CHARLES BRACE

THE DANGEROUS CLASSES OF NEW YORK, AND TWENTY YEARS' WORK AMONG THEM

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Brace C.

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Charles Loring Brace
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DEDICATION

To the many co-laborers, men and women, who have not held their comfort or even their lives dear unto themselves, but have striven, through many years, to teach the ignorant, to raise up the depressed, to cheer the despairing, to impart a higher life and a Christian hope to the outcast and neglected youth of this city, and thus save society from their excesses, this simple record of common labors, and this sketch of the terrible evils sought to be cured, is respectfully dedicated.

INTRODUCTION

The great pioneer in the United States, in the labors of penal Reform and the prevention of crime, – EDWARD LIVINGSTON, – said as long ago as 1833, in his famous "Introductory Report to the Code of Reform and Prison Discipline": "As prevention in the diseases of the body is less painful, less expensive, and more efficacious than the most skillful cure, so in the moral maladies of society, to arrest the vicious before the profligacy assumes the shape of crime; to take away from the poor the cause or pretence of relieving themselves by fraud or theft; to reform them by education and make their own industry contribute to their support, although difficult and expensive, will be found more effectual in the suppression of offences and more economical than the best organized system of punishment." – (p. 322.)

My great object in the present work is to prove to society the practical truth of Mr. Livingston's theoretical statement: that the cheapest and most efficacious way of dealing with the "Dangerous Classes" of large cities, is not to punish them, but to prevent their growth; to so throw the influences of education and discipline and religion about the abandoned and destitute youth of our large towns, to change their material circumstances, and draw them under the influence of the moral and fortunate classes, that they shall grow up as useful producers and members of society, able and inclined to aid it in its progress.

In the view of this book, the class of a large city most dangerous to its property, its morals and its political life, are the ignorant, destitute, untrained, and abandoned youth: the outcast street-children grown up to be voters, to be the implements of demagogues, the "feeders" of the criminals, and the sources of domestic outbreaks and violations of law.

The various chapters of this work contain a detailed account of the constituents of this class in New York, and of the twenty years' labors of the writer, and many men and women, to purify and elevate it; what the principles were of the work, what its fruits, what its success.

So much interest at home and abroad has been manifested in these extended charities, and so many inquiries are received continually about them, that it seemed at length time to give a simple record of them, and of the evils they have sought to cure.

If the narrative shall lead the citizens of other large towns to inaugurate comprehensive and organized movements for the improvement of their "Dangerous Classes," my object will be fully attained.

I have the hope, too, that these little stories of the lot of the poor in cities, and the incidents related of their trials and temptations, may bring the two ends of society nearer together in human sympathy.

The discussion of the Causes of Juvenile Crime contained in this work must aid others who would found similar reformatory and preventive movements, to base them on principles and motives which should reach similar profound and threatening evils.

CHARLES LORING BRACE.
19 EAST 4TH STREET, NEW YORK.
June 1, 1872.

CHAPTER I

CHRIST IN CHARITY AND REFORM

THE CONDITION OF NEGLECTED CHILDREN BEFORE CHRISTIANITY

The central figure in the world's charity is CHRIST. An eloquent rationalistic writer – Mr. Lecky – speaking of the Christian efforts in early ages in behalf of exposed children and against infanticide, says:

"Whatever mistakes may have been made, the entire movement I have traced displays an anxiety not only for the life, but for the moral well-being, of the castaways of society, such as the most humane nations of antiquity had never reached. This minute and scrupulous care for human life and human virtue in the humblest forms, in the slave, the gladiator, the savage, or the infant, was indeed wholly foreign to the genius of Paganism. It was produced by the Christian doctrine of the inestimable value of each immortal soul.

"It is the distinguishing and transcendent characteristic of every society into which the spirit of Christianity has passed."

Christ has indeed given a new value to the poorest and most despised human being.

When one thinks what was the fate before He lived, throughout the civilized world, of for instance one large and pitiable class of human beings – unfortunate children, destitute orphans, foundlings, the deformed and sickly, and female children of the poor; how almost universal, even under the highest pagan civilization – the Greek and Roman – infanticide was; how Plato and Aristotle both approved of it; how even more common was the dreadful exposure of children who were physically imperfect or for any cause disagreeable to their parents, so that crowds of these little unfortunates were to be seen exposed around a column near the Velabrum at Rome – some being taken to be raised as slaves, others as prostitutes, others carried off by beggars and maimed for exhibition, or captured by witches to be murdered, and their bodies used in their magical preparations; when one remembers for how many centuries, even after the nominal introduction of Christianity, the sale of free children was permitted by law, and then recalls how utterly the spirit of the Founder of Christianity has exterminated these barbarous practices from the civilized world; what vast and ingenious charities exist in every Christian country for this unfortunate class; what time and wealth and thought are bestowed to heal the diseases, purify the morals, raise the character, and make happy the life of foundlings, outcast girls and boys and orphans, we can easily understand that the source of the charities of civilized nations has been especially in Christ; and knowing how vital the moral care of unfortunate children is to civilization itself the most skeptical among us may still put Him at the head of even modern social reform.

EXPOSURE OF CHILDREN

The "exposure of children" is spoken of casually and with indifference by numerous Latin authors. The comedians include the custom in their pictures of the daily Roman life, usually without even a passing condemnation. Thus, in Terence's play (Heauton: Act iii., sc. v.), the very character who uttered the apothegm which has become a proverb of humanity for all ages – "I am a man, and nothing belonging to man is alien to me" – is represented, on the eve of his departure on a long journey, as urging his wife to destroy the infant soon to be born, if it should prove to be a girl, rather

than expose it. She, however, exposes it, and it was taken, as was usual, and brought up as a prostitute. This play turns in its plot, as is true of many popular comedies, on this exposition of the abandoned child.

It is frequently commented on by Roman dramatists, and subsequently by the early Christian preachers, that, owing to this terrible custom, brothers might marry sisters, or fathers share in the ruin of their unknown daughters in houses of crime.

Seneca, who certainly always writes with propriety and aims to be governed by reason, in his treatise on Anger (De Ira: i., 15), comments thus calmly on the practice: "Portentos foetus extingnimus; liberos quoque si debiles, monstrosique editi sunt, mergimus. Non ira, sed *ratio* est, a sanis, inutilia secernere." (Monstrous offspring we destroy; children too, if weak and unnaturally formed from birth, we drown. It is not anger, but reason, thus to separate the useless from the sound.)

In another work (Controversi, lib. v., 33), he denounces the horrible practice, common in Rome, of maiming these unfortunate children and then offering them to the gaze of the compassionate. He describes the miserable little creatures with shortened limbs, broken Joints, and carved backs, exhibited by the villainous beggars who had gathered them at the *Lactaria,* and then deformed them: "Volo nosse," "I should like to know" says the moralist, with a burst of human indignation, "illam calamitatum humanarum officinam – illud infantum spoliarium!" – "that workshop of human misfortunes – those shambles of infants!"

On the day that Germanicus died, says Suetonius (in Calig., n. 5), "Subversae Deam arae, partus conjugum expositi," parents exposed their new-born babes.

The early Christian preachers and writers were unceasing in their denunciations of the practice.

Quintilian (Decl. 306, vol vi., p. 236) draws a most moving picture of the fate of these unhappy children left in the Forum: "Rarum est ut expositi vivant! Yos ponite ante oculos puerum statim neglectum * * * inter feras et volucres."

"It is rare that the exposed survive!" he says.

Tertullian, in an eloquent passage (Apol., c. 9), asks: "Quot vultis ex his circumstantibus et in christianum sanguinem hiantibus * * * apud conscientias pulsem, qui natos sibi liberos enecent?"

"How many, do you suppose, of those standing about and panting for the blood of Christians, if I should put it to them before their very conscience, would deny that they killed their own children?"

Lactantius, who was the tutor of the son of Constantine, in a book dedicated to Constantine, protests: "It is impossible to grant that one has the right to strangle one's new-born children"; and speaks of exposition as exposing one's own blood – "ad servitutem vel ad lupanar" – "for slavery or the brothel." "It is a crime as execrable to expose a child as to kill him."

So fearfully did the numbers increase, under the Roman Empire, of these unfortunate children, that the spark of charity, which is never utterly extinguished in the human breast, began to kindle. Pliny the Younger is said to have appropriated a sum equivalent to $52,000 (see Epist., v., 7), to found an asylum for fathers unable to support their children.

THE FIRST CHILDREN'S ASYLUM

Probably the first society or asylum in history for poor children was the foundation established by the Emperor Trajan (about A. D. 110) for destitute and abandoned children. The property thus established in perpetuity, with real estate and money at interest (at five per cent.), was equivalent in value to $920,000, and supported some five thousand children of both sexes. Singularly enough, there seems to have been only one illegitimate child to one hundred and fifty legitimate in these institutions.

The Antonines, as might be expected, did not neglect this charity; but both Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius founded associations for destitute girls. Alexander Severus established one also for poor children. These form the only organized efforts made for this object, during many centuries, by the most civilized and refined state of antiquity.

The number, however, of these wretched creatures, increased beyond all cure from scattered exceptional efforts like these. Everywhere the poor got rid of their children by exposure, or sold them as slaves. The rich, if indifferent to their offspring, or unwilling to take the trouble of rearing them, sent them out to the public square, where pimps, beggars, witches, and slave-dealers gleaned their horrible harvest. At length, under the influence of Christianity, legislation began to take cognizance of the practice.

The Emperor Constantine, the Emperor Valentian, Valens, and Gratian, sixty years later, continued this humane legislation.

They ordered, under strict penalties, that every one should nourish his own children, and forbade exposition; declaring also that no one had the right to reclaim the children he had abandoned; the motive to this law being the desire to make it for the interest of those "taking up" exposed children to keep them, even if necessary, as slaves, against any outside claims.

Unfortunately, at that period, slavery was held a less evil than the ordinary fate to which the poor left their children.

The punishment of death was also decreed against Infanticide.

It is an interesting fact that a portion, and probably the whole, of our ancestral tribes looked with the greatest horror on abortion and infanticide. The laws of the Visigoths punished these offenses with death or blindness. Their influence, of course, should always be considered, as well as that of Christianity, in estimating the modern position of woman and the outcast child, as compared with their status under Greek and Roman civilization.

At a later period (412 A. D.) the imperial legislation again endeavored to prevent the reclaiming of exposed children from compassionate persons who had taken them. "Were they right to say that those children belonged to them when they had despised them even to the point of abandoning them to death?"

It was provided also, that in future no one should "take from the ground" exposed children except in the presence of witnesses, and that the archbishop should put his signature on the document of guardianship which was prepared. (Cod. Theod., lib. 5, tit. 7, De Expositis.)

Hitherto, exposed children had generally been taken and reared as slaves; but in A. D. 529, Justinian decreed that not only the father lost all legitimate authority over the child if he exposed it, but also that the child itself preserved its liberty.

This law applied only to the Eastern Empire; in the Western the slavery of exposed children continued for centuries. (Lecky: Hist. of Europ. Morals, vol. ii, p. 32.) The Christian churches throughout the early centuries took especial care of orphans, in parish orphan nurseries, or *orphanotrophioe.*

The first asylums for deserted and foundling children which are recorded in the Christian era are one in Treves in the sixth century, one at Angiers in the seventh, and a more famous one in Milan, A. D. 787.

Societies for the protection of children were also formed in Milan in the middle of the twelfth century.

At the end of that century a monk of Montpelier, Brother GUY, formed what may be called the first "Children's Aid Society," for the protection, shelter, and education of destitute children, a fraternity which subsequently spread over Europe.

One great cause of the final extreme corruption and extinction of ancient pagan society was the existence of large classes of unfortunate beings, whom no social moral movement of renovation ever reached – the slaves, the gladiators, the barbarian strangers, and the outcast children.

To all these deep strata of misery and crime Christianity gradually penetrated, and brought life and light, and finally an almost entire metamorphosis. As criminal and unfortunate classes, they have – with the exception only of the children – ceased to exist under modern civilization. We have no longer at the basis of modern society the dangers of a multitude of ignorant slaves, or of disaffected

barbarous foreigners, or of a profession of gladiators – brutal, brutalizing; but we do still have masses of unfortunate youth, whose condition, though immensely improved, and lightened by the influences of Christianity, is still one of the most threatening and painful phenomena of modern society in nearly all civilized countries.

Still, unlike the experience of Paganism under the Roman Empire and before it, rays of light, of intelligence, and of moral and spiritual influence penetrate to the depths of these masses. The spirit of Christ is slowly and irresistibly permeating even this lowest class of miserable, unfortunate, or criminal beings; inspiring those who perseveringly labor for them, drawing from wealth its dole and from intelligence its service of love, educating the fortunate in the habit of duty to the unfortunate, giving a dignity to the most degraded, and offering hope to the despairing.

CHRIST leads the Reform of the world, as well as its Charity.

Those who have much to do with alms-giving and plans of human improvement soon see how superficial and comparatively useless all assistance or organization is, which does not touch habits of life and the inner forces which form character. The poor helped each year become poorer in force and independence. Education is a better preventive of pauperism than charity. The best police and the most complete form of government are nothing if the individual morality be not there. But Christianity is the highest education of character. Give the poor that, and only seldom will either alms or punishment be necessary.

When one comes to know the peculiar overpowering temptations which beset the class of unfortunate children and similar, classes; the inducements to sharpness, deception, roguery, lying, fraud, coarseness, vice in many forms, besides toward open offenses against the law; the few restraining influences in social opinion, good example, or inherited self-control; the forces without and the organization within impelling to crime, and then sees how immensely powerful the belief in and love for a supernatural and noble character and Friend is upon such wild natures; how it inspires to nobleness, restrains low passions, changes bad habits, and transforms base hearts; how the thoughts of this supernatural Friend can accompany a child of the street, and make his daily hard life an offering of loving service; how the unseen sympathy can dry the orphan's tears, and throw a light of cheerfulness around the wan, pale face of the little vagrant, and bring down something of the splendor of heaven to the dark cellars and dreary dens of a great city: whoever has had this experience – not once, but many times – will begin to understand that Christ must lead Reform as well as Charity, and that without Him the worst diseases of modern society can never be cured.

CHAPTER II

THE PROLETAIRES OF NEW YORK

New York is a much younger city than its European rivals; and with perhaps one-third the population of London, yet it presents varieties of life among the "masses" quite as picturesque, and elements of population even more dangerous. The throng of different nationalities in the American city gives a peculiarly variegated air to the life beneath the surface, and the enormous over-crowding in portions of the poor quarters intensifies the evils, peculiar to large towns, to a degree seen only in a few districts in such cities as London and Liverpool.

The *mass* of poverty and wretchedness is, of course, far greater in the English capital. There are classes with inherited pauperism and crime more deeply stamped in them, in London or Glasgow, than we ever behold in New York; but certain small districts can be found in our metropolis with the unhappy fame of containing more human beings packed to the square yard, and stained with more acts of blood and riot, within a given period, than is true of any other equal space of earth in the civilized world.

