

## (2) REPORT ON HOUSELESS POOR, OTHER THAN DESTITUTE WAYFARERS AND WANDERERS.

[Read, 18th April, 1876.]

TAKING the houseless poor, recorded amongst the admissions to the Bow-street Night Asylum as "strangers," to represent the wayfarers and wanderers, and those recorded as "citizens" to represent the other houseless poor, the Committee find in the statistics of 1874, the number of wayfarers and wanderers, 49 each night; and the number of other houseless poor, 121. The aggregate admissions of the first class (wayfarers, etc.) amounts to 17,880 in the year, and of others to 44,781. In the latter number there is, most probably, a much larger proportion of re-admissions, making the number of distinct individuals of each class relieved throughout the year more nearly equal than the total admissions in the year, or the average number each night would indicate. The committee of the asylum are taking steps towards distinguishing the number of distinct individuals amongst such total number of admissions.

(1.) *Provisions of English Act of 1871, for checking persons going frequently out of and into Workhouses.*

One of the classes most likely to occupy night asylums, if persons are admitted without inquiry, are poor people who have taken their discharge from the workhouse for some temporary object. In England it has been deemed a matter of state policy to check this tendency of inmates of workhouses to run out and in; and the 4th section of "The Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulation Act, 1871," provides:—

"The guardians of any Union may direct that any pauper inmate of the workhouse, or the paupers of any class therein, shall be detained in the workhouse after giving notice to quit the same for times not exceeding the limited periods hereinafter mentioned, that is to say:—

"(1) If the pauper has not previously discharged himself from the workhouse within one month before giving the notice, twenty-four hours;

"(2) If he has discharged himself once, or oftener, within such month, forty-eight hours;

"(3) If he has discharged himself more than twice within two months before giving the notice, seventy-two hours."

In Ireland, under the latest published orders, any pauper may go out on giving three hours' notice only.

The Committee are informed that it is no uncommon occurrence for the same persons to go out of and into the Union Workhouses in Dublin six or eight times in one month. It would appear, therefore, that provisions similar to the above section of English Act of 1871, are as necessary for Ireland as for England, to be established by general orders of the Irish Local Government Board, or, if necessary, by legislation. The committee of the Bow-street Night Asylum might accelerate the adoption of such legislation, if they entered into arrangements with the guardians for comparing the discharges from the unions with the admissions to their Night Asylum.

It is obvious that so far as night asylums afford facilities for the destitute to run out of and into workhouses, they are encouraging a system which the legislature has thought right, in 1871, to entrust every Board of Guardians in England and Wales with special powers to check.

(2.) *Suggested testing of the results of practice of discharging able-bodied paupers to look for work.*

The comparison which the Committee have suggested between the discharges from workhouses and admissions to the night asylums, would have an important use in testing the results of the practice of the Guardians, in one at least of the Dublin Unions, of discharging able-bodied paupers to look for work.

The first section of the "Irish Poor Relief Extension Act, 1847," provides :—

"That the Guardians shall take order for relieving and *setting to work in the workhouse* of the Union, at all times when there shall be sufficient room in the workhouse of the Union to enable them so to do, such other persons (*i.e.* other than persons permanently disabled from labour, etc., or disabled by serious sickness, etc., or widows with two or more children) as the said Guardians shall deem to be destitute."

The Workhouse Rules of 5th February, 1849, No. 4, direct the master

"To report to the Board from time to time the names of such *children* as may be fit to put out to service or other employment, and to take the necessary steps for carrying into effect the directions of the Board of Guardians thereon."

The "General Regulations" of 19th February, 1852, for regulating the meetings of the Board of Guardians, provide :—

"Ninthly. They shall consider the *report of the master* of the workhouse, and order the discharge of such *persons* as appear to be no longer proper objects of relief in the workhouse of the Union."

As the only special report which the master, by the published Workhouse Rules, is directed to make, relates to the *children* ready to be discharged on apprenticeship *prima facie*, the report of the master which the Guardians are directed to consider would appear to mean the report as to such children which he is directed by rule 47, above referred to, to make. The wording of the ninth rule taken by itself would not, however, convey this impression; and it has accordingly received, in the North Dublin Union at least, a larger interpretation, and notwithstanding the obligation by the statute of 1847, for the Guardians to take order for *setting to work in the workhouse* all whom they have admitted as destitute, this general order has been interpreted as authorizing the Guardians to turn out persons they have admitted as destitute, after a short time, *to look for work*.

Whatever the exact construction of the law may be, the important question is, whether this practice, different from that which is pursued in England, and resting on a difference between the Poor-law of the two countries, leads to satisfactory results.

One case which has been brought under the notice of the Com-

mittee by a member of their body, shows the importance of having the results of this system thoroughly tested. A young man of twenty years of age was in the North Dublin Workhouse on different occasions, asking from time to time to stay in for a fortnight or three weeks, and went out from time to time. On the last of these occasions, the 18th of October, 1875, he was, as he alleged, brought before the Board of Guardians and discharged to look for work. He turned up the same evening at the Bow-street Night Asylum without shoes or socks, and badly clothed, but he was in good health. On the 20th he was very ill, with face swollen, and in much suffering. On the night of the 23rd he was so ill that the superintendent of the Night Asylum sent him to the North Dublin Union, and he died there on the 25th, of pneumonia.

The Committee think that this case, which the researches of an active member of the Bow-street Night Asylum has brought under notice, shows the importance of a most careful watching of the results of the system of turning out able-bodied persons to look for work.

The trustees of the Bow-street Night Asylum, by comparing, as suggested above, their admissions with the discharges thus ordered, from the workhouse, could contribute thus to the carrying out of such an investigation.

The trustees of the Mendicity Institution might also trace how far those discharged from the workhouse came to that institution for relief.

(3.) *Suggested Charity Organisation for examining specially into cases of persons frequently leaving and entering Workhouses.*

The Committee think that of all classes in the community, these unsettled classes just hanging between employment and relief, dependent partly on the Night Asylum, and the Mendicity Institution, and partly on workhouses, are those to which organised charity could be best directed, if earnest charitable workers in sufficient numbers and with sufficient leisure could be found to undertake the task of tracing the history of each individual of this class, and trying to rescue them from their present precarious position, so full of misery and of temptation to crime.

The entire number of these classes is not very great, and if carefully looked after they would rapidly diminish; so that a large number of charitable workers would not be required for the work.

As Dublin occupies the unsatisfactory position of showing more indictable offences in proportion to population than any town in England or Ireland, except Manchester, and more indictable offences than all the rest of Ireland put together, it is a more important duty in Dublin than elsewhere to look after the classes who are in that state of unsettledness and distress which exposes them to the temptation to fall into crime; and these duties can, in the opinion of the Committee, be best discharged by some voluntary charitable organisation devoted to this special social want, which is not met by any of the existing charitable bodies in Dublin, so far as the Committee are aware.