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WORKS OF CHARITY.

(From the Dublin Review.)

Among the many feelings roused by the stirring events of the present day, none are so deep or so diffused as those which have made men sensible that a reform of our public charitable institutions is imperative, and that the machinery hitherto brought to bear on the amelioration of our poor population, is insufficient for its purpose.—Such an opinion is no new one to Catholics whose vivid remembrance of English history in bygone days, and whose acquaintance with the habits and customs of Catholic countries; in a word, whose knowledge of the *remedy* has made them fully aware of the enormity of the *evil* which even a casual visit to public institutions will present; but far beyond the Catholic Church has the feeling extended; among every body of professing Christians its expression has been heard, and it swells each day with a louder tone. The barrier of insular pride is broken down at last; the boast of Great Britain's perfection is fast dying away, and men are fain to confess that France and Belgium, and even Spain and Italy, have something to teach, have accomplished something she has left undone. It is not the Catholic only who, returning from his summer wandering on some foreign shore, and treading again the streets of busy England, misses the high white cap that shades the placid brow of the daughters of St. Vincent. It is not the Catholic only who, entering our Hospitals, painfully contrasts the rough nurses with those gentle *Sœurs*; and then the Englishman turning a longing remembrance to the many holy institutes he has seen in foreign lands, clustering close as flowers on one shrub, and bringing forth their fruit in rich abundance, true to his national instinct of imitation, immediately plans or resolves how, in Protestant soil too, the fair plant shall take root and flourish; and the Catholic looking on is rejoiced, but not surprised to find that effort and plan alike tell but one tale, and witness to the truth of his holy faith. A more remarkable evidence of this could scarcely be found than in the pages of the two works before us, which, while they have the same object in view, yet differ materially in their mode of treatment. In "Hospitals and Sisterhoods," we find a bare record of facts noted with a rigid impartiality rarely found in these carping days of ours; the opinions of the writer do not even appear; the account of the different institutions is taken word for word from their own reports and documents; and facts and figures, dates and statistics, are left bare with no glowing colors to shade off the rough edges. The writer's sole purpose has evidently been to lay matters simply as they are before the world, and let each reader draw his own conclusion.

Communion of Labor pursues another track; for while the facts mentioned are similar to those recorded in "Hospitals and Sisterhoods," we are never suffered to forget that Mrs. Jameson *saw* them. Mrs. Jameson has passed judgment upon them, and has drawn conclusive evidence which *must* be true. Not that there is a world of unfairness in Mrs. Jameson's book. It is but the working of a vigorous mind with strong confidence in the truth of her own deductions, and with an entire misconception of the grounds upon which those deductions rest. However, Mrs. Jameson's strongly expressed opinions, and the unvarnished statements of "Hospitals and Sisterhoods" meet so closely, that the two voices sound in perfect harmony.

Both bear witness to the universal success of Catholic religious communities, and the equally universal failure of Protestant ones;—both proclaim the evils to be met, and the necessity of a remedy; and both declare their ignorance where that remedy in Protestant countries is to be found. In "Hospitals and Sisterhoods," it is painful to peruse the repeated demands for the services of Christian women, working, from love of God, in our Hospitals and other public charities;—the tale of souls perishing because there are none beside them in their hour of affliction or punishment, to whom they can turn for succor. We find countless plans and suggestions from chaplains, physicians, and benevolent men; proposals for the commencement of the good work have been repeatedly drawn up and signed by numbers of respectable and influential names; and to all the same result, the same reply is sent. "We did not get one offer to do this service for the love of Christ, and of the souls whom He died to redeem, though Hundreds of my papers were circulated far and near."

Although in all these suggestions for the formation of Protestant Sisterhoods, a scanty measure of approval of the Catholic ones is of necessity forced out from its promoters, they are careful to inform us that a life of charity and self-denial, is no stranger to the Protestant religion; and they triumphantly point to the deaconesses in Paris and Germany, as proof of their assertion. Accordingly, a brief account of their labors also, is found in "Hospitals and Sisterhoods." Begun twenty years ago, backed by every assistance royal and noble benefactors

could give, the deaconesses number considerably below 500; they are (with the exception of about twenty, from Kaiserworth) confined to their own provinces, where they first sprung, and where they are well fostered. Out of fifteen foundations, noticed in the pages before us, eight have been founded by rich patrons, and the scarcity of the number of deaconesses at once appears from the enormous disproportion between their numbers and their incomes.

