

"Yes, I know what needs to be done. They must be kept busy, and kept interested and contented. They are, in some way, to be so helped back to their sense of manhood, and they are so to commit themselves to a new course of life that they will never fall again. How to effect these objects is the great question, and I really feel incompetent to answer it."

"The difficulty to be overcome in the attempt to reform a pauper of any sort, it seems to me," said Miss Larkin, "lies in the impossibility of placing him in dignified conditions. No matter what ambitions and resolutions you may be able to stir in a man whose conditions are mean and suggestive only of his animal wants, they fade out when he realizes the setting in which his life is placed. His wife and children are ragged, his tenement is filthy, his neighborhood is base, and everything around him is a draught upon his self-respect. How he is to get that which will keep him and his alive is the ever-present question. Every thought is concentrated upon his animal life. Every thought of his neighbor is engaged in the same way. In this respect they are all like babies. Everything that comes to their hands is carried at once to their mouths. They cannot see any significance in the Christianity which good people preach to them unless it will, in some way, feed them or give them money."

"Well, I have removed my men from their mean conditions," said Nicholas, "and I shall lend them books and pictures."

"I was not thinking so much about them, as about those who are in worse conditions," said Miss Larkin. "If we could only contrive, in some way, to dignify the facts of their every-day life and surroundings, to inspire ambitions and emulations among them, to enable them to see that even poverty has its poetical side, and that their pinched lives may be dignified by humble spiritualities, we could do much for them. Until we can accomplish this, every good thing which we do for them will be debased. We must make men and women of them before they will answer to motives addressed to men and women. There is no use in addressing our religion to an open mouth; we must have the open mind and heart."

"You have taken a very large contract, my good friends," says Glezen, who had never entered very heartily into their schemes. "Wise heads have been trying to solve this problem for a great many years, and they have never solved it."

"Well," said Nicholas, "perhaps the solution of the problem is to be revealed unto babies. I believe in Christian benevolence, of the right sort, but I suspect that the benevolence of propaganda is not exactly the thing for our pauper population. There is one field, it seems to me, which Christian benevolence has never properly occupied. It has fed the mouth and clothed the back, and thus nursed the very greed which it ought to have destroyed. When it has done this, it has undertaken to give to the pauperism it has helped to develop, the Christian religion. I don't believe it can be made to

grow on such a stock. I believe you might just as well preach religion to a stableful of ravenous horses. There is an intermediate ground that Christian benevolence generally has failed to occupy. There is, now and then, a missionary or a Christian preacher, who sees the right thing to be done; but most of them ignore the conditions of the life they attempt to benefit, and, after cramming and clothing the body, present their religion in the form of a sermon or a tract. I feel sure that if three-quarters of the money that has been expended on food and clothing, and Sunday-schools and preaching, had been devoted to the enterprise of placing the pauper population in better conditions,—to giving them better tenements, better furniture, instructions in the facts and possibilities of common life, entertaining books, suggestive pictures, and training in household arts,—the good results to religion itself would be ten-fold greater than they are."

"Where did you learn all this?" inquired Glezen, with genuine surprise.

"I never learned it; I see it," replied Nicholas. "I thank God that I never learned anything to cloud my instincts in this matter."

"Well, you seem to have succeeded very well with the three fellows whose salvation you have undertaken, so far. The end is not yet, even with them, but I'm inclined to think you can manage them."

"I am going to make them help me in some way," said Nicholas. "The reformed drunkard knows what motives to address to a man who is still a slave to his vice, and I don't see why a reformed pauper cannot be as useful to the class from which he has risen."

"We must all be careful about one thing," said Miss Larkin; "we must be careful not to forget that the poor who need aid are not all voluntary paupers, and we must not forget the little children."

This remark brought out Miss Coates, whose whole heart was with the children, and who believed that the way to cure pauperism was to stop raising paupers.

"Now you touch the vital point," she said. "I have not much faith in the reformation of the confirmed paupers, but I have great faith in the training up of a generation of children that will wipe out pauperism."

"Do you suppose you can counteract on Sunday a week's teaching in pauperism?" inquired Nicholas. "Do you suppose that children who live in a room little better than a sty, and who hear nothing talked of but food and the easiest way to get it, and who are instructed to manage for the reception of benefactions from their teachers, can be cured of pauperism in a Sunday-school? Their whole life is in pauper homes and pauper conditions."

"They can be taught honesty and truthfulness and moral obligation, at least," she responded.

"Under hopeless disadvantages, I fear," he said.

"Would you advise that we let them alone?" she enquired.

"No, but they ought to have something more done for them—something more and of a dif-