

The most fundamental, as it is the most obtrusive and pressing, of all social problems is at present that of the unemployed. The unemployed are everywhere. They are present in all our cities by thousands. They are of two classes, those who do not wish to work, and those who do. It is self-evident that the members of these two distinct classes require radically different treatment. The problem presented by the first is, at the outset, a moral problem. It is also a perpetual problem. The lazy, the shiftless, the shirkers, are always with us. The law which must commend itself to every intelligence as the righteous rule in regard to all such, is that of the Apostle, who says, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." This does not, however, meet the case of those dependent upon him. Nor is society in a position to enforce the law with even-handed firmness unless it can say, "Here, or there, is the work. Do it and you shall be fed."

But what of the tens of thousands who are ready and willing, aye, more than willing, agonizingly anxious, to work, but for whom no work can be found. This is the question which is or ought to be supreme, until a satisfactory answer is found. It is, surely, not too much to say that there is work enough to be done in the civilized world, or in any large modern community or nation, to give employment to every one, and that there is wealth enough to pay for the work at such rates as would enable the worker to live in tolerable comfort. Food, clothing, shelter, are produced in sufficient quantities to supply the needs of all. If they are not under present conditions, that fact should make the answer to the question the more easily found, for all that is required is to employ the unemployed in producing more of these necessities until the supply is ample for all. Now whatever our horror of socialism or any of its kindred revolutionary schemes, we do not suppose that there is a single thoughtful person among our readers who will hesitate to admit that the people in any community as a whole, that is, organized society, have a natural and moral right to effect by proper means such a distribution of wealth, the product of the labour of the community, as would bring it to pass that no man or woman who is willing to work should be under the necessity of begging or starving for want of opportunity to earn by honest labour the wherewithal to supply his own wants and those of his helpless dependents. In other words, all will admit that it is contrary to natural right, to moral law, and to the soundest sociological principles, that a part of the community should be permitted to appropriate, whether by superior shrewdness, by gaining control of natural monopolies, or by any other means, so large a share of the products of labour that other members of the community should be left unable to obtain enough of these products to supply the necessities of life, and should perish in consequence.

And yet, if all can agree upon this, a general principle is admitted which covers the whole ground. What remains is simply to find out the best means of reducing the principle to practice. This should not be beyond the wisdom and skill of modern statesmen and philanthropists. The fact that the best mode, or any effectual mode, of doing it has not yet been discovered or recognized, simply proves either that the principle, so readily admitted when simply stated, has not yet been clearly apprehended, or that sufficient attention has not been given to its practical application. But it is clear that society, those who are fitted to be the leaders of society in particular, have hitherto failed to fulfil one of their first and highest obligations.

All those theories, of which Professor Hume enumerated so formidable a list at the Auditorium meetings, and each of which has its ardent advocates, are but so many attempts on the part of individuals to devise the best plan for the accomplishment of a redistribution of property which all thoughtful persons, if our assumption be admitted, are agreed ought to be made. The same may be said of the proposal to limit private fortunes so well advocated by a contributor in our columns last week.

It is not the object of the present article to discuss these various schemes in detail, a task for which our space would prove utterly inadequate. The one practical point which we wish to make is that these are all honest and more or less plausible attempts to solve a problem which presses upon modern society and demands solution. It is evident, therefore, that mere negative criticism, mere pointing out of the deficiencies or alleged deficiencies of this or that particular proposal, is not enough. It is a cold and heartless treatment of the theme which stands in close relation, not only to the comfort and happiness, but to the very existence of hundreds of thousands of our fellow-beings. The thing aimed at ought to be done, must be done, if our Christian civilization is not to prove a gigantic failure. How does the cool-headed, or cynical critic propose to do it?

NOTES ON DANTE.—VI.

PARADISO.

We have gone down into the abodes of hopeless sin and misery and seen every phase of human agony. We have passed through the ranks of those who are undergoing purification from the stain of evil. We are now to go up higher, and behold the circles of the saints in light, the blessedness of the redeemed spirits in paradise through all their stages. In purgatory we heard of purification, instruction, development—of process, not attainment. Now we are to behold the fruition of glory. Yet even here there are differences. The blessed live in different spheres corresponding with the degrees of glory into which they have entered. This is pointed out by the poet at the very beginning of the Paradiso:

"His glory, by whose might all things are moved,
Pierces the universe, and in one part
Sheds more resplendence, elsewhere less."

As in the Inferno and Purgatorio, there are here also nine spheres; first, the seven planets, next (8) the fixed stars, and (9) the primum mobile; and beyond all these, the Empyrean, or sphere of immediate divine manifestation.

The spheres are: (1) The moon, the habitation of those who had been forced to violate their vows of celibacy; (2) Mercury, inhabited by those who had done great deeds for the sake of fame; (3) Venus, by the spirits of lovers; (4) the Sun, by great theologians; (5) Mars, by crusaders, martyrs, and champions of the faith; (6) Jupiter, by the great of the earth, kings and just rulers; (7) Saturn, by the contemplative; (8) the fixed stars, where is shown the triumph of Christ, who appears surrounded by saints of special pre-eminence; (9) the Crystalline Heavens—the Primum Mobile; (10) the Empyrean.

Dante is with Beatrice in the earthly paradise. Beatrice is gazing on the sun, and he, catching the same power, finds himself borne aloft, as the purified soul must needs ascend, even as the torrent rushes "downwards from a mountain's height."

1. They first enter the Moon, inhabited by the spirits of those who had been forced to violate religious vows. Here for the first time Dante beholds the spirits of the redeemed. So ethereal were they that he thought them mere shadows. Beatrice smiled, and told him (iii., 28):

"True substances are these, which thou beholdest,
Hither thro' failure of their vow exiled,
But speak thou with them; listen and believe."

First they see Piccarda Donati, a connection of his own, who had been torn by her brother Corso, from a convent and married against her will. Another was Constance, daughter of the King of Naples, also taken "from the pleasant cloister's pale," and married to the Emperor Henry VI., so that she afterwards became the mother of Frederick II.

It seemed hard that those who had fallen short of perfect obedience through no fault of their own, should be placed in a lower sphere; and Dante asks if they are contented (iii., 64):

"Yet inform me, ye who here
Are happy; long ye for a higher place,
More to behold, and more in love to dwell?"
On this point he received instant satisfaction, the answer showing that these spirits had learned the true secret of all blessedness:

"She with those spirits gently smiled;
Then answered with such gladness, that she seemed
With love's first flame to glow: 'Brother!
our will

Is, in composure, settled by the power
Of charity, who makes us will alone
What we possess, and nought beyond desire.
If we should wish to be exalted more,
Then must our wishes jar with the high will
Of Him who sets us here; which in these orbs
Thou wilt confess not possible, if here
To be in charity must needs befall,
And if her nature well thou contemplate.
Rather it is inherent in this state
Of blessedness, to keep ourselves within
The divine will, by which our wills with His
Are one.
And in His will is our tranquillity.
It is the mighty ocean, whither tends
Whatever it creates and nature makes."

So that Dante confesses: