

effectual way alienations in mortmain and the aggrandizement of wealthy ecclesiastical corporations. Probably under the English system of entail, the estates were as little likely to be freely alienated in the hands of the new possessors, as they had been in those of the old. Doubtless, too, the old agricultural customs would linger longest on the monastic estates, and the transfer only hastened economic changes which were already beginning on monastic establishments, and which were inevitable alike under the old as under the new ownership. As far as the monks were skilled artisans or agriculturists, so far would their dispersion disseminate their knowledge, and if they were skilled, industrious and intelligent, their services were sure to be sought after. Since many of the dispersed monks married, there would be a slight acceleration of the rate of increase of the population, which must be regarded as beneficial, since there was not yet any danger of the pressure of population on the means of subsistence, if indeed anything of the kind ever occurs.

The earliest system of poor relief in England was parochial, and a law of King Ethelred and the Witan devoted one-third of the tithes of the church to the relief of "God's poor and needy men in thralldom." But this parochial system soon broke down, and was replaced by relief by monasteries, hospitals, guilds and private parties, without co-operation or personal supervision of the relieved. Father Gasquet has erroneously stated that the monks "knew the circumstances of those they helped." In many monasteries an almoner daily distributed alms in food and money to all who came, irrespective of their needs. Professor Ashley points out that the "shameless beggars" got more than their share, while the deserving poor who were unable, or afraid, or too sensitive to come for relief went unrelieved. The monasteries were not the only means of poor-relief, and it must in fairness be stated that the faults of the monastic poor-relief were for the most part as noticeable in the other agencies. There were hospitals for the destitute and aged, and most of these which were efficiently managed were spared at the Suppression. The religious guilds and crafts also had a system for relieving the destitute of their own number, and among the craftsmen as the pressure was more directly felt the recipients were under more careful supervision. The churches also had a "stock" or store