There are houses, well known to sanitary boards and the police, where Fever has taken a perennial lease, and will obey no legal summons to quit; where Cholera – if a single germ-seed of it float anywhere in American atmosphere – at once ripens a black harvest; where Murder has stained every floor of its gloomy stories, and Vice skulks or riots from one year's end to the other. Such houses are never reformed. The only hope for them is in the march of street improvements, which will utterly sweep them away.

It is often urged that the breaking-up of these "dens" and "fever-nests" only scatters the pestilence and moral disease, but does not put an end to them.

The objection is more apparent than real. The abolishing of one of these centres of crime and poverty is somewhat like withdrawing the virus from one diseased limb and diffusing it through an otherwise healthy body. It seems to lose its intensity. The diffusion weakens. Above all, it is less likely to become hereditary.

One of the remarkable and hopeful things about New York, to a close observer of its "dangerous classes," is, as I shall show in a future chapter, that they do not tend to become fixed and inherited, as in European cities.

But, though the crime and pauperism of New York are not so deeply stamped in the blood of the population, they are even more dangerous. The intensity of the American temperament is felt in every fibre of these children of poverty and vice. Their crimes have the unrestrained and sanguinary character of a race accustomed to overcome all obstacles. They rifle a bank, where English thieves pick a pocket; they murder, where European *proletaires* cudgel or fight with fists; in a riot, they begin what seems about to be the sacking of a city, where English rioters would merely batter policemen, or smash lamps. The "dangerous classes" of New York are mainly American-born, but the children of Irish and German immigrants. They are as ignorant as London flash-men or costermongers. They are far more brutal than the peasantry from whom they descend, and they are much banded together, in associations, such as "Dead Rabbit," "Plug-ugly," and various target companies. They are our *enfants perdus,* grown up to young manhood. The murder of an unoffending old man, like Mr. Rogers, is nothing to them. They are ready for any offense or crime, however degraded or bloody. New York has never experienced the full effect of the nurture of these youthful ruffians as she will one day. They showed their hand only slightly in the riots during the war. At present, they are like the athletes and gladiators of the Roman demagogues. They are the "roughs" who sustain the ward politicians,

and frighten honest voters. They can "repeat" to an unlimited extent, and serve their employers. They live on *"panem et circenses,"* or City-Hall places and pot-houses, where they have full credit.

We shall speak more particularly of the causes of crime in future chapters, but we may say in brief, that the young ruffians of New York are the products of accident, ignorance, and vice. Among a million people, such as compose the population of this city and its suburbs, there will always be a great number of misfortunes; fathers die, and leave their children unprovided for; parents drink, and abuse their little ones, and they float away on the currents of the street; step-mothers or step-fathers drive out, by neglect and ill-treatment, their sons from home. Thousands are the children of poor foreigners, who have permitted them to grow up without school, education, or religion. All the neglect and bad education and evil example of a poor class tend to form others, who, as they mature, swell the ranks of ruffians and criminals. So, at length, a great multitude of ignorant, untrained, passionate, irreligious boys and young men are formed, who become the "dangerous class" of our city. They form the "Nineteenth-street Gangs," the young burglars and murderers, the garroters and rioters, the thieves and flash-men, the "repeaters" and ruffians, so well known to all who know this metropolis.

THE DANGERS

It has been common, since the recent terrible Communistic outbreak in Paris, to assume that France alone is exposed to such horrors; but, in the judgment of one who has been familiar with our "dangerous classes" for twenty years, there are just the same explosive social elements beneath the surface of New York as of Paris.

There are thousands on thousands in New York who have no assignable home, and "flit" from attic to attic, and cellar to cellar; there are other thousands more or less connected with criminal enterprises; and still other tens of thousands, poor, hard-pressed, and depending for daily bread on the day's earnings, swarming in tenement-houses, who behold the gilded rewards of toil all about them, but are never permitted to touch them.

All these great masses of destitute, miserable, and criminal persons believe that for ages the rich have had all the good things of life, while to them have been left the evil things. Capital to them is the tyrant.

Let but Law lift its hand from them for a season, or let the civilizing influences of American life fail to reach them, and, if the opportunity offered, we should see an explosion from this class which might leave this city in ashes and blood.

To those incredulous of this, we would recall the scenes in our streets during the riots in 1863, when, for a short period, the guardians of good order – the local militia – had been withdrawn for national purposes, and when the ignorant masses were excited by dread of the draft.

Who will ever forget the marvelous rapidity with which the better streets were filled with a ruffianly and desperate multitude, such as in ordinary times we seldom see – creatures who seemed to have crept from their burrows and dens to join in the plunder of the city – how quickly certain houses were marked out for sacking and ruin, and what wild and brutal crimes were committed on the unoffending negroes? It will be recalled, too, how much *women* figured in these horrible scenes, as they did in the Communistic outbreak in Paris. It was evident to all careful observers then, that had another day of license been given the crowd, the attack would have been directed at the apparent wealth of the city – the banks, jewelers' shops, and rich private houses.

No one doubted then, or during the Orange riot of 1871, the existence of "dangerous classes" in New York. And yet the separate members of these riotous and ruffianly masses are simply neglected and street-wandering children who have come to early manhood.

The true preventive of social catastrophes like these, are just such Christian reformatory and educational movements as we are about to describe.

Of the number of the distinctly homeless and vagrant youth in New York, it is difficult to speak with precision. We should be inclined to estimate it, after long observation, as fluctuating each year between 20,000 and 30,000. [The homeless children who come each year under the charitable efforts afterwards to be described amount to some 12,000.] But to these, as they mature, must be added, in the composition of the dangerous classes, all those who are professionally criminal, and who have homes and lodging-places. And again to these, portions of that vast and ignorant [It should be remembered that there are in this city over 60,000 persons above ten years of age who cannot write their names.] multitude, who, in prosperous times, just keep their heads above water, who are pressed down by poverty or misfortune, and who look with envy and greed at the signs of wealth and luxury all around them, while they themselves have nothing but hardship, penury, and unceasing drudgery.

CHAPTER III

THE CAUSES OF CRIME

The great practical division of causes of crime may be made into preventible and non-preventible. Among the preventible, or those which can be in good part removed, may be placed ignorance, intemperance, over-crowding of population, want of work, idleness, vagrancy, the weakness of the marriage-tie, and bad legislation.

Among those which cannot be entirely removed are inheritance, the effects of emigration, orphanage, accident or misfortune, the strength of the sexual and other passions, and a natural weakness of moral or mental powers.

IGNORANCE

There needs hardly a word to be said in this country on the intimate connection between ignorance and crime.

The precise statistical relation between them in the State of New York would seem to be this: about thirty-one per cent. of the adult criminals cannot read or write, while of the adult population at large about six (6.08) per cent. are illiterate; or nearly one-third of the crime is committed by six-hundredths of the population. In the city prisons for 1870, out of 49,423 criminals, 18,442 could not write and could barely read, or more than thirty-three per cent.

In the Reformatories of the country, according to the statement of Dr. Bittinger before the National Congress on prison-discipline at Cincinnati, out of the average number of the inmates for 1868, of 7,963 twenty-seven per cent. were wholly illiterate.

Very great criminality is, of course, possible with high education; but in the immense majority of cases a very small degree of mental training or intellectual tastes is a preventive of idleness and consequent crime and of extreme poverty. The difference between knowing how to read and not knowing will often be the line between utter poverty and a capacity for various occupations.

Among the inmates of the city prisons a large percentage are without a trade, and no doubt this idle condition is largely due to their ignorance and is one of the great stimulants to their criminal course. Who can say how much the knowledge of Geography alone may stimulate a child or a youth to emigrate, and thus leave his immediate temptations and escape pressing poverty?

ORPHANAGE

Out of 452 criminal children received into the House of Refuge in New York during 1870, only 187 had both parents living, so that nearly sixty per cent. had lost one or both of their parents, or were otherwise separated from them.

According to Dr. Bittinger, [Transactions of the National Congress, p. 279.] of the 7,963 inmates of the reformatories in the United States in 1870, fifty-five per cent. were orphans or half orphans.

The following figures strikingly show the extent to which orphanage and inheritance influence the moral condition of children.

Mettrai, the celebrated French reformatory, has received since its foundation 3,580 youthful inmates. Of these, there are 707 whose parents are convicts; 308 whose parents live in concubinage;

534 "natural" children; 221 foundlings; 504 children of a second marriage; and 1,542 without either father or mother. [Une visite a Mettrai. Paris, 1868.]

An intelligent French writer, M. de Marsangy, [Moralisation de l'enfance coupable, p. 18.] in writing of the causes of juvenile crime in France, says that "a fifth of those who have been the objects of judicial pursuit are composed of orphans; the half have no father, a quarter no mother, and as for those who have a family, nearly all are dragged by it into evil."

EMIGRATION

There is no question that the breaking of the ties with one's country has a bad moral effect, especially on a laboring class. The Emigrant is released from the social inspection and judgment to which he has been subjected at home, and the tie of church and priesthood is weakened. If a Roman Catholic, he is often a worse Catholic, without being a better Protestant. If a Protestant, he often becomes indifferent. Moral ties are loosened with the religious. The intervening process which occurs here, between his abandoning the old state of things and fitting himself to the new, is not favorable to morals or character.

The consequence is, that an immense proportion of our ignorant and criminal class are foreign-born; and of the dangerous classes here, a very large part, though native-born, are of foreign parentage. Thus, out of the whole number of foreigners in New York State, in 1860, 16.69 per cent. could not read or write; while of the native-born only 1.83 per cent. were illiterate.

Of the 49,423 prisoners in our city prisons, in prison for one year before January, 1870, 32,225 were of foreign birth, and, no doubt, a large proportion of the remainder of foreign parentage. Of the foreign-born, 21,887 were from Ireland; and yet at home the Irish are one of the most law-abiding and virtuous of populations – the proportion of criminals being smaller than in England or Scotland.

In the Eastern Penitentiary of Pennsylvania, according to Dr. Bittinger, from one-fourth to one-third of the inmates are foreigners; in Auburn, from a third to a half; in Clinton, one-half; in Sing Sing, between one-half and six-sevenths. In the Albany Penitentiary, the aggregate number of prisoners during the last twenty years was 18,390, of whom 10,770 were foreign-born. [Transact. of Nat. Cong., p. 282.]

It is another marked instance of the demoralizing influence of emigration, that so large a proportion of the female criminal class should be Irish-born, though the Irish female laboring class are well known to be at home one of the most virtuous in the world.

A hopeful fact, however, begins to appear in regard to this matter; the worst effects of emigration in this country seem over. The machinery for protecting and forwarding the newly-arrived immigrants, so that they may escape the dangers and temptations of the city, has been much improved. Very few, comparatively, now remain in our sea-ports to swell the current of poverty and crime. The majority find their way at once to the country districts. The quality, too, of the immigration has improved. More well-to-do farmers and peasantry, with small savings, arrive than formerly, and the preponderance, as to nationality, is inclining to the Germans. It comparatively seldom happens now that paupers or persons absolutely without means, land in New York.

As one of the great causes of crime, Emigration will undoubtedly have a much feebler influence in the future in New York than it has had in the past.

WANT OF A TRADE

It is remarkable how often, in questioning the youthful convicts in our prisons as to the causes of their downfall, they will reply that "if they had had a trade, they would not have been there." They disliked drudgery, they found places in offices and shops crowded; they would have enjoyed

the companionship and the inventiveness of a trade, but they could not obtain one, and therefore they were led into stealing or gambling, as a quick mode of earning a living.

There is no doubt that a lad with a trade feels a peculiar independence of the world, and is much less likely to take up dishonest means of living than one depending on manual labor, or chance means of living.

There is nearly always a demand for his work; the lad feels himself a member of a craft and supported by the consciousness of this membership; the means of the "Unions" often sustain him when out of employment; his associates are more honest and respectable than those of boys depending on chance-labor, and so he is preserved from falling into crime.

Of course, if such a lad would walk forth to the nearest country village, he would find plenty of healthy and remunerative employment in the ground, as gardener or farmer. And to a country-lad, the farm offers a better chance than a trade. But many city boys and young men will not consent to leave the excitements of the city, so that the want of a mechanical occupation does expose them to many temptations.

The persons most responsible for this state of things are the members of such "Unions" as refuse to employ boys, or to encourage the training of apprentices. It is well-known that in many trades of New York, hardly any young laborers or apprentices are being trained. The result of this selfish policy will be to reduce the amount of skilled labor in this city, and thus compel the importation of foreign labor, and to increase juvenile crime and the burdens on the poor.

Another cause of this increasing separation from trades among the young is, no doubt, the increasing aversion of American children, whether poor or rich, to learn anything thoroughly; the boys of the street, like those of our merchants, preferring to make fortunes by lucky and sudden "turns," rather than by patient and steady industry.

Our hope in this matter is in the steady demand for juvenile labor in the country districts, and the substantial rewards which await industry there.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAUSES OF CRIME

WEAKNESS OF THE MARRIAGE-TIE

It is extraordinary, among the lowest classes, in how large a number of cases a second marriage, or the breaking of marriage, is the immediate cause of crime or vagrancy among the children. When questioning a homeless boy or street-wandering girl as to the former home, it is extremely common to hear "I couldn't get on with my step-mother," or "My step-father treated me badly," or "My father left, and we just took care of ourselves." These apparently exceptional events are so common in these classes as to fairly constitute them an important cause of juvenile crime. When one remembers the number of happy second marriages within one's acquaintance, and how many children have never felt the difference between their step-mother and their own mother, and what love and patience and self-sacrifice are shown by parents to their step-children, we may be surprised at the contrast in another class of the community. But the virtues of the poor spring very much from their affections and instincts; they have comparatively little self-control, the high lessons of duty and consideration for others are seldom stamped on them, and Religion does not much influence their more delicate relations with those associated with them. They might shelter a strange orphan for years with the greatest kindness; but the bearing and forbearing with the faults of another person's child year after year, merely from motives of duty or affection to its parent, belong to a higher range of Christian virtues, to which they seldom attain. Their own want of self-control and their tendency to jealousy, and little understanding of true self-sacrifice, combine to weaken and embitter these relations with step-children. The children themselves have plenty of faults, and have doubtless been little governed, so that soon both parties jar and rub against one another; and as neither have instincts or affections to fall back upon, mere principle or sense of duty is not enough to restrain them. What would be simply slights or jars in more controlled persons, become collisions in this class.

Bitter quarrels spring up between step-son and mother, or step-daughter and father; the other parent sometimes sides with the child, sometimes with the father; but the result is similar. The house becomes a kind of pandemonium, and the girls rush desperately forth to the wild life of the streets, or the boys gradually prefer the roaming existence of the little city-Arab to such a quarrelsome home. Thus it happens that step-children among the poor are so often criminals or outcasts.

