

I have heard wealthy landowners describing, in terms of commiseration, the wretched condition of labourer's dwellings, in agricultural districts, and the query, 'Will you buy a pie?' is immediately suggested itself, especially when, as in some instances I have known that they need not go beyond the boundaries of their own estates, to find opportunity of proving the sincerity of their convictions.

This inquiry might often with advantage be addressed to the advocates of philanthropic and benevolent movements, who would not unfrequently render more valuable assistance to the cause they espouse by practical co-operation than by their appeals to the sympathies of others.

But my object now, is to give the inquiry a personal application,

There is in the present day a very strong tendency, to let our sympathies evaporate in words, rather than to mould them into deeds; a great profusion of talk, with a very disproportionate amount of work; many expressions of interest, soon after to subside into indifference; large promises, far exceeding the subsequent performances; much pity, very little help.

Societies and institutions are now expected to undertake nearly every branch of benevolent enterprise, and very many suppose that because their names are recorded as subscribers or donors on the reports of one or more societies, that therefore, they done all that is required of them, and complacently cancel the claims of charity by deputing others to be the almoners of their bounty.

Obviously the organization and machinery of Societies enable them, by combining the efforts of many, to effect results, and carry on operations, which isolated individual labours could never accomplish, and on that account they merit our countenance and support; but there still remains much, very much to be done, that must be left to *individual efforts*; and no amount of talk, or mere pecuniary aid to societies, can release us from the responsibility which rests upon us, each in our own sphere, to "do good, and to communicate."

That this duty is so much neglected arises mainly from the fact that we want to "do good" on a large scale.

Neglecting or overlooking the many opportunities which offer immediately around

we are many of us waiting till some special occasion arises; these are but "little things," we are on the lookout for some nobler enterprise, which alas! with many will never come.

I once heard the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, when speaking upon this subject, observe that "there are many young men whose hearts glow with an earnest desire to carry the glad tidings of the cross to distant lands, when they have never spoken of the Saviour to the old apple-woman who sits at the corner of the street they live in, though she is as great a heathen, and as ignorant of the way of salvation, as they would meet with beyond the sea."

Even so there is no lack of work to be where willing hearts and hands are ready.

I remember, when some eight or ten years old, whilst watching my mother make some jellies, which she intended to take to a young woman who was very ill, and needed such nourishing food, I began to lament that I could not do something for her, when my mother inquired, —

'Are you sure you cannot do anything?'

'Me, mother! why, what can such a little fellow as I am do? I cannot make jellies and other nice things as you do.'

'No, but there are other things you can do. You can read?'

'Yes.'

'Well, now, would you like to go and ask Miss E., if you shall come and read to her for an hour twice a week?'

'Just the very thing!' and with a kiss for the suggestion, I was soon on my way with a book under my arm, which my fond mother selected as suitable; and for many weeks afterwards some hours of my holidays were spent in that sick chamber, much to my own profit, and, I think, not without pleasure to the invalid.

The influence of that lesson abides with me still,—it has taught me none are too young to give practical help to those who need it, and that opportunities are soon found when looked for.

Reader, will *you* buy a pie? Will you do what you can to brighten the path and diminish the cares of those around you?—What the pie-man wanted was not mere pity, but a purchase: and he did not ask his friend to buy his whole stock, but only a single pie. Take the hint; instead of condoling with some Widow Brown, who