

acter? Is it the fact that religious destitution prevails among us? When the late Dr. Chalmers first laid open to public view the prevalent ignorance and irreligion of a large proportion of our town population, his statements were met with the sneer of incredulity. The public could not be brought to believe that the sad state of things represented by him existed anywhere but in his own heated imagination. A considerable time elapsed, indeed, before the matter was allowed to be tested by inquiry. But inquiry was at length ordered, and a commission appointed to conduct it—impartial, I have no doubt,—but certainly not in the least disposed to take an exaggerated view of the alleged evils. The result of that inquiry is well known. Every statement that Dr. Chalmers had made was more than confirmed. Thousands, and tens of thousands of the inhabitants of our large towns were found to be living “without God and without hope in the world”—not connected with any Christian society whatsoever; and ignorant, in cases innumerable, of the very first principles of Christian truth. Nor is there reason to believe that any material improvement has since been effected. It is true, many new churches have been built, and many additional labourers have been employed in the work of the ministry. But neither have the churches been planted in the waste places of society, nor, generally speaking, have the services of those appointed to them been directed to reclaim our social wastes. This is the fact, and it is easily accounted for. Where ministers are dependent on their congregations they can minister, as a general rule, but to those who will own the obligation that thence results. But, though the cause were hidden from us, the alleged fact of the continuance of a large proportion of our town population in the deplorable circumstances adverted to, would not admit of question. It is confirmed by the testimony, alike of dissenters and churchmen—of all, indeed, who have made it matter of careful observation. And it is not in the large towns only that this sad state of things is to be met with. It is equally prevalent in our mining and manufacturing villages. There are thousands of the inhabitants of these villages whose feet never cross the threshold of a House of Prayer. The same melancholy fact is not less conclusively established by its painful results. Witness, among large masses of the population, the want of all proper attention to the decency and cleanliness of their dwellings. Ceasing to own their responsibility to God, they have become equally unmindful of what is due to themselves. Witness, again, to the same fact, the general prevalence of intemperance, established by the fact that the Excise returns show a consumption of ardent spirits in Scotland which gives an allowance of more than two gallons a-year to every man, woman, and child, in this part of the United Kingdom. Witness, further, the statements brought out in the reports of the Board of Supervision for relief of the poor. It is

not alone the increased cost of maintenance—that is to be considered here, although the cost has been more than doubled within the last ten years. More pregnant is the fact, that, while in 1846-7 the number of orphan and deserted children was only from 4000 to 5000, it amounted, in 1853-4 to between 8000 and 9000. It is further to be kept in view that the condition of the pauper is no longer regarded with aversion in Scotland—thousands of claims for relief having annually to be rejected as made on insufficient grounds. Nor are the returns of crime less indicative of an unhealthy social state, it being computed, that, probably, not fewer than 400 youthful delinquents annually pass under the arm of the law for the first time. If, as now appears to be the case, criminals are, for the most part, to be retained in the country, it is easy to apprehend what fearful consequences must result from this large annual increase of delinquents. Another social evil to be almost equally dreaded, is the unhappy frequency of strikes among workmen, more particularly in the mineral districts of the country. But a few months have elapsed since, in the western counties of Scotland, from 30,000 to 40,000 men were off work for the long period of eleven weeks. The loss sustained in consequence has been estimated, by competent judges, at not much less than £1,000,000. Taking it at the lowest possible estimate, it must have amounted, in the item of wages alone, to £330,000, and, probably, to little less than an equal sum in returns on capital and masters' profits—making this a total of from £600,000 to £700,000. It results, I think, but too clearly from the several particulars that I have now enumerated, that a greater amount of force is at work tending to the disorganisation of society than what it was found necessary to keep up to maintain the honour and just rights of the country during the late war. The full amount of the evils resulting from this unhappy state of things is not, indeed, to be continued. For those of them that affect society, if less perceptibly yet most vitally, no money value is to be found. By the prevalence of intemperance, reckless pauperism, crime, &c., the character of the whole community is necessarily lowered. In attempting to be reconciled to such a state of things, every man must suffer from it morally, as well as in his outward estate. The finer springs of action, and, along with these, all that is most godlike in man, must be kept in an unnatural state of depression, if we suppose ourselves obliged to consent to the doctrine that the world's evil is the world's law. But, apart from this, there are direct and tangible injurious results which must force themselves upon every man of reflection, and constrain him to use his best efforts to apply an effectual remedy. So far at least as these results are concerned, the public is happily becoming alive to its true interests, and the only wonder is that they should have been so long hidden from it. In every case the selfish principle of

caring only for ourselves is found to be untrue to nature, rightly understood. It matters not that we keep our own houses clean and wholesome, if we suffer to sink of pestilential corruption to exist on our neighbour's. Affecting him, the contagion will soon spread to affect ourselves, and prove to us, by involving us in the same common calamity, that though we shut up our bowels of compassion from him he was indeed our brother. The same holds true of the results of the other social ills which we have passed under review. If we will not exert ourselves to subdue them, we cannot possibly escape suffering from them. The question of crime, for instance, particularly in the altered state of secondary punishments, to which I have already alluded, is now forcing itself upon public attention, as a question of even vital moment. It is seen and felt that if the security of life and property is to be at all adequately provided for, youthful delinquency must be more effectually guarded against, and when it does occur treated with more effectual remedies. Some of the leading men of our time are eagerly engaged in discussing the question, and we cannot but hope and pray that their deliberations may lead to a successful solution of it. If that solution shall be obtained, and effectual preventions or remedies be applied within the country itself, an important advance will be made toward the attainment of a sound social regeneration. The society which shall receive back into its bosom the penitent criminal, and rejoice over his repentance—even as that repentance is matter of joy to the hosts of heaven—will be in a far healthier state than if it had obtained relief by transporting him to a distant colony. Again all sound hearted citizens have obviously a like common interest in putting down intemperance, reckless pauperism, and those unhappy differences that manifest themselves in the form of strikes. Not an individual can suffer from intemperance—not an individual can allow himself to be deprived of that independence of mind which makes it a man's first duty to provide by his own industry for his own wants—not an individual can decline to work when he is able to work—but inflicts on the country, of which he is a citizen, a corresponding amount of injury. It may be proved for instance, on the most elementary principles of political economy, that the loss sustained by the late strike in the Western counties must diffuse itself over the whole of the community. The country must be eventually affected by it in precisely the same way as if it had been constrained to make payment from the public funds of an equal sum to a Foreign Power, and so obviously must incur all the disabilities imposed by intemperance and reckless pauperism. It is as plain then as an axiom of Euclid that it is the will of God—an unchangeable law impressed upon his moral creation—that every man should be his brother's keeper, and that the contrary doctrines cannot be embraced by us without entailing upon us condign