It needs a number of years among the lower working-classes to understand what a force public opinion is in all classes in keeping the marriage-bond sacred, and what sweeping misfortunes follow its violation. Many of the Irish peasants who have landed here have married from pure affection. Their marriage has been consecrated by the most solemn ceremonies of their church. They come of a people peculiarly faithful to the marriage-tie, and whose religion has especially guarded female purity and the fidelity of husband and wife. At home, in their native villages, they would have died sooner than break the bond or leave their wives. The social atmosphere about them and the influence of the priests make such an act almost impossible. And yet in this distant country, away from their neighbors and their religious instructors; they are continually making a practical test of "Free-Love" doctrines. As the wife grows old or ugly – as children increase and weigh the parents down – as the home becomes more noisy and less pleasant, – the man begins to forget the vows made at the altar, and the blooming girl he then took; and, perhaps meeting some prettier woman, or hearing of some chance for work at a distance, he slips quietly away, and the deserted wife, who seems to love him

the more the more false he is, is left alone. For a time she has faith in him and seeks him far and near; but at length she abandons hope, and begins the heavy struggle of maintaining her little family herself. The boys gradually get beyond her control; they are kept in the street to earn something for their support; they become wild and vagrant, and soon end with being street-rovers, or petty thieves, or young criminals. The girls are trained in begging or peddling, and, meeting with bold company, they gradually learn the manners and morals of the streets, and after a while abandon the wretched home, and break what was left of the poor mother's hope and courage, by beginning a life of shame.

This sad history is lived out every day in New York. If any theorists desire to see what fruits "Free Love" or a weak marriage-bond can bear among the lowest working-classes, they have only to trace the histories of great numbers of the young thieves and outcasts and prostitutes in this city. With the dangerous classes, "elective affinities" are most honestly followed. The results are suffering, crime, want, and degradation to those who are innocent.

INHERITANCE

A most powerful and continual source of crime with the young is inheritance – the transmitted tendencies and qualities of their parents, or of several generations of ancestors.

It is well-known to those familiar with the classes, that certain appetites or habits, if indulged abnormally and excessively through two or more generations, come to have an almost irresistible force, and, no doubt, modify the brain so as to constitute almost an insane condition. This is especially true of the appetite for liquor and of the sexual passion and sometimes of the peculiar weakness, dependence, and laziness which make confirmed paupers.

The writer knows of an instance in an alms-house in Western New York, where four generations of females were paupers and prostitutes. Almost every reader who is familiar with village life will recall poor families which have had dissolute or criminal members beyond the memory of the oldest inhabitant, and who still continue to breed such characters. I have known a child of nine or ten years, given up, apparently beyond control, to licentious habits and desires, and who in all different circumstances seemed to show the same tendencies; her mother had been of similar character, and quite likely her grandmother. The "gemmules," or latent tendencies, or forces, or cells of her immediate ancestors were in her system, and working in her blood, producing irresistible effects on her brain, nerves, and mental emotions, and finally, not being met early enough by other moral, mental, and physical influences, they have modified her organization, until her will is scarcely able to control them and she gives herself up to them. All those who instruct or govern "Houses of Refuge," or "Reform Schools," or Asylums for criminal children and youths, will recall many such instances.

They are much better known in the Old World than this; they are far more common here in the country than in the city.

My own experience during twenty years has been in this regard singularly hopeful. I have watched great numbers of degraded families in New York, and exceedingly few of them have transmitted new generations of paupers, criminals, or vagrants.

The causes of this encouraging state of things are not obscure. The action of the great law of "Natural Selection," in regard to the human race, is always towards temperance and virtue. That is, vice and extreme indulgence weaken the physical powers and undermine the constitution; they impair the faculties by which man struggles with adverse conditions and gets beyond the reach of poverty and want. The vicious and sensual and drunken die earlier, or they have fewer children, or their children are carried off by diseases more frequently, or they themselves are unable to resist or prevent poverty and suffering. As a consequence, in the lowest class, the more self-controlled and virtuous tend constantly to survive, and to prevail in "the struggle for existence," over the vicious and ungoverned, and to transmit their progeny. The natural drift among the poor is towards virtue.

Probably no vicious organization with very extreme and abnormal tendencies is transmitted beyond the fourth generation; it ends in insanity or cretinism or the wildest crime.

The result is then, with the worst-endowed families, that the "gemmules" or latent forces of hundreds of virtuous, or at least, not vicious, generations, lie hid in their constitutions. The immediate influences of parents or grandparents are, of course, the strongest latent tendencies to good, coming down from remote ancestors, be aroused and developed.

Thus is explained the extraordinary improvement of the children of crime and poverty in our Industrial Schools; and the reforms and happy change is seen in the boys and girls of our dangerous classes when placed in kind Western homes. The change of circumstances, the improved food, the daily moral and mental influences, the effect of regular labor and discipline, and, above all, the power of Religion, awaken these hidden tendencies to good, both those coming from many generations of comparative virtue and those inherent in the soul, while they control and weaken and cause to be forgotten those diseased appetites or extreme passions which these unfortunate creatures inherit directly, and substitute a higher moral sense for the low moral instincts which they obtained from their parents. So it happens, also, that American life, as compared with European, and city life, as compared with country, produces similar results. In the United States, a boundless hope pervades all classes; it reaches down to the outcast and vagrant. There is no fixity, as is so often the fact in Europe, from the sense of despair. Every individual, at least till he is old, hopes and expects to rise out of his condition.

The daughter of the rag-picker or vagrant sees the children she knows, continually dressing better or associating with more decent people; she beholds them attending the public schools and improving in education and manners; she comes in contact with the greatest force the poor know – public opinion, which requires a certain decency and respectability among themselves. She becomes ashamed of her squalid, ragged, or drunken mother. She enters an Industrial School, or creeps into a Ward School, or "goes out" as a servant. In every place, she feels the profound forces of American life; the desire of equality, ambition to rise, the sense of self-respect and the passion for education.

These new desires overcome the low appetites in her blood, and she continually rises and improves. If Religion in any form reach her, she attains a still greater height over the sensual and filthy ways of her parents. She is in no danger of sexual degradation, or of any extreme vice. The poison in her blood has found an antidote. When she marries, it will inevitably be with a class above her own. This process goes on continually throughout the country, and breaks up criminal inheritance.

Moreover, the incessant change of our people, especially in cities, the separation of children from parents, of brothers from sisters, and of all from their former localities, destroy that continuity of influence which bad parents and grandparents exert, and do away with those neighborhoods of crime and pauperism where vice concentrates and transmits itself with ever-increasing power. The fact that tenants must forever be "moving" in New York, is a preventive of some of the worst evils among the lower poor. The mill of American life, which grinds up so many delicate and fragile things, has its uses, when it is turned on the vicious fragments of the lower strata of society.

Villages, which are more stable and conservative, and tend to keep families together more and in the same neighborhoods, show more instances of inherited and concentrated wickedness and idleness. In New York the families are constantly broken up; some members improve, some die out, but they do not transmit a progeny of crime. There is little inherited criminality and pauperism.

A QUESTION

Among these public influences on the young, it has been often a question with some, whether the Public Schools did not educate the daughters of the poor too much, and thus make them discontented with their condition, and exposed to temptation.

It is said that these working-girls, seeing such fine dresses about them, and learning many useless accomplishments, have become indifferent to steady hand-labor, and have sought in vice for the luxuries which they have first learned to know in the public schools. My own observation, however, leads me to doubt whether this occurs, unless as an exceptional fact. The influence of discipline and regular instruction is against the style of character which makes the prostitute. Where there is a habit of work, there are seldom the laziness and shiftlessness which especially cause or stimulate sexual vice. Some working-girls do, no doubt, become discontented with their former condition, and some rise to a much higher, while some fall; but this happens everywhere in the United States, and is not to be traced especially to the influence of our Free Schools.

We have spoken of the greater tendency of large cities, as compared with villages, in breaking up vicious families. There is another advantage of cities in this matter. The especial virtue of a village community is the self-respect and personal independence of its members. No benefits of charity or benevolent assistance and dependence could ever outweigh this. But this very virtue tends to keep a wicked or idle family in its present condition. The neighbors are not in the habit of interfering with it; no one advises or warns it. The children grow up as other people's children do, in the way the parents prefer; there is no machinery of charity to lift them out of the slime; and if any of their wealthier neighbors, from motives of benevolence, visited the house, and attempted to improve or educate the family, the effort would be resented or misconstrued. The whole family become a kind of *pariahs*; they are morally tabooed, and grow up in a vicious atmosphere of their own, and really come out much worse than a similar family in the city. This phenomenon is only a natural effect of the best virtues of the rural community.

In a large town, on the other hand, there exist machinery and organization through which benevolent and religious persons can approach such families, and their good intentions not be suspected or resented. The poor people themselves are not so independent, and accept advice or warning more readily; they are not so stamped in public repute with a bad name; less is known of them, and the children, under new influences, break off from the vicious career of their parents, and grow up as honest and industrious persons. Moreover, the existence of so much charitable organization in the cities brings the best talent and character of the fortunate classes to bear directly on the unfortunate, far more than is the fact in villages.

CHAPTER V

THE CAUSES OF CRIME

OVERCROWDING

The source of juvenile crime and misery in New York, which is the most formidable, and, at the same time, one of the most difficult to remove, is the *overcrowding* of our population. The form of the city-site is such – the majority of the dwellings being crowded into a narrow island between two water-fronts – that space near the business-portion of the city becomes of great value. These districts are necessarily sought for by the laboring and mechanic classes, as they are near the places of employment. They are avoided by the wealthy on account of the population which has already occupied so much of them. The result is, that the poor must live in certain wards; and as space is costly, the landlords supply them with (comparatively) cheap dwellings, by building very high and large houses, in which great numbers of people rent only rooms, instead of dwellings.

Were New York a city radiating from a centre over an almost unlimited space – as Philadelphia, for instance – the laborers or the mechanics might take up their abode anywhere, and land would be comparatively cheap, so that the highest blessing of the laboring class would be attainable – of separate homes for each family. But, on this narrow island, business is so peculiarly concentrated, and population is so much forced to one exit – towards the north – and the poor have such a singular objection to living beyond a ferry, that space will inevitably continue very dear in New York, and the laboring classes will be compelled to occupy it.

To add to the unavoidable costliness of ground-room on this island, has come in the effect of bad government.

It is one of the most unpleasant experiences of the student of political economy, that the axioms of his science can so seldom be understood by the masses, though their interests be vitally affected by them. Thus, every thoughtful man knows that each new "job" among city officials, each act of plunder of public property by members of the municipal government, every loss of income or mal-appropriation or extravagance in the city's funds, must be paid for by taxation, and that taxation always falls heaviest on labor. The laboring classes of the city rule it, and through their especial leaders are the great public losses and wastefulness occasioned.

Yet they never know that they themselves continually pay for these in increased rents. Every landlord charges his advanced taxation in rent, and probably a profit on that. The tenant pays more for his room, the grocer more for his shop, the butcher and tailor and shoemaker, and every retailer have heavier expenses from the advance in rents, and each and all charge it on their customers. The poor feel the final pressure. The painful effect has been, that the expense for rent has arisen enormously with the laboring classes of this city during the last five years, while many of the other living expenses have nearly returned to the standard before the war.

The influence of high rents is to force more people into a given space, in order to economize and divide expense.

The latest trustworthy statistics on this important subject are from the excellent Reports of the Metropolitan Board of Health for 1866. From these, it appears that the Eleventh Ward of this city, with a population of 58,953, has a rate of population of 196,510 to the square mile, or 16 1/10 square yards to each person; the Tenth Ward, with 31,587 population, has a rate of 185,512 to the square mile, or 17 1/10 square yards to each; the Seventeenth Ward, with 79,563, has the rate of 153,006;

the Fourteenth, with 23,382, has a rate of 155,880; the Thirteenth, with 26,388, has 155,224; and so on with others, though in less proportion.

The worst districts in London do not at all equal this crowding of population. Thus, East London shows the rate of 175,816 to the square mile; the Strand, 141,556; St. Luke's, 151,104; Holborn, 148,705; and St. Jame's, Westminster, 144,008.

If particular districts of our city be taken, they present an even greater massing of human beings than the above averages have shown. Thus, according to the Report of the Council of Hygiene in 1865, the tenant-house and cellar population of the Fourth Ward numbered 17,611 packed in buildings over a space less than thirty acres, exclusive of streets, which would make the fearful rate of 290,000 to the square mile.

In the Seventeenth Ward, the Board of Health reports that in 1868, 4,120 houses contained 95,091 inhabitants, of whom 14,016 were children under five years. In the same report, the number of tenement-houses for the whole city is given at 18,582, with an estimate of one-half the whole population dwelling in them – say 500,000.

We quote an extract from a report of Mr. Dupuy, Visitor of the Children's Aid Society of the First Ward, describing the condition of a tenement-house:

"What do you think of the moral atmosphere of the home I am about to describe below? To such a home two of our boys return nightly.

"In a dark cellar filled with smoke, there sleep, all in one room, with no kind of partition dividing them, two men with their wives, a girl of thirteen or fourteen, two men and a large boy of about seventeen years of age, a mother with two more boys, one about ten years old, and one large boy of fifteen; another woman with two boys, nine and eleven years of age – in all, *fourteen persons.*

"This room I have often visited, and the number enumerated probably falls below, rather than above the average that sleep there."

It need not be said that with overcrowding such as this, there is always disease, and as naturally, crime. The privacy of a home is undoubtedly one of the most favorable conditions to virtue, especially in a girl.

If a female child be born and brought up in a room of one of these tenement-houses, she loses very early the modesty which is the great shield of purity. Personal delicacy becomes almost unknown to her. Living, sleeping, and doing her work in the some apartment with men and boys of various ages, it is well-nigh impossible for her to retain any feminine reserve, and she passes almost unconsciously the line of purity at a very early age.

In these dens of crowded humanity, too, other and more unnatural crimes are committed among those of the same blood and family.

Here, too, congregate some of the worst of the destitute population of the city – vagrants, beggars, nondescript thieves, broken-down drunken vagabonds, who manage as yet to keep out of the station-houses, and the lowest and most bungling of the "sharpers." Naturally, the boys growing up in such places become, as by a law of nature, petty thieves, pickpockets, street-rovers, beggars, and burglars. Their only salvation is, that these dens become so filthy and haunted with vermin, that the lads themselves leave them in disgust, preferring the barges on the breezy docks, or the boxes on the side-walk, from which eventually they are drawn into the neat and comfortable Boys' Lodging-houses, and there find themselves imperceptibly changed into honest and decent boys. This is the story of thousands every year.

The cellar-population alone of this city is a source of incessant disease and crime.

And with the more respectable class of poor who occupy the better kind of tenement-houses, the packing of human beings in those great caravansaries is one of the worst evils of this city. It sows pestilence and breeds every species of criminal habits.

From the eighteen thousand tenement-houses comes seventy-three per cent. [In 1865, the deaths in tenement-houses were 14,500 out of 19,813, the total for the city. The death-rate has,

however, been brought down by sanitary improvements from 76 per cent., in 1866, to about 66 per cent, in 1871, or a gain of 2,900 lives in these wretched houses.] of the mortality of our population, and we have little doubt as much as ninety per cent. of the offenses against property and person.

Over-crowding is the one great misfortune of New York. Without it, we should be the healthiest large city in the world, [Our annual death-rate is now 28.79 per 1,000, while some of the clean wards show 15 per 1,000, or about the rate of the Isle of Wight. The rate of London is about 34, Liverpool has been as high as 40, but is more healthy now, owing to sanitary improvements. Our Sixth Ward reaches 48, and "Gotham Court," in Cherry Street, attains the horrible maximum of 195 per 1,000.] and a great proportion of the crimes which disgrace our civilization would be nipped in the bud. While this continues as it does now, there is no possibility of a thorough sanitary, moral, and religious reform in our worst wards.

