

England has failed to cope with it, argues the existence of something wrong in the social conditions; and suggests a problem that requires for its solution not only charity and money, but brains. To a poor man, nothing seems easier for a rich man than to give upon a large scale for the benefit of the poor. This may be true where the rich man has the time, the intelligence and the inclination to be his own almoner; to seek out individual cases of poverty and to give with discrimination to each; but a man who wants to spend a quarter of a million dollars at once on charity, and to the best advantage, needs his wits about him.

The plan of the Alexandra Trust is to fight starvation, not by giving away money, or food, but by supplying meals at prices hitherto unheard of. The founders propose to supply a good dinner for two pence, and to be able to do it without giving anything away. The large amount subscribed, and the positions of the people who are managing the affair, indicate that the experiment is to be tried upon an extensive scale, and the question naturally presents itself, "Is this scheme likely to furnish a solution of the problem that has outmatched the charity of all England, in its thousand and one forms?" If we make it possible for a man to live on six pence, or even on two pence a day, shall we have done much towards banishing starvation from the land? We fear not—unless we can also guarantee the two pence.

Experience has shewn that the minimum rate of wages for the least intelligent class of labour, the class which suffers the most from enforced idleness, is the minimum amount that will keep body and soul together. The labour market is over-stocked with this class of labour. Make it possible for this class to live on a penny a day, and inexorable competition for bare subsistence will bring down the average wages to a penny a day. The bare necessities of life are cheap according to English standards in China, Japan and India. In many parts of the far East a man can live on a penny a day. If there is starvation in these places, it is because there are so many people who cannot earn a penny a day.

The remedy that is wanted for England's trouble is not so much a new scheme of charity for the relief of poverty, as a new scheme of justice for the prevention of poverty. We talk glibly about the law of supply and demand regulating the labour market, and every other market; but experience has shown that there is always a big unsupplied demand, and always (at the very same time) a big undemanded supply. At the same time that the price of wheat is cut down to an unremunerative figure by an alleged over-supply, thousands are crying for bread and not getting it. While landlords are complaining about empty houses, poor people are living in hovels or without a roof to cover them. The farmer with wheat on his hands cannot get boots; and the boot-maker with boots on his hands cannot get bread; and the poor fellow without a shirt to his back blames his

misfortunes, perhaps, to over-production in the cotton mills.

We welcome such schemes as the Alexandra Trust because they indicate that an honest effort is being made to solve the problem; but with little hope of getting thereby a satisfactory direct solution. The problem must and will be solved. Any man in England or elsewhere, who is willing and able to work, is entitled at least to food, shelter, fuel and clothing. And as to the possibility of recognizing this law, we say with Carlyle, "It is impossible for us to believe it impossible;" and he reminds his readers, "There is not a horse in England able and willing to work but has due food and lodging." He might have added, that there is no charity either, about the provision for English horses, nothing but self-interest. Will not an enlightened self-interest lead the nation to see that a man is a more valuable asset than a horse.

The complexity of modern life, with its infinite division of labour, has made possible the extremities of wealth and poverty, of luxury and want; surely it has also imposed responsibilities upon the fortunate few towards the unfortunate many who, willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, contribute to their ease and comfort; responsibilities which were unknown when, under simpler conditions of life, each man enjoyed the fruits of his own labour, the gifts of Divine Providence, and practically nothing more.

RUSSIA'S PEACE PRONOUNCEMENT.

That the "forces which make for peace" have received, in the Czar's circular to the great nations of the earth inviting them to an international peace conference, a vast accession of strength from an unexpected quarter, is a somewhat mild characterization of the Russian proposal that has just startled the civilized world. That it has been motivated by a sincere desire for universal peace, and is an honest effort in that direction, is a question upon which those familiar with Russian history and Russian methods may be pardoned for entertaining doubts.

A fact which has struck several students of Russian history, and particularly of her aggressive and acquisitive policy during the present century, is that while the Muscovites have been invariably defeated in war, they have generally been successful in diplomacy. Presuming upon the military strength with which they have for several years been credited—one million regular soldiers in time of peace—Russia has gone on taking territory after territory until she received a recent ultimatum from Great Britain in regard to her encroachments in China. Who can, for instance, recall a war, except with some petty tribe, in which Russia, unaided, has been triumphant? In her last great war—that with Turkey—she was on the verge of disaster when Roumania went to her rescue. In the Crimea she was beaten on her own ground. In Hungary she was merely Austria's ally. Her finest armies were vanquished, and her ancient capital seized by Napoleon I.; and though his invading