We wonder what our communities of poor nuns, (too often obliged to refuse admission to others from want of funds) would say to a convent of six Sisters with £954 per annum; or another of eight, with £1700 per annum. All has not gone smoothly however, with Protestant Sisters; there have been dissensions in the camp. Among the Protestants in France, the flame broke out and the horrible accusation of Popery was levelled by Pasteur Coquerel at Pasteur Vermeil. Indignantly did Pasteur Vermeil repel the assault. He hastened to relieve the minds of the alarmed Protestants of France, by assuring them that Rome herself owed her Sisters of Charity to the evangelical spirit of the Reformation, and that they existed only in France. The *Sœurs de Charité*, whom Mrs. Jameson once called ubiquitous, and the long array of the Dames Hospitalières, founded at the time of the crusades, and the ancient order of Berguines, are all myths in Pasteur Vermeil's imagination. Besides this, the rules and constitutions of his order, are so firmly set, that no Romish heaven can possibly creep in: he has no cloister, "the life of a Sister of Charity is passed out of doors."

We wonder where all the Catholic *Sœurs* pass their life; perhaps the "wards of the Hospitals, or the sick-rooms," or the tents near battle fields, are too much shelter for Pasteur Vermeil to countenance. In fact the whole of his rules for the conduct of the deaconesses border so nearly on the absurd, that we only wonder how the establishment holds together at all; that it will not do so long, save perhaps in name, it needs hardly a prophet to tell us. If the Gospel be true, said a French Protestant clergyman, not long since, Protestantism in France cannot flourish, for "a house divided against itself cannot stand." The thorough *expose* in forcible words by Mrs. Jameson, of the disgraceful moral state of our public charities, will, we trust, do some good. It is the state of our workhouses which has elicited from her the strongest remonstrance. She says, "Never did I visit any dungeon, any abode of crime or misery in any country which left the same crushing sense of sorrow, indignation, and compassion, almost despair, as some of our English workhouses." There is certainly a peculiar disgrace attached to us as a nation for the government of these "abodes of wretchedness and mass of human agonies." In penitentiaries and prisons there is at least the sense that by their own act in the majority of cases the suffering has been incurred; but how widely different as regards a workhouse. No doubt the very worst of the poor are congregated there; no doubt it is chiefly the vicious and idle who fill its walls, because it has so become the property of the vicious and idle, that the deserving poor for whose relief it was intended, abandon it to them and endure the keenest misery, often death from slow starvation, rather than be exposed to such pollution, and be subjected to a horrible slavery in their old age. For what purpose a workhouse was originally intended, Mrs. Jameson shall tell us. "They were intended to be religious and charitable institutions, to supply the place of those conventual hospital and charities which, with their revenues, were suppressed by Henry the Eighth."

"The purpose of a workhouse is to be a refuge to the homeless, helpless poor, to night wanderers, to orphan children, to the lame and blind, to the aged who will lie down on their last bed to die." These purposes then were the intention of the charity of those bygone ages, of those useless monasteries, of those idle dissolute monks, of those miserable imbecile "cloistered" nuns, whom the glorious Reformation swept away from the face of England. In their stead, for those who would have craved a night's lodging at the abbey gate, we prepare the "casualty ward" of the workhouse, described by those who know it as an earthly hell,—the halt, the maimed, the blind, who would then have been tended by the *Sœurs Hospitalières*, we now commit to the tender mercies of some drunken virago; the orphan children and the young girls, once safely guarded within convent walls, in purity and peace, we train in the polluting atmosphere of the "union," for a life of sin; and when they have accomplished the end for which they were prepared, the virtuous men and women of England shrink from the contemplation of their own handiwork as a subject, too dreadful to be dwelt on, and for which there is no remedy. "Send a girl to us, Ma'am," said the relieving officer of St. Mary's Workhouse, to a lady who was seeking a refuge for

* See the recent exposure elicited by an unexpected night visit of the Lord Mayor and Recorder of the City of London.

one, "and if you want to find a sure way to ruin her that will do it."

