses of our Home with a monthly grant of Rs. 100, and encouraging the criminal classes to take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded them for reforming their lives.

The common reason given for refusing such assistance elsewhere is that Government cannot interfere with the religion of the prisoners. But in Ceylon the majority of the prisoners are Buddhists, Hindoos and Mahomedans, and what has been found to work so well there can surely be tried with equal success elsewhere! Government does

not hesitate all over India to assist religious bodies in their endeavours to *educate* the people, and they may therefore well countenance and help forward, as they might so easily do, our efforts to reach and reform the criminal classes on precisely the same grounds, offering similar advantages to any Hindoo or Mahomedan Associations that might afterwards be formed for the same purpose. At present the Indian criminal has no friend to lend him a helping hand. Prison officials in various places have personally informed me that they are distressed at being able to do nothing for criminals, who, having lost their character and being abandoned by their friends, have no alternative but to return to their old associates. If our example causes others to rise up and make efforts for reaching and reforming these classes, who would not rejoice? At present it is a sad fact that throughout India the native criminals are debarred from all opportunities of being reached by the softening influences of religion. The Europeans have their Chaplains, —the Natives are allowed to have no one to minister to their souls' needs, or to bring to bear upon them those moral influences which might, and we know often would, lead to their reform. There seems no reason whatever why the following rules, which have been drawn up by the Ceylon Government, should not be adopted likewise in India :—

GENERAL RULES made by His Excellency the Governor, acting under the advice of the Executive Council for the Government of Prisons, for the guidance of the prison officers, under and by authority of Section 26 of the Prisons Ordinance, 1887.

226. Ministers of religion and religious instructors shall be entitled to visit prisoners under commitment for trial and prisoners undergoing sentence after trial, and to give religious and moral instructions to those who are willing to receive the same on Sundays and other days in

which prisoners are usually allowed freedom from work, between the hours of eight in the morning and four in the afternoon.

227. Such ministers or other persons shall be allowed access at all times (but between the hours specified) to all prisoners who shall be certified by the medical officers of the prison to be seriously ill.

228. In prisons where such an arrangement can conveniently be made, a suitable room shall be set apart where religious instruction can be afforded to prisoners and the rites of religion administered.

229. If, under the directions of Government, Christian services be held in any Jail, on Sundays and on other days when such services are performed, all Christian criminal prisoners shall attend the same unless prevented by sickness or other reasonable cause—to be allowed by the Jailer—or unless their service is dispensed with by the Superintendent. No prisoner, however, shall be compelled to attend any religious instruction given by the ministers or religious instructor of a church or persuasion to which the prisoner does not belong.

230. It shall be lawful for the Superintendent in charge of any prison to prohibit any particular minister or instructor visiting any prisoner. In such prison, if it shall appear to him that such minister or instructor is an improper or indiscreet person or likely to have improper communication with the prisoner, provided that such Superintendent shall without delay communicate his reason for doing so, to the Inspector General for report to Government.

231. No books or printed papers shall be admitted into any prison for the use of the prisoners, except by permission of the Superintendent, and the jailor shall keep a catalogue of all books and printed papers admitted into the prison.

232. It shall be the duty of the minister or instructor admitted to visit any prison, to communicate to the jailor any abuse or impropriety in the prison which may come to his knowledge, on pain of being prohibited from visiting the prison.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE BORDER LAND.

BESIDES the 25,000,000 who constitute the actual destitute and criminal population, we estimate that at a very low computation there are 25,000,000 who are on the border-land, who are scarcely ever in a position to properly obtain for themselves and for their families the barest necessities of existence. I do not say that they are wholly submerged, but they pass a sort of amphibious existence, being part of the time under water and part of the time on land,—some part of their life being spent in the most abject poverty, and some part of it in absolute starvation—positively for the time submerged, and liable at any moment to be lastingly engulfed. These are the classes whose income never rises above five rupees a month, while more frequently it is under four rupees.

On one farm, concerning which we have detailed information, where the rent of the land is unusually low, the soil good and well irrigated, where loans can be got at a merely nominal interest, the cultivators, with the additional help of occasional cooly work, did not average in their earnings four rupees a month, some having to keep a family on three and a half, while if a bullock died, or a plough had to be procured, it meant positive hunger and increased indebtedness to supply these needs.

