

I inquired how it is, that with such large sums expended among the poor, so many cases of want and suffering are found. I was told that there was a large number of people who were pauperized in the past through indiscriminate giving. These persons exploit different organizations—two or more churches of different denominations at the same time—and reap as rich a harvest as they can from private sources.

When persons of this class find they can obtain aid by making known their wants, they soon lose all feeling of shame in doing so, and begin to claim it as a right. Besides having a bad effect upon the young, almstaking begets wastefulness.

What is obtained for nothing is little valued. Today there is a full supply, eat and drink to satiety, careless of tomorrow's wants. The absence of any knowledge of domestic economy among women of the extreme poor is one cause of their deplorable condition.

To show how easy it is to propagate pauperism: I heard of a case in a New England town where it was the custom to distribute outside aid from the almshouse at stated periods. The superintendent had been connected with the institution in different capacities for fifty years. When he first came there, an old man and his grandson, a mere child, came regularly for help. The old man passed away, but the grandson was still coming, and had been doing so during the whole fifty years. From such examples as this we can see how easy it is to encourage dependence.

Is it not possible to devise some way to prevent this great waste?

Surely some concerted action might be taken by the different churches and organizations by which deserving ones only might be assisted, while the generous public could be protected from impostors. All who are incapacitated to earn a living either through misfortune or for other reasons should be cared for, but all who are fitted both physically and mentally to earn a living should receive no encouragement to lead idle and vicious lives.

Another condition peculiar to our city I understand, is, that the respectable poor are compelled to take lodgings in tenements where they are surrounded on all sides by the disreputable and vile. They locate in these places of necessity, the rents in the reputable quarters being beyond their reach. Home influence, however good it may be, cannot be expected to withstand the demoralizing effects of such surroundings upon the children reared under these conditions.