Few girls can grow up to maturity in such dens as exist in the First, Sixth, Eleventh, and Seventeenth Wards and be virtuous; few boys can have such places as homes and not be thieves and vagabonds. In such places typhus and cholera will always be rife, and the death-rate will reach its most terrible maximum. While the poorest population dwell in these cellars and crowded attics, neither Sunday-schools, nor churches, nor charities, can accomplish a thorough reform.

What, then, is to be done to remedy this terrible evil?

Experience has proved that our remedial agencies can, in individual cases cure even the evils resulting from this unnatural condensing of population. That is, we can point to thousands of lads and young girls who were born and reared in such crowded dens of humanity, but who have been transformed into virtuous, well-behaved, and industrious young men and women, by the quiet daily influence of the charitable organization I am about to describe.

Still, these cases of reform are, in truth, exceptions. The natural and legitimate influence of such massing of population is all in the direction of immorality and degeneracy. Whatever would lessen that, would at once, and by a necessary law, diminish crime and poverty and disease.

REMEDIES

The great remedies are to be looked for in broad, general provisions for distributing population. Thus far, the means of communication between business New York and the suburbs have been singularly defective. An underground railway with cheap workman's trains, or elevated railways with similar conveniences, connecting Westchester County and the lower part of the city, or suburbs laid out in New Jersey or on Long Island expressly for working people, with cheap connections with New York and Brooklyn, would soon make a vast difference in the concentration of population in our lower wards. It is true that English experience would show that laboring-men, after a heavy day's work, cannot bear the jar of railway traveling. There must be, however, many varieties of labor – such as work in factories and the like – where a little movement in a railroad-train at the close of a day would be a refreshment.

Then, as the laboring class was concentrated in suburban districts, the various occupations which attend them, such as grocers, shoemakers, tailors, and others, would follow, and be established near them. Many nationalities among our working class have an especial fondness for gardens and bits of land about their houses. This would be an additional attraction to such settlements; and with easy and cheap communications we might soon have tens of thousands of our laborers and mechanics settled in pleasant and healthy little suburban villages, each, perhaps having his own small house and garden, and the children growing up under far better influences, moral and physical, than they could possibly enjoy in tenement-houses. There are many districts within half an hour of New York, where such plots could be laid out with lots at $500 each, which would pay a handsome profit to the owner, or where a cottage could be let with advantage for the present rent of a tenement attic.

Improved communications have already removed hundreds and thousands of the middle class from the city to all the surrounding neighborhood, to the immense benefit both of themselves and their families. Equal conveniences suited to the wants of the laboring class will soon cause multitudes of these to live in the suburban districts. The obstacle, however, as in all efforts at improvement for the working people, is in their own ignorance and timidity, and their love of the crowd and bustle of a city.

More remote even, than relief by improved communications, is a possible check to high rents by a better government. A cheap and honest government of the masses in New York would at once lower taxation and bring down rents. The enormous prices demanded for one or two small rooms in a tenement-house are a measure (in part) of the cost of our city government.

Another alleviation to our over crowding has often been proposed, but never vigorously acted upon, as we are persuaded it might be, and that is the making the link between the demand for labor in our country districts and the supply in New York, closer. The success of the charity which we are about describing in the transfer of destitute and homeless children to homes in the West, and of the Commissioners of Emigration in their "Labor Exchange," indicate what might be accomplished by a grand organized movement for transferring our unemployed labor to the fields of the West. It is true, this would not carry away our poorest class, yet it would relieve the pressure of population here on space, and thus give more room and occupation for all.

But admitting that we cannot entirely prevent the enormous massing of people, such as prevails in our Eleventh and Seventeenth Wards, we can certainly control it by legislation. The recent Sanitary Acts of New York attempt to hold in check the mode of building tenement-houses, requiring certain means of ventilation and exit, forbidding the filling-up of the entire space between the houses with dwellings, and otherwise seeking to improve the condition of such tenement-houses.

There only needs two steps farther in imitation of the British Lodging-house Acts – one removing altogether the cellar-population, when under certain unhealthy conditions; and the other limiting by law the number who can occupy a given space in a tenement-room. The British Acts assign 240 cubic feet as the lowest space admissible for each tenant or lodger, and if the inspector finds less space than that occupied, he at once enters a complaint, and the owner or landlord is obliged to reduce the number of his occupants, under strict penalties. A provision of this nature in our New York law would break up our worst dens, and scatter their tenants or lodgers. The removal of the cellar-population from a large proportion of their dwellings should also be made. Liverpool removed 20,000 cellar-occupants in one year (1847), to the immense gain, both moral and sanitary, of the city. New York needs the reform quite as much. There would be no real hardship in such a measure, as the tenants could find accommodations in other parts of the city or the suburbs; and some would perhaps emigrate to the country.

One often-proposed remedy for the ills of our tenement-house system – the "Model Lodging-house" – has never been fairly tried here. The theory of this agency of reform is, that if a tenement-house can be constructed on the best sanitary principles, with good ventilation, with limited number of tenants, no overcrowding, and certain important conveniences to the lodgers, all under moral supervision (so that tenants of notoriously bad character are excluded), and such a house can be shown to pay, say seven per cent. net, this will become a "model" to the builders of tenement-houses; some building after the same style, because public opinion and their own conscience require it, others because competition compels it. Thus, in time, the mode of structure and occupancy of all the new tenement-houses would be changed. But to attain this desirable end, the model houses must first pay a profit, and a fair one. So long as they do not succeed in this, they are a failure, however benevolent their object and comfortable their arrangements. In this point of view, the "Waterloo Houses," in London, are a success, and do undoubtedly influence the mode of building and management of private tenement-houses; in this, also, the "Peabody Houses" are not a success, and will have no permanent influence.

The Model Houses in London for lodging single men have, as the writer has witnessed, changed and elevated the whole class of similar private lodging-houses.

The experiment ought to be tried here, on a merely business basis, by some of our wealthy men. The evil of crowded tenement-houses might be immensely alleviated by such a remedy.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAUSES OF CRIME

INTEMPERANCE

The power of the appetite for alcoholic stimulus is something amazing. A laboring-man feels it especially on account of the drag on his nervous system of steady and monotonous labor, and because of the few mental stimuli which he enjoys. He returns to his tenement-house after a hard day's work, "dragged out" and craving excitement; his rooms are disagreeable; perhaps his wife cross, or slatternly, and his children noisy; he has an intense desire for something which can take him out of all this, and cause his dull surroundings and his fatigue to be forgotten. Alcohol does this; moreover, he can bear alcohol and tobacco, to retard the waste of muscle, as the sedentary man cannot. In a few steps, he can find jolly companions, a lighted and warmed room, a newspaper, and, above all, a draught which, for the moment, can change poverty to riches, and drive care and labor and the thought of all his burdens and annoyances far away.

The liquor-shop is his picture-gallery, club, reading-room, and social *salon,* at once. His glass is the magic transmuter of care to cheerfulness, of penury to plenty, of a low, ignorant, worried life, to an existence for the moment buoyant, contented, and hopeful. Alas that the magician who thus, for the instant, transforms him with her rod, soon returns him to his low estate, with ten thousand curses haunting him! The one thus touched by the modern Circe is not even imbruted, for the brutes have no such appetite; he becomes a demonized man; all the treasures of life are trampled under his feet, and he is fit only to dwell "among the tombs." But, while labor is what it is, and the liquor-shop alone offers sociality and amusement to the poor, alcohol will still possess this overwhelming attraction. The results in this climate, and under the form of alcoholic stimulus offered here, are terrible beyond all computation. The drunkards' homes are the darkest spots even in the abyss of misery in every large city. Here the hearts of young women are truly broken, and they seek their only consolation in the same magic cup; here children are beaten, or maimed, or half-starved, until they run away to join the great throng of homeless street-rovers in our large towns, and grow up to infest society. From these homes radiate misery, grief, and crime. They are the nests in which the young fledgelings of misfortune and vice begin their flight. Probably two-thirds of the crimes of every city (and a very large portion of its poverty) come from the over-indulgence of this appetite. As an appetite, we do not believe it can ever be eradicated from the human race.

If we look at criminal statistics for the effects of this appetite, we will find that in the New York City prisons, during 1870, there were, out of 49,423 criminals, 30,507 of confessedly intemperate habits, while no doubt, with a large portion of the rest, indulgence in liquor was the cause of their offenses.

In the Albany Penitentiary there were, in 1869-70, 1,093 convicts, of whom 893 admitted they were intemperate. Of this whole number only 563 could read and write, and only 568 were natives of this country.

Among the children of misfortune in our city, the homeless boys and girls, and those compelled by poverty to attend the Industrial Schools (which I shall hereafter describe), it would be safe to say that ninety out of a hundred are the children of drunkards.

As a direct cause of crime in children, drunkenness takes but a small place. This is not an appetite of childhood. Very few boys or girls of the poorest class are addicted to it till they become mature.

The effort for Total Abstinence has been, indeed, an untold blessing to the working class in this country and many parts of Europe. It may be said, in many regions, to have broken the wand of the terrible enchantress. It has introduced a new social habit in drinking. It has connected abstinence with the ceremonial of religion and the pleasures of social organizations. It has addressed the working-man – as, in fact, he often is – as a child, and saved him from his own habits, by a sworn abstinence. Thousands of men could never have freed themselves from this most tyrannical appetite, except by absolute refusal to touch. In fact, it may be said that no vice is ever abandoned by gradual steps. The only hope for any one under the control of any wrong indulgence is in entire and immediate abandonment.

With those, too, who had not fallen under the sway of this appetite, especially if of the working class, abstinence was the safest rule.

The "Total Abstinence Reform" in this country, in Great Britain, and in Sweden, was one of the happiest events that ever occurred in the history of the working classes. Its blessings will descend through many generations. But in its nature it could not last. It was a tremendous reaction against the heavy and excessive drinking of fifty years since. It was a kind of noble asceticism. Like all asceticism, it could not continue as a permanent condition. Its power is now much spent. Wherever it can be introduced now among the laboring classes, it should be; and we believe one of the especial services of the Irish Catholic clergy, at this day, to the world, is in supporting and encouraging this great reform.

All who study the lower classes are beginning, however, now to look for other remedies of the evil of intemperance.

It has become remarkably apparent, during the last few years, that one of the best modes of driving out low tastes in the masses is to introduce higher. It has been found that galleries and museums and parks are the most formidable rivals of the liquor-shops. The experience near the Sydenham Palace, in England, and other places of instructive and pleasant resort for the laboring masses, is, that drinking-saloons do not flourish in opposition. Wherever, in the evening, a laboring-man can saunter in a pleasant park, or, in company with his wife and family, look at interesting pictures, or sculpture, or objects of curiosity, he has not such a craving for alcoholic stimulus.

Even open-air drinking in a garden – as is so common on the Continent – is never so excessive as in an artificial-lighted room. Where, too, a working-man can, in a few steps, find a cheerfully-lighted reading-room, with society or papers, or where a club is easily open to him without drinking, it will also be found that he ceases to frequent the saloon, and almost loses his taste for strong drink.

Whatever elevates the taste of the laborer, or expands his mind, or innocently amuses him, or passes his time pleasantly without indulgence, or agreeably instructs, or provides him with virtuous associations, tends at once to guard him from habits of intoxication. The Kensington Museum and Sydenham Palace, of London; the Cooper Union, the Central Park, and free Reading-rooms of New York, are all temperance-societies of the best kind. The great effort now is to bring this class of influences to bear on the habits of the laboring-people, and thus diminish intemperance.

It is a remarkable fact, in this connection, that, though ninety out of the hundred of our children in the Industrial Schools are the children of drunkards, not one of the thousands who have gone forth from them has been known to have fallen into intemperate habits. Under the elevating influences of the school, they imperceptibly grow out of the habits of their mothers and fathers, and never acquire the appetite.

Another matter, which is well worthy of the attention of reformers, is the possibility of introducing into those countries where "heavy drinking" prevails, the taste for light wines and the habit of open-air drinking. The passion for alcohol is a real one. On a broad scale it cannot be annihilated.

Can we not satisfy it innocently? In this country, for instance, light wines can be made to a vast extent, and finally be sold very cheaply. If the taste for them were formed, would it not expel the appetite for whisky and brandy, or at least, in the coming generation, form a new habit?

There is, it is true, a peculiar intensity in the American temperament which makes the taking of concentrated stimulus natural to it. It will need some time for men accustomed to work up their nervous system to a white heat by repeated draughts of whisky or brandy to be content with weak wines. Perhaps the present generation never will be. But the laws of health and morality are so manifestly on the side of drinking light wines as compared with drinking heavy liquors, that any effort at social improvement in this direction would have a fair chance of success. Even the slight change of habit involved in drinking leisurely at a table in the open air with women and children – after the German fashion – would be a great social reform over the hasty bar-drinking, while standing. The worst intoxication of this city is with the Irish and American bar-drinkers, not the German frequenters of gardens.

LIQUOR LAWS

In regard to legislation, it seems to me that our New York License laws of 1866 were, with a few improvements, a very "happy medium" in law-making. The ground was tacitly taken, in that code, that it subserved the general interests of morality to keep one day free from riotous or public drinking, and allow the majority of the community to spend it in rest and worship; and, inasmuch as that day was one of especial temptation to the working-classes, they were to be treated to a certain degree like minors, and liquor was to be refused to them on it. Under this law, also, minors and apprentices, on weekdays, were forbidden to be supplied with intoxicating drinks, and the liquor-shops were closed at certain hours of the night. Very properly, also, these sellers of intoxicating beverages, making enormous profits, and costing the community immensely in the expenses of crime occasioned by their trade, were heavily taxed, and paid to the city over a million dollars annually in fees, licenses, and fines. The effects of the law were admirable, in the diminution of cases of arrest and crime on the Sunday, and the checking of the ravages of intoxication.

But it was always apparent to the writer that, with the peculiar constitution of the population of this city, it could not be sustained, unless concessions were made to the prejudices and habits of certain nationalities among our citizens. Our reformers, however, as a class, are exceedingly adverse to concessions; they look at questions of habits as absolute questions of right and wrong, and they will permit no half-way or medium ground. But legislation is always a matter of concession. We cannot make laws for human nature as it ought to be, but as it is. If we do not get the absolutely best law passed, we must content ourselves with the medium best. If our Temperance Reformers had permitted a clause in the law, excepting the drinking in gardens, or of lager-beer, from the restrictions of the License Law, we should not, indeed, have had so good a state of things as we had for a few years, under the old law, but we might have had it permanently. Now, we have nearly lost all control over drinking, and the Sunday orgies and crimes will apparently renew themselves without check or restraint. If a reform in legislation claim too much, there is always a severe reaction possible, when the final effects will be worse than the evils sought to be corrected.

The true plan of reform for this city would be to cause the License Law of 1866 to be re-enacted with certain amendments. The "intoxicating drinks" mentioned should be held not to include lager-beer or certain light wines; and garden-drinking might be permitted, under strict police surveillance.

The Excise Board should be allowed very summary control, however, even over the German gardens and lager-beer drinking-places, so that, if they were perverted into places of disturbance and intoxication, the licenses could be revoked.

By separating absolutely the licenses for light drinks and those for rum, whisky, and heavy ales, a vast deal of drunkenness might be prevented, and yet the foreign habits not be too much

interfered with, and comparatively innocent pleasures permitted. In small towns and villages, a reasonable compromise would seem to be to allow each municipality to control the matter in the mode it preferred: some communities in this way, forbidding all sale of intoxicating liquors, and others permitting it, under conditions; but each being responsible for the evils or benefits of the system it adopted.

If a student of history were reviewing the gloomy list of the evils which have most cursed mankind, which have wasted households, stained the hand of man with his fellow's blood, sown quarrels and hatreds, broken women's hearts, and ruined children in their earliest years, bred poverty and crime, he would place next to the bloody name of War, the black word – INTEMPERANCE. No wonder that the best minds of modern times are considering most seriously the soundest means of checking it. If abstinence were the natural and only means, the noble soul would still say, in the words of Paul: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth."

But abstinence is not thoroughly natural; it has no chance of a universal acceptance; and experience shows that other and wider means must be employed. We must trust to the imperceptible and widely-extended influences of civilization, of higher tastes, and more refined amusements on the masses. We must employ the powers of education, and, above all, the boundless force of Religion, to elevate the race above the tyranny of this tremendous appetite.

CHAPTER VII

ORGANIZATION OF A REMEDY

In New York, we believe almost alone among the great capitals of the world, a profound and sustained effort for many years has been made to cut off the sources and diminish the numbers of the dangerous classes; and, as the records of crime show, with a marked effect.

In most large cities, the first practical difficulty is the want of a united organization to work upon the evils connected with this lowest class. There are too many scattered efforts, aiming in a desultory manner at this and that particular evil, resulting from the condition of the children of the streets. There is no unity of plan and of work. Every large city should form one Association or organization, whose sole object should be to deal alone with the sufferings, wants, and crimes, arising from a class of youth who are homeless, ignorant, or neglected. The injuries to public morals and property from such a class are important enough to call out the best thought and utmost energy and inventiveness of charitable men and women to prevent them. Where an association devotes itself thus to one great public evil, a thousand remedies or ingenious devices of cure and prevention will be hit upon, when, with a more miscellaneous field of work, the best methods would be overlooked. So threatening is the danger in every populous town from the children who are neglected, that the best talent ought to be engaged to study their condition and devise their improvement, and the highest character and most ample means should be offered to guarantee and make permanent the movements devised for their elevation.

The lack of all this in many European capitals is a reason that so little, comparatively, has been done to meet these tremendous dangers.

Then, again, in religious communities, such as the English and American, there is too great a confidence in *technical religious* means.

We would not breathe a word against the absolute necessity of Christianity in any scheme of thorough social reform. If the Christian Church has one garland on its altars which time does not wither nor skepticism destroy, which is fresh and beautiful each year, it is that humble offering laid there through every age by the neglected little ones of society, whom the most enlightened Stoicism despised and Paganism cast out, but who have been blessed and saved by its ministrations of love. No skeptical doubt or "rationalism" can ever pluck from the Christian Church this, its purest crown.

To attempt to prevent or cure the fearful moral diseases of our lowest classes without Christianity, is like trying to carry through a sanitary reform in a city without sunlight.

But the mistake we refer to, is a too great use of, or confidence in, the old technical methods – such as distributing tracts, and holding prayer-meetings, and, scattering Bibles. The neglected and ruffian class which we are considering are in no way affected directly by such influences as these. New methods must be invented for them.

Another obstacle, in American cities, to any comprehensive results of reform or prevention among these classes, has been the too blind following of European precedents. In Europe, the labor-market is fully supplied. There is a steady pressure of population on subsistence. No general method of prevention or charity can be attempted which interferes with the rights of honest and self-supporting labor. The victims of society, the unfortunate, the *enfants perdus,* must be retained, when aided at all, in public institutions. They cannot be allowed to compete with outside industry. They are not wanted in the general market of labor. They must be kept in *Asylums.*

Now, Asylums are a bequest of monastic days. They breed a species of character which is monastic-indolent, unused to struggle; subordinate indeed, but with little independence and manly

vigor. If the subjects of the modern monastery be unfortunates – especially if they be already somewhat tainted with vice and crime – the effect is a weakening of true masculine vigor, an increase of the apparent virtues, and a hidden growth of secret and contagious vices. Moreover, the life under the machinery of an "Institution" does not prepare for the thousand petty hand-labors of a poor man's cottage. But, greatest of all objections, the asylum system is, of necessity, immensely expensive, and can reach but a comparatively small number of subjects.

These various obstacles and difficulties, which impede thorough work for the elevation of our worst classes, can, however, be overcome.

PIONEER WORK

Some twenty years ago, the then Chief of Police of New York, Captain Matsell, put forth a report on the condition of the street-children of the city, which aroused universal anxiety, and called forth much compassion. The writer of this was then engaged (in 1852) outside of his professional duties in rather desultory and despairing labors for the reform of adult prisoners on Blackwell's Island and the squalid poor in the Five Points district. It was a Sisyphus-like work, and soon discouraged all engaged in it. We seemed in those infernal regions to repeat the toil of the Danaides, and to be attempting to fill the leaky vessel of society by efforts which left it as empty as before. What soon struck all engaged in those labors was the immense number of boys and girls floating and drifting about our streets, with hardly any arguable home or occupation, who continually swelled the multitude of criminals, prostitutes, and vagrants.

Saddest of all sights was the thin child's face, so often seen behind prison-bars, and the melancholy procession of little children who were continually passing through that gloomy Egyptian portal, which seemed to some of us then always inscribed with the scroll over the entrance of the Inferno, "Here leave all hope behind!"

It was evident soon, to all who thought upon the subject, that what New York most of all needed was some grand, comprehensive effort to check the growth of the "dangerous classes."

The "Social Evil," of course, was pressed continually on the minds of those engaged in these labors. Mr. Pease was then making a most heroic effort to meet this in its worst form in the Five-Points region. No one whom we have ever known was so qualified for this desperate work, or was so successful in it. Still, it was but one man against a sea of crime. The waves soon rolled over these enthusiastic and devoted labors, and the waste of misfortune and guilt remained as desolate and hopeless as before. It was clear that whatever was done there, must be done in the source and origin of the evil – in prevention, not cure.

The impression deepened both with those engaged in these benevolent labors and with the community, that a general Organization should be formed which should deal alone with the evils and dangers threatened from the class of neglected youth then first coming plainly into public view. Those who possessed property-interests in the city saw the immense loss and damage which would occur from such an increasing community of young thieves and criminals. The humane felt for the little waifs of society who thus, through no fault of their own, were cast out on the currents of a large city; and the religious recognized it as a solemn duty to carry the good news of Christianity to these "heathen at home." Everything seemed in readiness for some comprehensive and well-laid scheme of benevolence and education for the street-children of New York.

A number of our citizens, with the present writer threw themselves into a somewhat original method for benefiting the young "roughs" and vagabond boys of the metropolis. This was known as the effort of the

"BOYS' MEETINGS."

The theory of these original assemblages was, that the "sympathy of an audience" might be used to influence these wild and untutored young Arabs when ordinary agencies were of no avail. The street-boys, as is well-known, are exceedingly sharp and keen, and, being accustomed to theatrical performances, are easily touched by real oratory, and by dramatic instruction; but they are also restless, soon tired of long exhortations, and somewhat given to *chaff*.

The early days of those "Boys' Meetings" were stormy. Sometimes the salutatory exercises from the street were showers of stones; sometimes a general scrimmage occurred over the benches; again, the visitors or missionaries were pelted, by some opposition-gang, or bitter enemies of the lads who attended the meeting. The exercises, too, must be conducted with much tact, or they broke up with a laugh or in a row. The platform of the Boys' Meeting seemed to become a kind of chemical test of the gaseous element in the brethren's brains. One pungent criticism we remember – on a pious and somewhat sentimental Sunday-school brother, who, in one of our meetings, had been putting forth vague and declamatory religious exhortation – in the words "Gas! gas!" whispered with infinite contempt from one hard-faced young disciple to another. Unhappy, too, was the experience of any more daring missionary who ventured to question these youthful inquirers.

Thus – "In this parable, my dear boys, of the Pharisee and the publican, what is meant by the 'publican?'"

"Alderman, sir, wot keeps a pot-house!" "Dimocrat, sir!" "Black Republican, sir!"

Or – "My boys, what is the great end of man? When is he happiest? How would *you* feel happiest?"

"When we'd plenty of hard cash, sir!"

Or – "My *dear* boys, when your father and your mother forsake you, *who* will take you up?"

"The Purlice, sir (very seriously), the Purlice!"

They sometimes took their own quiet revenge among themselves, in imitating the Sunday-school addresses delivered to them.

Still, ungoverned, prematurely sharp, and accustomed to all vileness, as these lads were, words which came forth from the depths of a man's or woman's heart would always touch some hidden chord in theirs. Pathos and eloquence vibrated on their heartstrings as with any other audience. Beneath all their rough habits and rude words was concealed the solemn monitor, the *Daimon,* which ever whispers to the lowest of human creatures, that some things are wrong – are not to be done.

Whenever the speaker could, for a moment only, open the hearts of the little street-rovers to this voice, there was in the wild audience a silence almost painful, and every one instinctively felt, with awe, a mysterious Presence in the humble room, which blessed both those who spake and those who heard.

Whatever was bold, or practical, or heroic in sentiment, and especially the dramatic in oratory, was most intently listened to by these children of misfortune.

The Boys' Meetings, however, were not, and could not, in the nature of things, be a permanent success. They were the pioneer-work for more profound labors for this class. They cleared the way, and showed the character of the materials. Those engaged in them learned the fearful nature of the evils they were struggling with, and how little any moral influence on one day can do to combat them. These wild gatherings, like meetings for street-preaching, do not seem suited to the habits of our population; they are too much an occasion for frolic. They have given way to, and been merged in, much more disciplined assemblages for precisely the same class, which again are only one step in a long series of moral efforts in their behalf, that are in operation each day of every week and month, and extend through years.

The first of these meetings was opened in 1848, under the charge of Mr. A. D. F. Randolph by the members of a Presbyterian church, in a hall on the corner of Christopher and Hudson Streets. This was followed by another in a subsequent year in Wooster Street, commenced by the indefatigable exertions of the wife of Rev. Dr. G. B. Cheever, and sustained especially by Mr. B. J. Howland and W. C. Russell.

The writer took more or less part in those, but was especially engaged in founding one in Sixth Street, near Second Avenue; another in 118 Avenue D, from which arose the "Wilson School" and the Avenue D Mission; one in King Street, near Hudson, from which came the Cottage-Place Mission; and another in Greenwich Street, near Vandam Street.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW ORGANIZATION

All those who were engaged in these efforts felt their inadequacy and we resolved to meet at different private houses to discuss the formation of some more comprehensive effort. At length, in 1853, we organized, and, to the great surprise of the writer, his associates suggested that he should take the position of executive officer of the new and untried Association. He was at that time busied in literary and editorial pursuits, but had expected soon to carry out the purpose of his especial training, and to become a preacher. He never dreamed of making a life-pursuit of it in the beginning, or during a number of years; but "the call" of the neglected and outcast was too strong for him, finally, to listen to any other, and the humble charity at length became a moral and educational movement so profound and earnest as to repay the life-endeavors of any man. He has never regretted having cast aside whatever chance he may have had for the prizes and honors of life, for the sake of the forgotten and the unfortunate, and, above all, for HIS sake to whom we owe all. Indeed, he holds himself most fortunate in his profession, for it may be said there is no occupation to which man can devote himself, where he can have such unmingled happiness, as when he is assuaging human misery and raising the ignorant and depressed to a higher life.

THE TRUSTEES

One of the most energetic members of this new body, in the beginning, was a nephew of Dr. Channing – a Unitarian, Mr. Wm. C. Russell – a man of singular earnestness of character, now Professor of History and Vice-President in Cornell University. With him was associated a friend, Mr. B. J. Howland, of peculiar compassion of nature, whose life almost consisted of the happiness it shed on others-he also being a Unitarian. Then, on the other side, theologically, was Judge John L. Mason, one of the pillars of the Presbyterian Church, from an old and honored Presbyterian family. His accurate legality of mind and solidity of character were of immense advantage to the youthful Association, while, under a formal exterior, he had a most merciful heart for all kinds of human misery. He was our presiding officer for many years, and did most faithful and thorough work for the charity. With him, representing the Congregationalists, was a very careful and judicious man, engaged for many years in Sunday-schools and similar movements, Mr. Wm. C. Gilman. The Dutch Reformed were represented by an experienced friend of education, Mr. M. T. Hewitt; and the Presbyterians again by one of such gentleness and humanity, that all sects might have called him Brother – Mr. W. L. King. To these was added one who has been a great impelling force of this humane movement ever since-a man of large, generous nature, and much impulse of temperament, with a high and refined culture, who has done more to gain support for this charity with the business community, where he is so influential, than any other one man – Mr. J. E. Williams, also a Unitarian. Mr. W. had also been engaged in similar charities in Boston.

During the first year, we added to our board from the Methodists, Dr. J. L. Phelps; from the Episcopalians, Mr. Archibald Russell (since deceased), who has accomplished so much as the President of the Board of the Five Points House of Industry; Mr. George Bird, and Mr. A. S. Hewitt, who is now the managing head of that great educational institution, the Cooper Union; from the Presbyterians, the celebrated Mr. Cyrus W. Field; and from the "Come Outers," Mr. C. W. Elliott, the genial author of the "New England History." Of all the first trustees, the only ones in office in 1871 are J. E. Williams, B. J. Howland, M. T. Hewitt, and C. L. Brace.

On a subsequent year we elected a gentleman who especially represented a religious body that has always profoundly sympathized with our enterprise – Mr. Howard Potter, the son of the eminent Episcopal Bishop of Pennsylvania, and nephew of the Bishop of New York. And yet, of all the members of our Board, no one has been more entirely unsectarian than this trustee; and certainly no one has thrown into our charity more heart and a more unbiased judgment. Mr. Potter is still trustee. Through him and Mr. B. J. Livingston, who was chosen a few years after, the whole accounts of the Society were subsequently put in a clear shape, and the duties of the trustees in supervision made distinct and regular.

It is an evidence of the simple desire for doing good which actuated these gentlemen, and of the possibility of a "Christian Union" that, though representing so many different sects, and ardently attached to them, there never was in all the subsequent years the slightest difference among them resulting from their divergent views on speculative topics. Nearly all of them were engaged practically in laboring among the dangerous classes. Mr. Howland and Mr. Russell had struggled most earnestly for a considerable period to reform the morals and elevate the character of the degraded population near "Rotten Row," in Laurens street, and their "Boys' Meeting" had been one of the most spirited efforts in this direction to be seen in the city.

Several of the gentlemen I have mentioned have become distinguished in their various professions, but it maybe doubted if they will look back on any action of their public careers with more satisfaction than their first earnest efforts to lay firmly the foundations of a broad structure of charity, education, and reform.

