

feeling to exist in favour of the measure, founded on results which had already been achieved from voluntary efforts of this nature.

It is submitted that no city in the United Kingdom presents a field so in need of the measure as Dublin; and that government should be moved to introduce a short bill extending this boon to Ireland.

V.—*Notes as to Proceedings of the State Charities' Aid Association of New York.* By W. Neilson Hancock, LL.D.

[Read, 30th May, 1876.]

THE Fourth Annual Report of the State Charities' Aid Association of New York, bearing date 1st March, 1876, has been received, and it contains information on points that have interested this Society.

One object of the Association is to

“Promote an active public interest in the New York state institutions of public charities, with a view to the physical, mental, and moral improvement of their pauper inmates.”

The Association also endeavours

“To make the present pauper system more efficient, and to bring about reforms in it.”

The most remarkable features in the labours of the Association are:—firstly, the importance they attach to the investigation of the causes of pauperism; secondly, the broad line they draw between the treatment of children and the adult able bodied classes—recognizing the wide diversities in the duties of the state towards the one class and the other.

The study of the causes of pauperism has been present to the minds of American philanthropists for a considerable period. So far back as 1845, there is a provision in the state laws of New York to the following effect:—

“That the overseers of the poor-law shall keep a list, to be procured at the expense of the town, in which they shall enter the name, age, sex, and native country of every poor person who shall be relieved or supported by them, together with a statement of the causes—either direct or indirect—which shall have operated to render such person a pauper, so far as the same can be ascertained.”

It is owing, no doubt, to this provision of American law, in force for upwards of thirty years, that Americans have been able to investigate the question of hereditary pauperism, in a way much in advance of what has been done in Great Britain or here.

As an illustration of the importance the Association attaches to the investigation of the causes of pauperism, I may quote from the Report of the sub-committee on employment, 20th October, 1875:—

“The active causes which bring ruin, disease, and poverty among the population of this city, are also included in the object of checking pauperism, no less than those which, by encouraging self-reliance and self-support, prevent the necessity of applying for help to strangers and officials. It is by investigating the sources of distress—by personal

contact with the habits and daily life of the poor—by ascertaining the character, objects, and extent of the various agencies intended to help them—and by united action and co-operation among those engaged in this good work, that an effective check can be put upon the deteriorating influences in operation in this community.”

The same feature of dealing with the causes of pauperism has led the committee on adult able-bodied paupers, to recommend adult reformatories for certain classes of cases.

In speaking of a projected vagrancy law, they say:—

“But further legislation will also be necessary to provide permanently for the incorrigibly idle and vicious, who should, in accordance with the advice of the State Board of Charities, be withdrawn from jails and poor-houses of the state, and committed, *until reformed*, to district work-houses—there to be kept at hard labour and educated morally and mentally.”

The very strong view the Association appear to take as to the importance of checking out-door relief to able-bodied paupers in America, makes their views on the subject of children, which I next proceed to notice, all the more important. The committee on children report:—

“The whole drift of modern thought and opinion upon the subject of pauper children tends to establish the conclusion, that no child dependent upon the state should be allowed to grow up in a poor-house, because such a childhood, dreary enough in itself, is almost inevitably the beginning of a life of pauperism.”

The Report then gives us an account of a law passed by the State of New York for destitute children within poor-houses. The law was passed in 1875, and in the first clause has certain provisions as to “vagrant, truant, and disorderly children:” then as to all destitute children it has this provision:—

“It shall be the duty of the County Superintendents of the poor, or other officers charged with the support and relief of indigent persons \* \* \* to cause the removal of all children, between the ages of three and sixteen [except unteachable idiots, epileptic, paralytic, or others defective and unfit for family care], from their respective poor-houses, on or before the 1st of January, 1876.”

The law then, as to future cases after the 1st of January, 1876, has the following provision:—

“And also to cause the removal of those who may hereafter come under their care and control, or hereafter be born in such poor-houses, before they have arrived at the age of three years; and provide for their support and care in families, orphan asylums, or other appropriate institutions.”

As to the asylum or institution to be chosen, in cases where the children are not placed in families, the rule prescribed is that one

“Governed by officers or persons of the same religious faith as the parents of the child, is to be selected as far as practicable.”

This law has an important bearing upon the question now pending as to extending the limit of boarding out in Ireland beyond ten years, as we see sixteen years is the limit fixed by the New York State Legislature so recently as 1875, on the recommendation of New York State Board of Charities, for a young person's return to a poor-house.

The Committee, in commenting on this law, have expressed in two passages their strong opinion of its importance :—

“ The new law, by giving precedence to family homes in the disposal of children, recognizes the fact that, if carefully placed and judiciously watched, they are better off in families than they can be anywhere else, and they are much less likely to become chargeable to the state in after life, because they will learn to help and to respect themselves; and loss of self-respect is at once the cause and the effect of pauperism.”

The Committee finish their report thus :—

“ In concluding this report, it may be said that the Association regards the passage of the law removing children from the poor-houses as the most important step in poor-law reform made in the state during the present century.”

Having regard to the interest that has always been taken in this Society in the subject of boarding-out of pauper children—an interest enhanced by the able address and subsequent paper by Dr. Ingram on the subject—and as the age to which children are to be allowed to be boarded out in Ireland is still unsettled, I thought an account of the latest proceedings and opinions from America would be a contribution to the formation of public opinion on the subject.

The question has a further interest in connection with the discussions now going on in the Charity Organisation Society in London, and elsewhere in England, as to out-door relief. In these discussions out-door relief is generally spoken of as a whole, without any distinction between the case of the adults and that of the children. Of the increase of out-door relief that has taken place in Ireland, the two causes connected with children have had a very considerable share. The number of children boarded out has, since the Act allowing boarding-out was passed in 1862, grown to 1,500 in 1874; and the number of children relieved with their widowed mothers has increased, as appears from table in appendix, from 87 in 1857, to 5,479 in 1874, which, including 1,626 widows who are thus relieved to preserve their orphans in their natural home, makes 7,105 receiving out-door relief for the sake of children. The 1,500 added to this makes 8,605 relieved thus directly in connection with the maintenance of family life for children.

#### *Appendix.*

The extent to which Irish Guardians have adopted out-door relief, in the case of widows with two or more legitimate children dependent upon them, so as to allow such children to be reared by their widowed mothers on the family system, is shown in the following table :—

*Out-door Relief to Orphans with Widows, where there are TWO\* Legitimate Children dependent on Widows under Irish Poor Relief Extension Act, 1847.*

Year.	Orphans.	Widows.	Total.
1857	86	34	120
1858	174	79	253
1859	144	53	197
1860	274	87	361
1861	513	175	688
1862	752	283	1,035
1863	1,170	414	1,584
1864	1,453	486	1,939
1865	1,947	606	2,353
1866	2,075	696	2,771
1867	2,564	920	3,484
1868	3,323	1,075	4,398
1869	3,731	1,157	4,888
1870	3,862	1,183	5,045
1871	4,469	1,360	5,829
1872	4,884	1,463	6,347
1873	5,613	1,684	7,297
1874	5,479	1,626	7,105

\* While guardians in England are allowed to give out-door relief to a widow with one legitimate child dependent upon her, in Ireland, under an *Imperial statute* of 1847 (10 Victoria, c. 31, s. 1), a different rule is forced on Irish guardians; and if by death, or by the children being otherwise provided for, there should be only one dependent upon her, Irish guardians can then only grant relief in a workhouse.

VI.—*On the Extension of the Laws of Pawnbroking now in force in Great Britain to Ireland.* By W. Neilson Hancock, LL.D.

[Read, 30th May, 1876.]

IN 1870 a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the state of the laws affecting the Pawnbroking trade, with a view to their consolidation and amendment. The Committee was re-appointed in 1871, and made a report, which led to the "Pawnbrokers' Act, 1872."

Upon the general question of pawnbroking laws, they say:—

"Before considering the evidence taken by the Committee in the last session, on the subject referred to your Committee, and already reported to the House, they would observe that the laws relating to pawnbrokers originated in a policy which has long ceased to be recognized or enforced in this country. For centuries Parliament undertook to regulate the profit to be allowed for the loan of money, as well as the dealings in many branches of trade."