

Professional Review.

NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS.

Probably none of Miss Loane's books will ever have quite the charm for us of "The Queen's Poor," with its freshness, humour, and pathos, nevertheless, all who are interested in social problems should read her latest book, "Neighbours and Friends" (published by Edward Arnold). Voluntary workers will do well to study attentively the first chapter, in which the author endorses the view of the Poor Law Commissioners that "one great cause of pauperism is that Voluntary and State Aid compete with one another, instead of dividing out their respective territories, and establishing a firm and uniform system within those boundaries. . . . Where we are going is as important a question as where we are, even more so; to take long views will at least, to use an old-fashioned Americanism, 'solemnise' us, and compel us to realise that all dilettantism and amateurism in works of charity is little more than mere indulgence in moral sleeping draughts." Without conference and co-ordination there will be overlapping of charitable aid in one place, and a terrible gap in another. Miss Loane says:—"Frequently I have had to beg voluntary workers not to supply alcohol to my patients unless they received a direct request from the doctor in charge of the case as the messages sent them were often not merely fabrications, but in direct opposition to his stringent orders. I have known the following articles demanded (and obtained) for the supposed benefit of the same patient within thirty hours: Wine and brandy because he was 'sinking'; jelly, custard, and broth because he 'must have something light'; roast beef (mutton on no account to be sent) because he 'must have something strengthening.' Except for a couple of days, when a few pennyworth of milk would have met all requirements, the man was capable of eating ordinary food, and was drawing his usual wages."

We often hear of the wages on which the working classes lived and brought up large families in days gone by. Did they? One of Miss Loane's acquaintances told her, "When I was young people didn't even have enough to eat. How could they? Father was gettin' seven shillin' a week, and there was six of us. I was the eldest, so I had the worst of it, but mother'n father had it still worse when they was young. Wages was about the same, but they went no way at all. Mother's often told me that bread was 1s. 10d. and 2s. for the four pound loaf. But all that's clean forgotten; when I tell people they don't believe me. We wasn't as bad off as some, for if there was a bit extra to be earned for his family, father was the man to get out of his bed in the middle of a winter's night, and go five miles to earn it." Seeing the spirit of his daughter, adds the author, I could well believe it."

"If," says Miss Loane, "we would solve even the simplest of problems, we must be willing to learn from the working classes as well as to teach. I have never forgotten what a respectable woman living in a crowded parish in London, where the local demand for domestic servants was almost nil,

said to me when I asked her if no one ever helped her to find situations for her daughters outside its borders. 'Well, you see, Miss, there isn't hardly anyone but the vicar's wife, and she's so busy with them that's gone wrong that she's no time for the others. And there's Mr. ——— just the same. I'm not one for wishing to push anyone in the dirt, and many's the girl I've helped on the quiet, but to see him acting as if he couldn't make enough of girls who hadn't kep' straight, and not a word nor a look to help the others, fair turns me sick. . . . One side of the results of this exclusive attention to those of bad reputation was rather amusingly brought out by a girl of twenty-three applying to me for employment. I asked if the vicar would give her a reference, and she replied indignantly, 'I've always had a good character of me own. I've never had no need to ast for one!— as if characters were second-hand clothing passed on to those in need.'

We shall many of us endorse Miss Loane's remarks when speaking of private nurses. "For some reason unknown to me, nurses need more bed-clothing than most people. I have generally found that they like four blankets in winter, and to have a third one at hand even in summer. In many private houses two are considered enough, and the unlucky nurse shivers and shakes half the night."

A word as to the 'cured' maniac shows how many homes are terrorised by the early discharge of asylum patients. "Forty or fifty years ago there was a great outcry against the detention of persons in asylums for the insane who might, it was asserted, with safety and advantage have been sent to their homes. Doubtless there was some justification for the complaints, but since then the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction; women are discharged when utterly unable to bear the mental annoyances and petty vexations of ordinary domestic life, and this is still more frequently the case with men. Can anyone who has neither endured such Fortune, nor seen anyone else compelled to endure it, imagine what it is like to be day and night in the power of a man who, at any moment, may be attacked by homicidal mania? Of a man who falls into a paroxysm of rage, or broods for days at a stretch over an imaginary insult, who sleeps with a loaded pistol under his pillow, or a sharpened razor in his hand?"

The whole town is horror-stricken when some discharged maniac murders wife and children, but few think of the life of fear which preceded the terrible deed, nor of the many hundreds of families living under similar conditions."

One more story: "The ordinary father has always to 'show cause' why he should not black the boots, and he can rarely do this during the first fourteen or fifteen years of married life. A North Country school teacher told me that she was giving a lesson on the history of Solomon. She could not avoid mentioning his wives, but was trying to pass over that portion of the subject as lightly as possible, when a boy showed his appreciation of the drawbacks of polygamy by the heartfelt sympathy with which he exclaimed, 'What a lot o' boots he must have had to clean!'"

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