The organization was happily named

"THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF NEW YORK."

This association, which, from such small beginnings has grown to so important dimensions, was thus formed in 1853, and was subsequently incorporated in 1856, under the general Act of the State of New York in relation to Charitable Associations.

A small office on the corner of Amity Street was opened, with a single lad in attendance, besides the present writer.

The public, so profound was the sense of these threatening evils, immediately came forward with its subscriptions – the first large gift (fifty dollars) being from the wife of the principal property-holder in the city, Mrs. William B. Astor.

Most touching of all was the crowd of wandering little ones who immediately found their way to the office. Ragged young girls who had nowhere to lay their heads; children driven from drunkards' homes; orphans who slept where they could find a box or a stairway; boys cast out by step-mothers or step-fathers; newsboys, whose incessant answer to our question, "Where do you live?" rung in our ears, *"Don't live nowhere!"* little bootblacks, young peddlers "canawl-boys," who seem to drift into the city every winter, and live a vagabond life; pickpockets and petty thieves trying to get honest work; child beggars and flower-sellers growing up to enter courses of crime – all this motley throng of infantile misery and childish guilt passed through our doors, telling their simple stories of suffering, and loneliness, and temptation, until our hearts became sick; and the present writer, certainly, if he had not been able to stir up the fortunate classes to aid in assuaging these fearful miseries, would have abandoned the post in discouragement and disgust.

The following letter, written at this time by the Secretary, is appended, as showing the feeling of those founding the Society:

"W. L. KING, Esq.:

"MY DEAR SIR – We were very glad to get your first letter to Mr. Russell, giving us your good wishes and your subscription. It was read aloud to our committee, and we have several times

expressed ourselves as very much regretting your absence. I should have certainly written you, but I did not know your address. I received yours from Macon yesterday, and hasten to reply.

"Everything goes on well. We have taken Judge Mason and Mr. J. E. Williams (formerly of Boston) into the committee. I enclose a circular, to which, according to the permission which you gave us, we have placed your name. We have opened one room for a workshop in Wooster Street, where we expect to have forty or fifty boys. The work is shoe-making. The boys jump at the chance gladly. Some three 'Newsboys' Meetings' we are just getting under way, though the churches move slowly. Our Meeting in Avenue D is improving every Sunday, and is very full. Next Thursday eve, I have made arrangements for a lecture on the Magic Lantern to the boys of our Meeting. We gave out tickets on Sunday. The Girls' meeting is large, and you know, perhaps, is now widened into an 'Industrial School' ["The Wilson School."] for girls, which meets every day in our Building in Avenue D. They have some fifty girls at work there – the worst vagrant kind. Public attention is arousing everywhere to this matter; and the first two or three days after our Appeal was published, we had some $400 sent in, part in cash, without the trouble of collecting. We shall begin collecting this week. I have been interrupted here by a very intelligent little newsboy, who is here vagrant and helpless – ran away from his step-father. One of the pressmen sent him to me. We shall put him in our workshop.

"I pray with you, dear sir, for God's blessing on our young enterprise.

It is a grand one; but without HIM I see how useless it will be. If we succeed even faintly, I shall feel that we have not lived in vain.

Surely Christ will be with us in these feeble efforts for his poor creatures.

"Very truly yours,
"CHARLES L. BRACE.

"NEW YORK, March 7, 1853.

"P. S. – I forgot to tell you the name we have chosen – 'Children's Aid Society.'

"Office, No. 683 Broadway, 2d floor, New York."

The following is the first circular of

THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

"This society has taken its origin in the deeply settled feelings of our citizens, that something must be done to meet the increasing crime and poverty among the destitute children of New York. Its objects are to help this class by opening Sunday Meetings and Industrial Schools, and, gradually as means shall be furnished, by forming Lodging-houses and Reading-rooms for children, and by employing paid agents whose sole business shall be to care for them.

"As Christian men, we cannot look upon this great multitude of unhappy, deserted, and degraded boys and girls without feeling our responsibility to God for them. We remember that they have the same capacities, the same need of kind and good influences, and the same Immortality as the little ones in our own homes. We bear in mind that One died for them, even as for the children of the rich and happy. Thus far, alms-houses and prisons have done little to affect the evil. But a small part of the vagrant population can be shut up in our asylums, and judges and magistrates are reluctant to convict children so young and ignorant that they hardly seem able to distinguish good and evil. The class increases. Immigration is pouring in its multitude of poor foreigners, who leave these young outcasts everywhere abandoned in our midst. For the most part, the boys grow up utterly by themselves. No one cares for them, and they care for no one. Some live by begging, by petty pilfering, by bold robbery; some earn an honest support by peddling matches, or apples, or newspapers; others gather bones and rags in the street to sell. They sleep on steps, in cellars, in old barns, and in markets, or they hire a bed in filthy and low lodging-houses. They cannot read; they do not go to school or attend

a church. Many of them have never seen the Bible. Every cunning faculty is intensely stimulated. They are shrewd and old in vice, when other children are in leading-strings. Few influences which are kind and good ever reach the vagrant boy. And, yet, among themselves they show generous and honest traits. Kindness can always touch them.

"The girls, too often, grow up even more pitiable and deserted. Till of late no one has ever cared for them. They are the crosswalk sweepers, the little apple-peddlers, and candy-sellers of our city; or, by more questionable means, they earn their scanty bread. They traverse the low, vile streets alone, and live without mother or friends, or any share in what we should call a home. They also know little of God or Christ, except by name. They grow up passionate, ungoverned, with no love or kindness ever to soften the heart. We all know their short wild life – and the sad end.

"These boys and girls, it should be remembered, will soon form the great lower class of our city. They will influence elections; they may shape the policy of the city; they will, assuredly, if unreclaimed, poison society all around them. They will help to form the great multitude of robbers, thieves, vagrants, and prostitutes who are now such a burden upon the law-respecting community.

"In one ward alone of the city, the Eleventh, there were, in 1863, out of 12,000 children between the ages of five and sixteen, only 7,000 who attended school, and only 2,500 who went to Sabbath School; leaving 5,000 without the common privileges of education, and about 9,000 destitute of public religious influence.

"In view of these evils we have formed an Association which shall devote itself entirely to this class of vagrant children. We do not propose in any way to conflict with existing asylums and institutions, but to render them a hearty co-operation, and, at the same time, to fill a gap, which, of necessity, they all have left. A large multitude of children live in the city who cannot be placed in asylums, and yet who are uncared-for and ignorant and vagrant. We propose to give to these work, and to bring them under religious influence. As means shall come in, it is designed to district the city, so that hereafter every Ward may have its agent, who shall be a friend to the vagrant child. 'Boys' Sunday Meetings' have already been formed, which we hope to see extended until every quarter has its place of preaching to boys. With these we intend to connect 'Industrial Schools,' where the great temptations to this class arising from want of work may be removed, and where they can learn an honest trade. Arrangements have been made with manufacturers, by which, if we have the requisite funds to begin, five hundred boys in different localities can be supplied with paying work. We hope, too, especially to be the means of draining the city of these children, by communicating with farmers, manufacturers, or families in the country, who may have need of such for employment. When homeless boys are found by our agents, we mean to get them homes in the families of respectable, needy persons the city, and put them in the way of an honest living. We design, in a word, to bring humane and kindly influences to bear on this forsaken class – to preach in various modes the gospel of Christ to the vagrant children of New York.

"Numbers of our citizens have long felt the evils we would remedy, but few have the leisure or the means to devote themselves personally to this work with the thoroughness which it requires. This society, as we propose, shall be a medium through which all can, in their measure, practically help the poor children of the city.

"We call upon all who recognize that these are the little ones of Christ; all who believe that crime is best averted by sowing good influences in childhood; all who are the friends of the helpless, to aid us in our enterprise. We confidently hope this wide and practical movement will have its full share of Christian liberality. And we earnestly ask the contributions of those able to give, to help us in carrying forward the work. * * * * * * * "March, 1858."

DENS OF MISERY AND CRIME

In investigating closely the different parts of the city, with reference to future movements for their benefit, I soon came to know certain centres of crime and misery, until every lane and alley, with its filth and wretchedness and vice, became familiar as the lanes of a country homestead to its owner. There was the infamous German "Rag-pickers' Den," in Pitt and Willett Streets – double rows of houses, flaunting with dirty banners, and the yards heaped up with bones and refuse, where cholera raged unchecked in its previous invasion. Here the wild life of the children soon made them outcasts and thieves.

Then came the murderous blocks in Cherry and Water Streets, where so many dark crimes were continually committed, and where the little girls who flitted about with baskets and wrapped in old shawls became familiar with vice before they were out of childhood.

There were the thieves' Lodging-houses' in the lower wards, where the street-boys were trained by older pickpockets and burglars for their nefarious callings; the low immigrant boarding-houses and vile cellars of the First Ward, educating a youthful population for courses of guilt; the notorious rogues' den in Laurens Street – "Rotten Row" – where, it was said, no drove of animals could pass by and keep its numbers intact; and, farther above, the community of young garroters and burglars around Hamersley Street and Cottage Place. And, still more north, the dreadful population of youthful ruffians and degraded men and women in "Poverty Lane," near Sixteenth and Seventeenth streets and Ninth Avenue, which subsequently ripened into the infamous "Nineteenth-street Gang."

On the east side, again, was "Dutch Hill," near Forty-second Street, the squatters' village, whence issued so many of the little peddlers of the city, and the Eleventh Ward and "Corlear's Hook," where the "copper-pickers," and young wood-stealers, and the thieves who beset the ship-yards congregated; while below, in the Sixth Ward, was the Italian quarter, where houses could be seen crowded with children, monkeys, dogs, and all the appurtenances of the corps of organ-grinders, harpers, and the little Italian street-sweepers, who then, ignorant and untrained, wandered through our down-town streets and alleys.

Near each one of these "fever nests," and centres of ignorance, crime, and poverty, it was our hope and aim eventually to place some agency which should be a moral and physical disinfectant – a seed of reform and improvement amid the wilderness of vice and degradation.

It seemed a too enthusiastic hope to be realized; and, at times, the waves of misery and guilt through these dark places appeared too overwhelming and irresistible for any one effort or association of efforts to be able to stem or oppose them.

How the somewhat ardent hope was realized, and the plan carried out, will appear hereafter.

The first special effort that we put forth was the providing of work for these children, by opening

WORKSHOPS

These experiments, of which we made many at different times, were not successful. Our object was to render the shops self-supporting. But the irregularity of the class attending them, the work spoiled, and the necessity of competing with skilled labor and often with machinery, soon put us behind. We had one workshop for pegging boots and shoes in Wooster Street, where we soon got employment for numbers of street-boys; but a machine was suddenly invented for pegging shoes, which drove us out of the field. We tried then paper box and bag-making, carpentering, and other branches; but it may be set down as an axiom, that "Benevolence cannot compete with Selfishness in business." Philanthropy will never cut down the expenses of production, as will individual self-interest.

Moreover, these artificial workshops excite the jealousy of the trades, while they are not so necessary in this country as in Europe, because the demand is so great here for children's labor.

We soon discovered that if we could train the children of the streets to habits of industry and self-control and neatness, and give them the rudiments of moral and mental education, we need not trouble ourselves about anything more. A child in any degree educated and disciplined can easily make an honest living in this country. The only occasional exception is with young girls depending on the needle for support, inasmuch as the competition here is so severe. But for these we often were enabled to provide instruction in skilled labor, which supported them easily; and, if taught cleanliness and habits of order and punctuality, they had no difficulty in securing places as upper servants, or they soon married into a better class.

CHAPTER IX

HOMELESS BOYS

THE NEWSBOYS' LODGING-HOUSE

The spectacle which earliest and most painfully arrested my attention in this work, were the *houseless* boys in various portions of the city.

There seemed to be a very considerable class of lads in New York who bore to the busy, wealthy world about them something of the same relation which Indians bear to the civilized Western settlers. They had no settled home, and lived on the outskirts of society, their hand against every man's pocket, and every man looking on them as natural enemies; their wits sharpened like those of a savage, and their principles often no better. Christianity reared its temples over them, and Civilization was carrying on its great work, while they – a happy race of little heathens and barbarians – plundered, or frolicked, or led their roving life, far beneath. Sometimes they seemed to me, like what the police call them, "street-rats," who gnawed at the foundations of society, and scampered away when light was brought near them. Their life was, of course, a painfully hard one. To sleep in boxes, or under stairways, or in hay-barges on the coldest winter-nights, for a mere child, was hard enough; but often to have no food, to be kicked and cuffed by the older ruffians, and shoved about by the police, standing barefooted and in rags under doorways as the winter-storm raged, and to know that in all the great city there was not a single door open with welcome to the little rover – this was harder.

Yet, with all this, a more light-hearted youngster than the street-boy is not to be found. He is always ready to make fun of his own sufferings, and to "chaff" others. His face is old from exposure and his sharp "struggle for existence;" his clothes flutter in the breeze; and his bare feet peep out from the broken boots. Yet he is merry as a clown, and always ready for the smallest joke, and quick to take "a point" or to return a repartee. His views of life are mainly derived from the more mature opinions of "flash-men," engine-runners, cock-fighters, pugilists, and pickpockets, whom he occasionally is permitted to look upon with admiration at some select pot-house; while his more ideal pictures of the world about him, and, his literary education, come from the low theatres, to which he is passionately attached. His morals are, of course, not of a high order, living, as he does, in a fighting, swearing, stealing, and gambling set. Yet he has his code; he will not get drunk; he pays his debts to other boys, and thinks it dishonorable to sell papers on their beat, and, if they come on his, he administers summary justice by "punching;" he is generous to a fault, and will always divide his last sixpence with a poorer boy. "Life is a strife" with him, and money its reward; and, as bankruptcy means to the street-boy a night on the door-steps without supper, he is sharp and reckless, if he can only earn or get enough to keep him above water. His temptations are, to cheat, steal, and lie. His religion is vague. One boy, who told me he "didn't live nowhere," who had never heard of Christ, said he had heard of God, and the boys thought it "kind o' lucky" to say over something to Him which one of them had learned, when they were sleeping out in boxes.

With all their other vices, it is remarkable how few of these smaller street-boys ever take liquor. And their kindness to one another, when all are in the utmost destitution, is a credit to human nature. [Only recently, a poor hump-backed lad in the Newsboys' Lodging-house gave his dollar, and collected nine more from the boys, for the family of the children who were lost in New Jersey.]

Their money is unfortunately apt to slip away, especially for gambling and petty lotteries, called "policy-tickets." A tradition in the remote past of some boy who drew a hundred dollars in these

lotteries still pervades the whole body, and they annually sink a considerable portion of their hard-earned pennies in "policy-tickets."

The choice of these lads of a night's resting-place is sometimes almost as remarkable as was Gavroche's in "Les Miserables." Two little newsboys slept one winter in the iron tube of the bridge at Harlem; two others made their bed in a burned-out safe in Wall Street. Sometimes they ensconced themselves in the cabin of a ferry-boat, and thus spent the night. Old boilers, barges, steps, and, above all, steam-gratings, were their favorite beds.

