

THE PROBLEM  
OF THE  
UNEMPLOYED.

To Mr. Geoffrey Drage of the English Labour Commission I am indebted in great part for the classification and verbal treatment of the subject presented in the following paper; and to Mr. John A. Hobson, the eminent English Social Economist, is due the drafting of the scheme here suggested as a solution of the problem of the unemployed.

At the threshold of this subject, we come face to face with three or four radical questions. It is well to recognize these immediately, as by so doing we establish a certain classification which will better enable us to view the problem as a whole, and, at the same time, help us to grasp its minor details with greater clearness.... Who are the unemployed? Why are they unemployed? Do they require aid? If so, what is the best way of truly helping them?

CLASSIFICATION OF UNEMPLOYED.

Roughly speaking, two main classes of the unemployed can be distinguished:—Those with whom want of regular employment is merely temporary and those with whom it is permanent. Of those who are temporarily out of work, a large number are members of season trades, such as dock labourers; builders, painters, millhands, etc. Others may have been thrown out of regular employment by some temporary cause, such as a strike, which exercises directly or indirectly a wide-spread influence on other industries besides that in which it occurs. In either of these cases, although the exact length of the period of suspended work cannot be determined, these men have, throughout the slack time, a certain prospect of returning to regular work. With this class then, the only difficulty is tiding over the time till work be resumed.

Temporarily unemployed.

Others, however, with whom want of regular employment is merely temporary, have, besides an indeterminate period of waiting, no certain prospect of returning to their former employment. This happens when general depression of trade occurs and factories close down; it happens when an industry is removed from one place to another or when machinery is substituted for hand labour. An