But is there not a chaplain, demands some one, shocked at these revelations? There is, but Mrs. Jameson assures us that he is but "a religious accident; often from the lowness of their stipends, and the rough treatment they have to encounter from the Board, the chaplains are the most inferior of their profession, who do not attempt to do more than "hurry over a few prayers;" but even when the office is filled by earnest and active men, they are forced to confess that their influence is nought, their labors almost useless; "in his presence," says Mrs. Jameson, "the oaths, the curses, the vile language, cease to recommence the moment his back is turned." Thus does Christian England, who is for ever shuddering at some awful immorality she has heard of in foreign countries, teach virtue and faith to her poor.

On Penitentiaries also Mrs. Jameson dwells at length; the ill success of their system is again her theme, caused in her opinion by the "incredible rashness and incredible mistakes" of those who conduct them. Can anything be conceived more likely to disgust the poor outcasts with a return to the path of virtue, than the prison-like buildings, the hard repulsive labor to which they are condemned? or anything surer to crush the faint aspirations for good which quivers in their hearts, than the government of the rough harsh matrons who perform their distasteful task for hire? Who has more need of sympathy and help in the bitter conflict with the powers of darkness than these poor wanderers, so dear to Him who "goeth after that which is lost?" For a contrast to London penitentiaries let us turn to an institution visited by Mrs. Jameson at Turin, and which justly elicited her warm commendation.

"This institution (called at Turin *il Refugio*, the Refuge), was founded nearly thirty years ago by a good Christian, whose name was not given to me, but who still lives, a very old man. When his means were exhausted, he had recourse to the Marquise de Barol, who has from that time devoted her life, and the greater part of her possessions, to the objects of this institution.—Madame de Barol told me candidly in 1855, that in the commencement she had made mistakes; she had been too severe. It had required twenty years of reflection, experience, and the most able assistance to work out her purposes. The institution began on a small scale, with few inmates; it now covers a large space of ground, and several ranges of buildings for various departments, all connected, and yet most carefully separated. There are several distinct gardens, enclosed by these buildings, and the green trees and flowers give an appearance of cheerfulness to the whole. There is first a refuge for casual and extreme wretchedness; a certificate from a priest or a physician is required, but often dispensed with. I saw a child brought into this place by its weeping and despairing mother—a child about ten years old, and in a fearful state. There was no certificate in this case, but the wretched little creature was taken in at once. There is an infirmary, admirably managed by a good physician, and two medical sisters of a religious order.—There are also convalescent wards. These parts of the building are kept separate, and the inmates carefully classed, all the younger patients being in a separate ward. In the penitentiary and schools, forming the second department, the young girls and children are kept distinct from the elder ones, and those who have lately entered from the others. I saw about twenty girls under the age of fifteen, but only a few together in one room. Only a few were tolerably handsome, many looked intelligent and kindly. In one of these rooms I found a tame thrush hopping about, and I remember a girl with a soft face crumbling some bread for it, saved from her dinner. Reading, writing, and plain work and embroidery are taught, also cooking and other domestic work. A certain number assisted by rotation in the large, lightsome kitchens, and the general service of the house, but not till they had been there some months, and had received badges for good conduct. There are three gradations of these badges of merit, earned by various terms of probation. It was quite clear to me that these badges were worn with pleasure; whenever I fixed my eyes upon the little bits of red or blue ribbon attached to the dress, and smiled approbation, I was met by a responsive smile, sometimes by a deep modest blush. The third and highest order of merit, which was a certificate of good conduct and steady industry during three years at least, conferred the privilege of entering an order destined to nurse the sick in the infirmary, or entrusted to keep order in the small classes; they had also a still higher privilege. And now I come to a part of the institution which excited my strongest sympathy and admiration. Appended to it is an infant Hospital for the children of the very lowest orders, children born diseased, or deformed, or maimed by accident—epileptic or crippled. In this Hospital were thirty-two poor suffering infants, care-

fully tended by such of the penitents as had earned this privilege. On a rainy day I found these poor little things taking their daily exercise in a long airy corridor. Over the clear shining floor was spread temporarily a piece of coarse grey druggel, that their feet might not slip, and so they were led along creeping, crawling, or trying to walk or run, with bandaged heads and limbs, carefully and tenderly helped and watched by the nurses, who were themselves under the supervision of one of the religious sisters already mentioned. There is a good dispensary, well supplied with common medicines, and served by a well-instructed Sister of Charity, with the help of one of the inmates whom she had trained. Any inmate is free to leave the Refuge whenever she pleases, and may be received a second time, but not a third time. I was told that when these girls leave the institution, after a probation of three or four years, there is no difficulty in finding them good places, as servants, cooks, washwomen, and even nurses; but all do not leave it. Those who after a residence of six years preferred to remain, might do so; they were devoted to a religious and laborious life, and lived in a part of the building which had a sort of conventual sanctity and seclusion. They are styled *les Madeines* (Magdalenes.) I saw sixteen of such; and I had the opportunity of observing them. They were all superior in countenance and organization, and belonged apparently to a better class. They were averse to re-entering the world, had been disgusted and humiliated by their bitter experience of vice, and disliked or were unfitted for servile occupations. They had a manufactory of artificial flowers, were skilful embroiderers and needlewomen, and supported themselves by the produce of their work. They were no longer objects of pity or dependent on charity; they had become objects of respect—and more than respect, of reverence.

"One of them who had a talent for music, Madame de Barol had caused to be properly instructed; she was the organist of the chapel and the music mistress; she had taught several of her companions to sing. A piano stood in the centre of the room, and they executed a little concert for us; everything was done easily and quietly, without effort or display. When I looked in the faces of these young women—the eldest was not more than thirty—so serene, so healthful, and in some instances so dignified, I found it difficult to recall the depth of misery, degradation, and disease, out of which they had risen. The whole number of inmates was about 140, without reckoning the thirty-two sick children. Madame de Barol said that this infant Hospital was a most efficient means of thorough reform; it called out what was best in the disposition of the penitents, and was indeed a test of the character and temper. If this institution had been more in the country, and if some of the penitents (or patients) whose robust *physique* seemed to require it, could have been provided with plenty of work in the open air, such as gardening, keeping cows or poultry, &c., I should have considered the arrangements for a Catholic country perfect. They are calculated to fulfill all the conditions of moral and physical convalescence. Early rising, regular active *useful* employment, thorough cleanliness, the strictest order, an even rather cool temperature, abundance of light and fresh air; and more than these, religious hope, wisely and kindly cultivated companionship, cheerfulness, and the opportunity of executing the sympathetic and benevolent affections." Madame de Barol is assisted considerably by funds from the government, in addition to her own large private means. She is therefore enabled to carry out her efforts on a scale and with an organization to which we in England can bring no parallel; but she would be the first gratefully to acknowledge that the life-blood of her community, which enable each sinew and muscle to have full play, are the Sisters of Charity; and these we also can show Mrs. Jameson. She need not go so far as Turin to see how the holy influence of persons devoted to a life of self-sacrifice can soften and elevate the most abandoned of human creatures. She has but to visit the Convent of the Good Shepherd at Hammersmith, to witness the quiet, orderly appearance of the hundred poor girls who have there found an asylum, to hear the joyous shouts at recreation, or the sweet singing in their chapel, to be assured that the hopelessness of success which prevails in Protestant communities extends not here; that though there are many disappointments, many failures, the work nevertheless is achieved, and many are won by the sight of the love and tenderness of the *servants* to cling to the infinitely greater of the *Master*. The point of Mrs. Jameson's work, and from which it derives its title, is the necessity of a thorough co-operation of men and women in charitable works, both of whom she argues, have hitherto pursued the path alone, studiously avoiding contact with each other. From this she conceives many evils have arisen; and here she is undoubtedly right. Women with the best intentions and the most