In those days the writer would frequently see ten or a dozen of them, piled together to keep one another warm, under the stairs of the printing-offices.

In planning the alleviation of these evils, it was necessary to keep in view one object, not to weaken the best quality of this class – their sturdy independence – and, at the same time, their prejudices and habits were not too suddenly to be assailed. They had a peculiar dread of Sunday Schools and religious exhortations – I think partly because of the general creed of their older associates, but more for fear that these exercises were a "pious dodge" for trapping them into the House of Refuge or some place of detention.

The first thing to be aimed at in the plan was, to treat the lads as independent little dealers, and give them nothing without payment, but at the same time to offer them much more for their money than they could get anywhere else. Moral, educational, and religious influences were to come in afterward. Securing them through their interests, we had a permanent hold of them.

Efforts were made by the writer among our influential citizens and in various churches, public meetings were held, articles written, the press interested, and at length sufficient money was pledged to make the experiment. The board of the new Society gave its approval, and a loft was secured in the old "Sun Buildings," and fitted up as a lodging-room, and in March, 1854, the first Lodging-house for street-boys or newsboys in this country was opened.

An excellent superintendent was found in the person of a carpenter, Mr. C. C. Tracy, who showed remarkable ingenuity and tact in the management of these wild lads. These little subjects regarded the first arrangements with some suspicion and much contempt. To find a good bed offered them for six cents, with a bath thrown in, and a supper for four cents, was a hard fact, which they could rest upon and understand; but the motive was evidently "gaseous." There was "no money in it" – that was clear. The Superintendent was probably "a street preacher," and this was a trap to get them to Sunday Schools, and so prepare them for the House of Refuge. Still, they might have a lark there, and it could be no worse than "bumming," *i. e.,* sleeping out. They laid their plans for a general scrimmage in the school-room – first cutting off the gas, and then a row in the bedroom.

The Superintendent, however, in a bland and benevolent way, nipped their plans in the bud. The gas-pipes were guarded; the rough ring-leaders were politely dismissed to the lower door, where an officer looked after their welfare; and, when the first boots began to fly from a little fellow's bed, he found himself suddenly snaked out by a gentle but muscular hand, and left in the cold to shiver over his folly. The others began to feel that a mysterious authority was getting even with them, and thought it better to nestle in their warm beds.

Little sleeping, however, was there among them that night; but ejaculations sounded out – such as, "I say, Jim, this is raythe better 'an bummin' – eh?" "My eyes! what soft beds these is!" "Tom! it's 'most as good as a steam-gratin', and there ain't no M. P.'s to poke neither!" "I'm glad I ain't a bummer to-night!"

A good wash and a breakfast sent the lodgers forth in the morning, happier and cleaner, if not better, than when they went in. This night's success established its popularity with the newsboys. The "Fulton Lodge" soon became a boys' hotel, and one loft was known among them as the "Astor House."

Quietly and judiciously did Mr. Tracy advance his lines among them.

"Boys," said he, one morning, "there was a gentleman here this morning, who wanted a boy in an office, at three dollars a week."

"My eyes! Let *me* go, sir!" And —*"Me,* sir!"

"But he wanted a boy who could write a good hand."

Their countenances fell.

"Well, now, suppose we have a night-school, and learn to write – what do you say, boys?".

"Agreed, sir."

And so arose our evening-school.

The Sunday Meeting, which is now an "institution," was entered upon in a similarly discreet manner. The lads had been impressed by a public funeral, and Mr. Tracy suggested their listening to a little reading from the Bible. They consented, and were a good deal surprised at what they heard. The "Golden Rule" struck them as an altogether impossible kind of precept to obey, especially when one was "stuck and short," and "had to live." The marvels of the Bible – the stories of miracles and the like – always seemed to them natural and proper. That a Being of such a character as Christ should control Nature and disease, was appropriate to their minds. And it was a kind of comfort to these young vagabonds that the Son of God was so often homeless, and that he belonged humanly to the working classes. The petition for "daily bread" (which a celebrated divine has declared "unsuited to modern conditions of civilization") they always rolled out with a peculiar unction. I think that the conception of a Superior Being, who knew just the sort of privations and temptations that followed them, and who felt especially for the poorer classes, who was always near them, and pleased at true manhood in them, did keep afterward a considerable number of them from lying and stealing and cheating and vile pleasures.

Their singing was generally prepared for by taking off their coats and rolling up their sleeves, and was entered into with a gusto.

The voices seemed sometimes to come from a different part of their natures from what we saw with the bodily eyes. There was, now and then, a gentle and minor key, as if a glimpse of something purer and higher passed through these rough lads. A favorite song was, "There's a Rest for the Weary," though more untiring youngsters than these never frisked over the earth; and "There's a light in the Window for Thee, Brother," always pleased them, as if they imagined themselves wandering alone through a great city at night, and at length a friendly light shone in the window for them.

Their especial vice of money-wasting the Superintendent broke up by opening a Savings-bank, and allowing the boys to vote how long it should be closed. The small daily deposits accumulated to such a degree that the opening gave them a great surprise at the amounts which they possessed, and they began to feel thus the "sense of property," and the desire of accumulation, which economists tell us, is the base of all civilization. A liberal interest was also soon allowed on deposits, which stimulated the good habit. At present, from two hundred to three hundred dollars will often be saved by the lads in a month.

The same device, and constant instruction, broke up gambling, though I think policy-tickets were never fairly undermined among them.

The present Superintendent and Matron of the Newsboys' Lodging-house, Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor (at Nos. 49 and 51 Park Place), are unsurpassed in such institutions in their discipline, order, good management, and excellent housekeeping. The floors, over which two hundred or two hundred and fifty street-boys tread daily, are as clean as a man-of-war's deck. The Sunday-evening meetings are as attentive and orderly as a church, the week-evening school quiet and studious. All that mass of wild young humanity is kept in perfect order, and brought under a thousand good influences.

The Superintendent has had a very good preliminary experience for this work in the military service – having been in the British army in the Crimea. The discipline which he maintains is excellent. He is a man, too, of remarkable generosity of feeling, and a good "provider." One always knows that his boys will have enough to eat, and that everything will be managed liberally – and justly. It is truly remarkable during how many years he controlled that great multitude of little vagabonds and "roughs," and yet with scarcely ever even a complaint from any source against him. For such

success is needed the utmost kindness, and, at the same time, the strictest justice. His wife has been almost like a mother to the boys.

In the course of a year the population of a town passes through the Lodging-house – in 1869 and '70, *eight thousand eight hundred and thirty-five* different boys. Many are put in good homes; some find places for themselves; others drift away – no one knows whither. They are an army of orphans – regiments of children who have not a home or friend – a multitude of little street-rovers who have no place where to lay their heads. They are being educated in the streets rapidly to be thieves and burglars and criminals. The Lodging-house is at once school, church, intelligence-office, and hotel for them. Here they are shaped to be honest and industrious citizens; here taught economy, good order, cleanliness, and morality; here Religion brings its powerful influences to bear upon them; and they are sent forth to begin courses of honest livelihood.

The Lodging-houses repay their expenses to the public ten times over each year, in preventing the growth of thieves and criminals. They are agencies of pure humanity and almost unmingled good. Their only possible reproach could be, that some of their wild subjects are soon beyond their reach, and have been too deeply tainted with the vices of street-life to be touched even by kindness, education, or religion. The number who are saved, however, are most encouragingly large.

The Newsboys' Lodging-house is by no means, however, an entire burden on the charity of the community. During 1870 the lads themselves paid $3,349 toward its expense.

The following is a brief description of the rooms during the past five years:

The first floor is divided into various compartments – a large dining-room, where one hundred and fifty boys can sit down to a table; a kitchen, laundry, storeroom, servants' room, and rooms for the family of the superintendent The next story is partitioned into a school-room, gymnasium, and bath and wash rooms, plentifully supplied with hot and cold water. The hot water and the heat of the rooms are supplied by a steam-boiler on the lower story. The two upper stories are filled with neat iron bedsteads, having two beds each, arranged like ships' bunks over each other; of these there are two hundred and sixty. Here are also the water-vats, into which the many barrelsful used daily are pumped by the engine. The rooms are high and dry, and the floors clean.

It is a commentary on the housekeeping and accommodations that for eighteen years no case of contagious disease has ever occurred among these thousands of boys.

The New York Newsboys' Lodging-house has been in existence eighteen years. During these years it has lodged 91,326 different boys, restored 7,278 boys to friends, provided 5,126 with homes, furnished 576,485 lodgings and 469,461 meals. The expense of all this has been $132,888. Of this amount the boys have contributed $32,306.

That the Lodging-house has had a vigorous growth, is shown by the following table:

TABULAR STATEMENT SINCE ORGANIZATION

YEAR	No. of Boys.	No. of Lodgings.	No. of Meals.	Return-ed to friends.
1854 to 1855..	408	6,872	……..	…….
1855 to 1856..	374	7,599	……..	…….
1856 to 1857..	387	5,157	……..	…….
1857 to 1858..	800	8,026	11,923	…….
1858 to 1859..	3,000	14,000	13,114	…….
1859 to 1860..	4,500	19,747	13,341	100
1860 to 1861..	4,000	27,390	16,873	247
1861 to 1862..	3,875	32,954	19,809	…….
1862 to 1863..	3,000	29,409	20,000	396
1863 to 1864..	6,325	36,572	25,506	437
1864 to 1865..	6,793	42,446	30,137	576
1865 to 1866..	7,256	43,797	32,867	633
1866 to 1867..	8,192	49,519	33,633	719
1867 to 1868..	8,599	51,740	35,617	819
1868 to 1869..	8,944	53,610	54,092	896
1869 9 months.	7,383	39,077	33,207	642
1869 to 1870..	8,655	55,565	56,128	713
1870 to 1871..	8,835	53,005	53,214	1,100
Total..	91,326	576,485	469,461	7,278

OF NEWSBOYS' LODGING-HOUSE

========== | | | | | | No. of | YEAR | Expenses. | Paid by | Boys |Am'nt saved | | Boys. | using | by them. | | | Bank. | | | | ——————————————————————————————- 1854 to 1855..| $1,199.76 | $397.56 | ..... | ..... 1855 to 1856..| 1,431.82 | 391.26 | 16 | $643.58 1856 to 1857..| 1,762.56 | 262.56 | 116 | 270.70 1857 to 1858..| 1,925.03 | 298.03 | ..... | ..... 1858 to 1859..| 2,199.34 | 807.15 | ..... | ..... 1859 to 1860..| 2,113.56 | 955.44 | 23 | 110.10 1860 to 1861..| 3,420.57 | 1,036.98 | 230 | 1,259.77 1861 to 1862..| 2,736.08 | 1,138.88 | 388 | 1,376.59 1862 to 1863..| 3,402.82 | 1,102.33 | 347 | 1,315.10 1863 to 1864..| 5,758.16 | 1,599.10 | 405 | 2,080.06 1864 to 1865..| 7,159.95 | 1,944.22 | 499 | 2,565.92 1865 to 1866..| 10,058.13 | 2,127.44 | 599 | 2,486.43 1866 to 1867..| 10,847.79 |

2,718.79 | 542 | 2,121.76 1867 to 1868..| 12,094.00 | 3,177.69 | 703 | 2,203.45 1868 to 1869..| 23,333.45 | 3,644.49 | 796 | 2,057.76 1869 9 months.| 13,445.24 | 3,180.35 | 659 | 1,688.22 1869 to 1870..| 15,102.11 | 4,214.42 | 1,107 | 2,433.60 1870 to 1871..| 14,898.03 | 3,349.77 | 1,065 | 2,588.31 |————————|————————|————|————————- Total..|$132,888.40 | $32,306.96 | 7,495 |$25,141.35

Extracts from the journal of a visitor from the country:

A VISIT TO THE NEWSBOYS

"It requires a peculiar person to manage and talk to these boys. Bullet-headed, short-haired, bright-eyed, shirt-sleeved, go-ahead boys. Boys who sell papers, black boots, run on errands, hold horses, pitch pennies, sleep in barrels, and steal their bread. Boys who know at the age of twelve more than the children of ordinary men would have learned at twenty; boys who can cheat you out of your eye-teeth, and are as smart as a steel-trap. They will stand no fooling; they are accustomed to gammon, they live by it. No audience that ever we saw could compare in attitudinizing with this. Heads generally up; eyes fall on the speaker; mouths, almost without an exception, closed tightly; hands in pockets; legs stretched out; no sleepers, all wide-awake, keenly alive for a pun, a point, or a slangism. Winding up, Mr. Brace said: 'Well, boys, I want my friends here to see that you have the material for talkers amongst yourselves; whom do you choose for your orator?'

"'Paddy, Paddy,' shouted one and all. 'Come out, Paddy. Why don't you show yourself?' and so on.

"Presently Paddy came forward, and stood upon a stool. He is a youngster, not more than twelve, with a little round eye, a short nose, a lithe form, and chuck-full of fun.

"'Bummers,' said he, 'snoozers, and citizens, I've come down here among ye to talk to yer a little! Me and my friend Brace have come to see how ye'r gittin' along, and to advise yer. You fellers what stands at the shops with yer noses over the railin', smellin' ov the roast beef and the hash – you fellers who's got no home – think of it how we are to encourage ye. [Derisive laughter, "Ha-ha's," and various ironical kinds of applause.] I say, bummers – for you're *all* bummers (in a tone of kind patronage) —*I was a bummer once* [great laughter] – I hate to see you spendin' your money on penny ice-creams and bad cigars. Why don't you save your money? You feller without no boots, how would you like a new pair, eh? [Laughter from all the boys but the one addressed.] Well, I hope you may get 'em, but I rayther think you won't. I have hopes for you all. I want you to grow up to be rich men – citizens, Government men, lawyers, generals, and influence men. Well, boys, I'll tell you a story. My dad was a hard 'un. One beautiful day he went on a spree, and he came home and told me where's yer mother? and I axed him I didn't know, and he clipt me over the head with an iron pot, and knocked me down, and me mither drapped in on him, and at it they went. [Hi-hi's, and demonstrative applause.] Ah! at it they went, and at it they kept – ye should have seen 'em – and whilst they were fightin', I slipped, meself out the back door, and away I went like a scart dog. [Oh, dry up! Bag your head! Simmer down!] Well, boys, I wint on till I kim to the 'Home' [great laughter

among the boys], and they took me in [renewed laughter], and did for me, without a cap to me head or shoes to me feet, and thin I ran away, and here I am. Now boys [with mock solemnity], be good, mind yer manners, copy me, and see what you'll become.'

"At this point the boys raised such a storm of hifalutin applause, and indulged in such characteristic demonstrations of delight, that it was deemed best to stop the youthful Demosthenes, who jumped from his stool with a bound that would have done credit to a monkey.

"At this juncture huge pans of apples were brought in, and the boys were soon engaged in munching the delightful fruit, after which the Matron gave out a hymn, and all joined in singing it, during which we took our leave."

A NEWSBOY'S SPEECH. (FROM OUR JOURNAL.)