The fact is that in many districts there is not only an increase of population to be sustained by a constantly narrowing area of cultivated land, but the land itself is deteriorating through the unendurable pressure put upon it. As the forests grow more distant through being used up for timber and fuel, wood becomes dearer. The manure which ought

to go upon the land is therefore by necessity consumed for fuel. The ground in consequence becomes impoverished. As the struggle for existence becomes fiercer, the people are unable to let their land periodically lie fallow, so the crops grow lighter. Again, the ryot is not only unable properly to feed himself, but his bullocks share a similar fate. The feeble animals can only draw a plough which merely scratches the surface of the ground. Furthermore, as the population increases the land is divided into smaller and smaller holdings. The struggle against the advancing tide of adversity cannot be maintained. Inch by inch the tide rolls up, pushing the border-landers closer and closer upon the black rocks of famine, to escape which they at length plunge into the sea amongst the submerged millions, who, weary and bitter and despairing, or with blind submission to the iron hand of fate, have grown hopelessly and miserably indifferent.

Now, it is notorious that millions live thus on the borderland. Granted that after the harvest border-landers may for a time get two good meals a day. Yet as the reserve store dwindles down and long before harvest-time comes round again, they get but one, and that frequently a scanty one. They do live, multitudes of them, it is true, amidst conditions that seem to us impossible. But how many of them die on this one meal a day, there is nobody to chronicle. But if we do nothing beyond rescuing a considerable mass of the totally submerged, we shall considerably ameliorate the condition of these border-landers.

By rendering independent of charity thousands who now depend upon the gifts of the more fortunate, by making large tracts of land productive which at present lie waste, by enlarging the stream of emigration, and partially draining the morass of crime, it is absolutely certain

that the conditions of life will become more favourable for the border-landers. New markets will be created both for produce and labour, which will tend to relieve the congested condition of the land now under cultivation.

The land at present is like a good, but overworked, and under-fed horse, which, under this double adversity of overwork and under-feeding, dies and leaves his poor owner, who was entirely dependent upon his earnings, a pauper. It is a condition of things which is bad, and bound of necessity to grow only worse and worse, till the willing horse drops under his load, and his master falls from poverty to destitution. Once enable the man to temporarily decrease his horse's labour and permanently increase its food supply, that horse will regain its strength, and by its increased strength become able to do double the amount of work, increase its master's earnings, and so in time enable him not only to properly feed his horse, but also to properly feed himself.

Now close to hand there is an unemployed horse available which will afford the relief, for want of which the overworked horse is dying. The unoccupied and waste lands, waste labour, and waste produce, constitute the ideal unemployed horse, on whose back we would put part of the burden of maintaining the life and feeding the mouths of the Nation. This idle and hitherto useless horse will immediately become useful and productive, and will enable its under-fed companion, not only to be relieved of part of its burden, but also to get sufficient food, and grow once more plump and strong. Thus the man, or nation, that lived, however miserably, yet still lived, on the labour of the one famished over-worked horse, will then be able to get a decent living, since there will be two strong well-fed horses to work for them, instead of a single broken-down one.

It is simply impossible within the limits of this chapter to trace out the whole process. Enough to say that as a rule, to which of course there are exceptions, one man's prosperity means some one else's prosperity. Suppose I am a beggar. I wear practically no clothing. The little I have is what somebody else has cast off. I have no home. I sleep in the street. I get very little food, and that I do not pay for. I produce nothing. My children, if I have any, are wasters like myself. But I am lifted out of this beggary, I become a productive worker. I get a home, wear clothes, buy food, educate my children. Not only have I improved my own circumstances, but I have helped to improve the circumstances of others. Builders, shopkeepers, food-producers, all profit by my redemption.

Now, if not one wastrel only, but 1,000,000 such are raised, a mighty impetus is given to industry of every kind, and the border-landers, instead of being driven on the black rocks by the tide of adverse surroundings, begin to drive back the tide, and conquer the earth, and subdue it, till the border-landers will be border-landers no longer, and the dreadful days of hunger will live only in the stories of famine and want, which the grey old man will tell to his happy and prosperous grandchildren, and ten thousand links of love between emigrant sons and home-staying fathers will bind the fertile plains of Ceylon, Burmah, Africa, and other countries to the populous shores of India.