self-denying motives, require the calm judgment and sound sense of men to guide them; while on the other hand, it would be simply impossible for men to carry on works of mercy to any extent without the aiding hand of woman. How the communion of labor is accomplished among Protestants, Mrs. Jameson does not inform us.—Among Catholics the need is at once met by due submission to the priestly office; but without finding any fault with what she has witnessed of its working, Mrs. Jameson strongly hints that any such submission is quite inadmissible in a Protestant scheme; yet she confesses herself at a loss to suggest a remedy either for this or any of the other evils she has laid before the world. Her great aim is to call the minds of others to consider what she has so deeply weighed, and to assure them that the case is not hopeless; that though it might seem at the first glance success lay exclusively in the hands of the Catholic Church, it is not so in reality, the proof being her own strong faith that it is not. This strong opinion arises from that utter misconception of the real mainspring of the religious life which, with all her admiration, Mrs. Jameson has brought away with her from an inspection of Catholic works; and it is remarkable how her powerful intellect, which can so clearly discern every vein and artery in the material working, should yet fail in tracing them to their fountain. "Really," she exclaims, "I do not see that feminine energy and efficiency belong to any one section of the Christian community." Certainly not; and very little have these to do with the formation of religious orders. Individual efforts may be found scattered far and wide; but the spirit of charity—of that which grows and multiplies from generation to generation, is found only within the pale of the true Church. Let us turn to familiar instances to prove the truth of this. We have little doubt that were Mrs. Jameson to organize a refuge or an hospital, and devote to its furtherance her life and energies, she would succeed; that others animated by her spirit would gather round her, and she might be led to believe that in time to come the work she had commenced would be continued. But are there no examples to show the fallacy of such a hope? There was one some thirty years ago, who although her creed was the coldest and most barren of the many sects of this land, yet rose up with the love of God burning so strongly in her heart, that it soon won back to Him the most abandoned of her sex; that it feared not to enter the "den of wild beasts," as Newgate was then called.—Who ever read the history of her deeds and was not moved to admiration? But Elizabeth Fry went the way of all living. Not twenty years have rolled by; and who amidst her countrymen of the Protestant faith emulate her actions? What body of women follow her footsteps and reverence her memory? In one house in London a few respectable hired nurses bear the name of "Mrs. Fry's Sisters;" but what she wonderfully achieved is almost forgotten. While Mrs. Fry was in the midst of her glorious work; while her Sovereign spoke words of approval; while her name was honored in Parliament, and noble ladies and noted statesmen acknowledged her friendship as a privilege—there lived in Dublin Katherine Macaulay; divine love dwelt in her heart, and the bloom of her youth and strength of her talents were offered on the Altar of her God. No earthly sovereigns bade her to their courts; no Acts of Parliament were passed by her influence. She died and the world missed her not. Some twelve years have passed since her burial day; and in Ireland, England, and many of our colonies, the works of Katherine Macaulay live and flourish. In crowded schools, in refuges for young innocent girls, in orphanages, in the wretched abodes of the sick and afflicted poor, and (whenever permitted) in hospitals, prisons, and workhouses, her daughters bear witness that "she being dead yet liveth." When the cry of anguish from the battle-field and the hospitals of the East, rang through the land awaking an echo in every heart and calling with thrilling accents, where are your Sisters of Charity, a band was hastily organized to meet the emergency. Application was made to the women called "Mrs. Fry's Sisters," to give their help; not one responded to the call. Foremost in that band were the Sisters of Mercy founded by Katherine Macaulay; no less than twenty-eight labored in those scenes of horror, and two sealed with their deaths the devotion of their lives.—Who has not heard of, who does not honor the *Sœurs de Charité* of France, an order which in two hundred years, numbers more than twelve thousand members, and yet what was its origin? a touching sermon in an obscure French town. Where was its first foundation? in a small house in Paris by four young girls and their superior, Madame le Gras, who afterwards avowed that so repeated were her failures in infusing into their hearts the true spirit, that she was tempted to give it up in despair. Yet she loved to see the Hotel Dieu reformed by their means; the *Enfants Trouvés* founded; to send them into military