"Some of these boys, in all their misfortunes, have a humorous eye for their situation – as witness the following speech, delivered by one of them at the Newsboys' Lodging-house, before the departure of a company to the West. The report is a faithful one, made on the spot. The little fellow mounted a chair, and thus held forth:

"'Boys, gintlemen, chummies: Praps you'd like to hear summit about the West, the great West, you know, where so many of our old friends are settled down and growin' up to be great men, maybe the greatest men in the great Republic. Boys, that's the place for growing Congressmen, and Governors, and Presidents. Do you want to be newsboys always, and shoeblacks, and timber-merchants in a small way by sellin' matches? If ye do you'll stay in New York, but if you don't you'll go out West, and begin to be farmers, for the beginning of a farmer, my boys, is the making of a Congressman, and a President. Do you want to be rowdies, and loafers, and shoulder-hitters? If ye do, why, ye can keep around these diggins. Do you want to be gentlemen and independent citizens? You do – then make tracks for the West, from the Children's Aid Society. If you want to be snoozers, and rummeys, and policy-players, and Peter Funks men, why you'll hang up your caps and stay round the groceries and jine fire-engine and target companies, and go firin' at haystacks for bad quarters; but if ye want to be the man who will make his mark in the country, ye will get up steam, and go ahead, and there's lots on the prairies a waitin' for yez.

"'You haven't any idear of what ye may be yet, if you will only take a bit of my advice. How do you know but, if you are honest, and good, and industerous, you may get so much up in the ranks that you won't call a gineral or a judge your boss. And you'll have servants ov all kinds to tend you, to put you to bed when you are sleepy, and to spoon down your vittles when you are gettin' your grub. Oh, boys! won't that be great! Only think – to have a feller to open your mouth, and put great slices of punkin pie and apple dumplings into it. You will be lifted on hossback when you go for to take a ride on the prairies, and if you choose to go in a wagon, or on a 'scursion, you will find that the hard times don't touch you there; and the best of it will be that if 'tis good to-day, 'twill be better to-morrow.

"But how will it be if you don't go, boys? Why, I'm afraid when you grow too big to live in the Lodging-house any longer, you'll be like lost sheep in the wilderness, as we heard of last Sunday night here, and you'll maybe not find your way out any more. But you'll be found somewhere else. The best of you will be something short of judges and governors, and the feller as has the worst luck – and the worst behaver in the groceries-will be very sure to go from them to the prisons.

"I will now come from the stump. I am booked for the West in the next company from the Lodging-house. I hear they have big school-houses and colleges there, and that they have a place for me in the winter time; I want to be somebody, and somebody don't live here, no how. You'll find him on a farm in the West, and I hope you'll come to see him soon and stop with him when you go, and let every one of yous be somebody, and be loved and respected. I thank yous, boys, for your patient attention. I can't say more at present, I hope I haven't said too much.'"

THE BUILDING FUND

An effort was made in the Legislature, a few years since, to obtain a building-fund for the Newsboys' Lodging-house. This was granted from the Excise Fund of the city for the legitimate reason, that those who do most to form drunkards should be compelled to aid in the expense and care of the children of drunkards. Thirty thousand dollars were appropriated from these taxes, provided a similar amount was raised by private subscription. This sum was obtained by the kindness and energy of the friends of the enterprise, and the whole amount ($60,000) was invested in good securities.

In 1872 it had accumulated to $80,000, and the purchase was made of the "Shakespeare Hotel," on the corner of Duane and Chambers Streets, which is now being fitted up and rebuilt as a permanent Lodging-house for Homeless Boys. The building has streets on three sides, and, plenty of air and light. Shops will be let underneath, so that the payments of the boys and the rents received will nearly defray the annual expenses of this charity, thus insuring its permanency.

CHAPTER X

STREET GIRLS

THEIR SUFFERINGS AND CRIMES

A girl street-rover is to my mind the most painful figure in all the unfortunate crowd of a large city. With a boy, "Arab of the streets," one always has the consolation that, despite his ragged clothes and bed in a box or hay-barge, he often has a rather good time of it, and enjoys many of the delicious pleasures of a child's roving life, and that a fortunate turn of events may at any time make an honest, industrious fellow of him. At heart we cannot say that he is much corrupted; his sins belong to his ignorance and his condition, and are often easily corrected by a radical change of circumstances. The oaths, tobacco-spitting, and slang, and even the fighting and stealing of a street-boy, are not so bad as they look. Refined influences, the checks of religion, and a fairer chance for existence without incessant struggle, will often utterly eradicate these evil habits, and the rough, thieving New York vagrant make an honest, hardworking Western pioneer. It is true that sometimes the habit of vagrancy and idling may be too deeply worked in him for his character to speedily reform; but, if of tender years, a change of circumstances will nearly always bring a change of character.

With a girl-vagrant it is different. She feels homelessness and friendlessness more; she has more of the feminine dependence on affection; the street-trades, too, are harder for her, and the return at night to some lonely cellar or tenement-room, crowded with dirty people of all ages and sexes, is more dreary. She develops body and mind earlier than the boy, and the habits of vagabondism stamped on her in childhood are more difficult to wear off.

Then the strange and mysterious subject of sexual vice comes in. It has often seemed to me one of the most dark arrangements of this singular world that a female child of the poor should be permitted to start on its immortal career with almost every influence about it degrading, its inherited tendencies overwhelming toward indulgence of passion, its examples all of crime or lust, its lower nature awake long before its higher, and then that it should be allowed to soil and degrade its soul before the maturity of reason, and beyond all human possibility of cleansing!

For there is no reality in the sentimental assertion that the sexual sins of the lad are as degrading as those of the girl. The instinct of the female is more toward the preservation of purity, and therefore her fall is deeper – an instinct grounded in the desire of preserving a stock, or even the necessity of perpetuating our race.

Still, were the indulgences of the two sexes of a similar character – as in savage races – were they both following passion alone, the moral effect would not perhaps be so different in the two cases. But the sin of the girl soon becomes what the Bible calls "a sin against one's own body," the most debasing of all sins. She soon learns to offer for sale that which is in its nature beyond all price, and to feign the most sacred affections, and barter with the most delicate instincts. She no longer merely follows blindly and excessively an instinct; she perverts a passion and sells herself. The only parallel case with the male sex would be that in some Eastern communities which are rotting and falling to pieces from their debasing and unnatural crimes. When we hear of such disgusting offenses under any form of civilization, whether it be under the Rome of the Empire, or the Turkey of to-day, we know that disaster, ruin, and death, are near the State and the people.

This crime, with the girl, seems to sap and rot the whole nature. She loses self-respect, without which every human being soon sinks to the lowest depths; she loses the habit of industry, and cannot

be taught to work. Having won her food at the table of Nature by unnatural means, Nature seems to cast her out, and henceforth she cannot labor. Living in a state of unnatural excitement, often worked up to a high pitch of nervous tension by stimulants, becoming weak in body and mind, her character loses fixedness of purpose and tenacity and true energy. The diabolical women who support and plunder her, the vile society she keeps, the literature she reads, the business she has chosen or fallen into, serve continually more and more to degrade and defile her. If, in a moment of remorse, she flee away and take honest work, her weakness and bad habits follow her; she is inefficient, careless, unsteady, and lazy; she craves the stimulus and hollow gayety of the wild life she has led; her ill name dogs her; all the wicked have an instinct of her former evil courses; the world and herself are against reform, and, unless she chance to have a higher moral nature or stronger will than most of her class, or unless Religion should touch even her polluted soul, she soon falls back, and gives one more sad illustration of the immense difficulty of a fallen woman rising again.

The great majority of prostitutes, it must be remembered, have had no romantic or sensational history, though they always affect this. They usually relate, and perhaps even imagine, that they have been seduced from the paths of virtue suddenly and by the wiles of some heartless seducer. Often they describe themselves as belonging to some virtuous, respectable, and even wealthy family. Their real history, however, is much more commonplace and matter-of-fact. They have been poor women's daughters, and did not want to work as their mothers did; or they have grown up in a tenement-room, crowded with boys and men, and lost purity before they knew what it was; or they have liked gay company, and have had no good influences around them, and sought pleasure in criminal indulgences; or they have been street-children, poor, neglected, and ignorant, and thus naturally and inevitably have become depraved women. Their sad life and debased character are the natural outgrowth of poverty, ignorance, and laziness. The number among them who have "seen better days," or have fallen from heights of virtue, is incredibly small. They show what fruits neglect in childhood, and want of education and of the habit of labor, and the absence of pure examples, will inevitably bear. Yet in their low estate they always show some of the divine qualities of their sex. The physicians in the Blackwell's Island Hospital say that there are no nurses so tender and devoted to the sick and dying as these girls. And the honesty of their dealings with the washerwomen and shopkeepers, who trust them while in their vile houses, has often been noted.

The words of sympathy and religion always touch their hearts, though the effect passes like the April cloud. On a broad scale, probably no remedy that man could apply would ever cure this fatal disease of society. It may, however, be diminished in its ravages, and prevented in a large measure. The check to its devastations in a laboring or poor class will be the facility of marriage, the opening of new channels of female work, but, above all, the influences of education and Religion.

An incident occurred daring our early labors, which is worth preserving:

EXTRACTS FROM JOURNAL DURING 1854

THE TOMBS

"Mrs. Forster, the excellent Matron of the Female Department of the prison, had told us of an interesting young German girl, committed for vagrancy, who might just at this crisis be rescued. I entered these soiled and gloomy Egyptian archways, so appropriate and so depressing, that the sight of the low columns and lotus capitals is to me now inevitably associated with the somber and miserable histories of the place.

"After a short waiting, the girl was brought in – a German girl, apparently about fourteen, very thinly but neatly dressed, of slight figure, and a face intelligent and old for her years, the eye passionate and shrewd. I give details because the conversation which followed was remarkable.

"The poor feel, but they can seldom speak. The story she told, with a wonderful eloquence, thrilled to all our hearts; it seemed to us, then, like the first articulate voice from the great poor class of the city.

"Her eye had a hard look at first, but softened when I spoke to her in her own language.

"'Have you been long here?'

"'Only two days, sir.'

"Why are you here?'

"'I will tell you, sir. I was working out with a lady. I had to get up early and go to bed late, and I never had rest. She worked me always; and, finally, because I could not do everything, she beat me – she beat me like a dog, and I ran away; I could not bear it.'

"The manner of this was wonderfully passionate and eloquent.

"'But I thought you were arrested for being near a place of bad character,' said I.

"'I am going to tell you, sir. The next day I and my father went to get some clothes I left there, and the lady wouldn't give them up; and what could we do? What can the poor do? My father is a poor old man, who picks rags in the streets, and I have never picked rags yet. He said, "I don't want you to be a rag-picker. You are not a child now – people will look at you – you will come to harm." And I said, "No, father, I will help you. We must do something now, I am out of place;" and so I went out. I picked all day, and didn't make much, and I was cold and hungry. Towards night, a gentleman met me – a very fine, well-dressed gentleman, an American, and he said, "Will you go home with me!" and I said, "No." He said, "I will give you twenty shillings," and I told him I would go. And the next morning I was taken up outside by the officer.'

"'Poor girl!' said some one, 'had you forgotten your mother? and what a sin it was!'

"'No, sir, I did remember her. She had no clothes, and I had no shoes; and I have only this (she shivered in her thin dress), and winter is coming on. I know what making money is, sir. I am only fourteen, but I am old enough. I have had to take care of myself ever since I was ten years old, and I have never had a cent given me. It may be a sin, sir (and the tears rained down her cheeks, which she did not try to wipe away). I do not ask you to forgive it. Men can't forgive, but God will forgive. I know about men.

"'The rich do such things and worse, and no one says anything against them. But I, sir —*I am poor!* (This she said with a tone which struck the very heart-strings.) I have never had any one to take care of me. Many is the day I have gone hungry from morning till night, because I did not dare spend a cent or two, the only ones I had. Oh, I have wished sometimes so to die! Why does not God kill me!'

"She was choked by her sobs. We let her calm herself a moment, and then told her our plan of finding her a good home, where she could make an honest living. She was mistrustful. 'I will tell you, *mein Herren;* I know men, and I do not believe any one, I have been cheated so often. There is no trust in any one. I am not a child. I have lived as long as people twice as old.'

"'But you do not wish to stay in prison?'

"'O God, no! Oh, there is such a weight on my heart here. There is nothing but bad to learn in prison. These dirty Irish girls! I would kill myself if I had to stay here. Why was I ever born? I have such *Kummerniss* (woes) here (she pressed her hand on her heart) – I am poor!'

"We explained our plan more at length, and she became satisfied. We wished her to be bound to stay some years.

"'No,' said she, passionately, 'I cannot; I confess to you, gentlemen. I should either run away or die, if I was bound.'

"We talked with the matron. She had never known, she said, in her experience, such a remarkable girl. The children there of nine or ten years were often as old as young women, but this girl was an experienced woman. The offense, however, she had no doubt was her first.

"We obtained her release; and one of us, Mr. G., walked over to her house or cabin, some three miles on the other side of Williamsburgh, in order that she might see her parents before she went to her new home.

"As she walked along, she looked up in Mr. G.'s face, and asked, thoughtfully. Why we came there for her? He explained. She listened, and after a little while, said, in broken English 'Don't you think better for poor little girls to die than live?' He spoke kindly to her, and said something about a good God. She shook her head, 'No, no good God. Why am I so? It always was so. Why much suffer, if good God?' He told her they would get her a supper, and in the morning she should start off and find new friends. She became gradually almost ungoverned – sobbed – would like to die, even threatened suicide in this wild way.

"Kindness and calm words at length made her more reasonable. After much trouble, they reached the home or den of the poor rag-picker. The parents were very grateful, and she was to start off the next morning to a country home, where, perhaps finally, the parents will join her.

"For myself, the evening shadow seemed more somber, and the cheerful home-lights less cheerful, as I walked home, remembering such a history.

"Ye who are happy, whose lives have been under sunshine and gentle influences around whom Affection, and Piety, and Love have watched, as ye gather in cheerful circles these autumn evenings, think of these bitter and friendless children of the poor, in the great city. But few have such eloquent expressions as this poor girl, yet all inarticulately feel.

"There are sad histories beneath this gay world – lives over which is the very shadow of death. God be thanked, there is a Heart which feels for them all, where every pang and groan will find a sympathy, which will one day right the wrong, and bring back the light over human life.

"The day is short for us all; but for some it will be a pleasant thought, when we come to lay down our heads at last, that we have eased a few aching hearts, and brought peace and new hope to the dark lives of those whom men had forgotten or cast out."

CHAPTER XI

LEGAL TREATMENT OF PROSTITUTES

SHOULD LICENSES BE ALLOWED?

The question of the best mode of legally controlling the great evil of prostitution, and confining its bad physical effects, is a very difficult one.

The merely philosophical inquirer, or even the physician, regarding humanity "in the broad," comes naturally to the conclusion that this offense is one of the inevitable evils which always have followed, and always will follow, the track of civilization; that it is to be looked upon, like small-pox or scarlet fever, as a disease of civilized man, and is to be treated accordingly, by physical and scientific means, and must be controlled, as it cannot be uprooted, by legislation. Or they regard it as they do intoxication, as the effect of a misdirected natural desire, which is everywhere thought to be a legitimate object both of permission or recognition by government, as well as of check by rigid laws.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.