

DESPERATE SITUATION OF ENGLAND'S POOR

More Than Two Millions of People Are Suffering From the Lack of Food.



HOMELESS WRETCHES WHO SLEEP ON BIRD FLOORS AND WOODEN BENCHES
FROM A FLASHLIGHT PHOTO MADE FOR THIS ARTICLE



STARVING AND IDLE MEN SPENDING THE NIGHT ON THE SHELTER



CONSUETO DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH FORMERLY MISS WANDERBILT OF NEW YORK



MR. HAROLD LABOUR LEADER AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

THE GIGANTIC PROBLEM OF THE UNEMPLOYED.

The problem of the hour in England is that of the unemployed. The distress throughout the United Kingdom is declared to be the worst on record. The severe weather in the early weeks of the Winter, the generally bad state of trade and the crop famine in Ireland are the causes of the present terrible condition. The estimate of the unemployed and starving of about two and one-half millions is conservative. Some estimates have declared the figures nearer six millions. Premier Balfour, appealed to call an extra session of Parliament in order to pass remedial measures, has refused. In all the 28 boroughs of London the Mayors and Councils have started extra works. In other cities the municipality is doing its utmost to supply work of some kind. Many are giving away free meals. In Leeds 23,000 meals per day are given. Newspapers in the provinces have started penny subscription funds. Important cities such as Liverpool and Manchester have declared in public meeting that a special session of Parliament is urgently needed. Other sections are sending in petitions and enough pressure may be given to force an extra session. Daily the newspapers contain stories of death from starvation and as the result of exposure. The Queen is about to institute a fund for the relief which will be of a national character. Mr. Keir Hardie, M. P., deals in an article with a solution of the problem and the American Duchess of Marlborough tells of a way to relieve immediate wants in a local way.

Read through the lines, there is not much difference between this address of the polished man of letters to cultured intelligence and the speech of the demagogue to the victims of hard times and social conditions. Both regard the present ministry with contempt. Both are in agreement that it is eminently desirable something should happen which would compel a serious effort to prevent such stupendous misery and destitution. Instead of resting content with the doling out of charity that thus far has barely sufficed to stave off actual starvation among thousands.

Winter in London is always accompanied by the wildest scenes of misery and distress, but not for long years has there been anything approaching the present destitution. Many of the leaders of the various agencies predict that matters will become much worse before the Winter ends. Already all the workhouses are filled. Thousands are in receipt of outdoor relief. Every charitable organization is straining its resources to the utmost and issuing pitiable appeals for funds to enable them to meet the increasing demands upon them. The Salvation Army and the Church Army keep a legion of poor wretches from famishing. The several Metropolitan Borough Councils have started relief works. A Mansion House fund has been opened, to which the King has contributed \$761,500; Lord Iveagh, the rich brewer, \$25,000, and the Messrs. Rothschild \$15,000. All that charity can be induced to do is being done. And yet, according to one authority, Dr. Horton, 125,000 ill-clad and under-fed children appear daily at the free schools to wrestle simultaneously with elementary education and hunger.

The destitution is not confined to London. It is spread all over the United Kingdom. It has been estimated that at the present time there are over 600,000 men out of work in what are termed the provinces. In another column of the same paper which published these figures appeared the Board of Trade returns for the last 11 months, gleefully paraded as proof that all was well economically with England. The figures for these months show that imports have increased by nearly \$40,000,000, and exports by nearly \$12,000,000, with a similar period for 1903. The expansion in trade has not been confined to a few months; it is spread over all of them. The figures for November, when the black clouds of distress had cast a gloom over the land, show better trade conditions—as financiers are accustomed to interpret sig-

—than in the previous November. Trade has expanded simultaneously with a great increase of the unemployed. Simultaneously appear loud proclamations to the world at large, based on statistics, that England is prosperous and holding her own with commercial rivals, and frantic appeals to charitable folk at home to succor the multitude who are on the verge of starvation for help to stave off the hunger madness and bread riots. Obviously, it would seem that there is something horribly wrong in the industrial system which brings prosperity to a few and hunger to the multitude. Anyhow, that is how it strikes the latter and many others in England who are opposed to the policy of just letting things drift.

2,500,000 in the Coils of Hunger.
It certainly lent point to the appeal made by several M. P.'s to the Premier to summon a special session of Parliament to consider the matter, to treat it as a national question and strive to devise some remedy for it other than mere temporary stop-gap measures. Mr. Balfour declined. He replied, in effect, that he favored the continuation of the palliative treatment. His and the very high opinion of Parliament and of the value of Parliamentary discussion, but Parliament was hardly capable of "framing a constructive policy." Which seems to justify the contemptuous comment of Mr. Crooks, a Member of Parliament himself, that "Parliament is all gaa."

Taking the latest Board of Trade figures on unemployed as a basis on a very moderate estimate, there were in November—there are many more thousands now—25,000 out of work. Assuming that only one-half of these are married men with families, that means 125,000 men, women and children in England in the coils of hunger, cold and despair. The amount of suffering and moral and physical deterioration which such figures represent is beyond the power of imagination to realize. And this, too, in a year of trade expansion—of what is called national prosperity! Yet the government calmly declines to treat it as a national question, or to summon Parliament to consider it. It is one of those mountainous problems that inevitably grows bigger the longer an effort to solve it is postponed. Meanwhile the unemployed are starving at the leach.

It is hardly realized in America what abnormal social conditions have resulted from the ever-increasing separation of the people from the land, and the sacrifice of agricultural to manufacturing interests. Since 1850 the number of people employed in cultivating the land has decreased by 1,200,000, while the population has in the same period vastly increased. They lie huddled together in gross slums with hardly room to turn round. Every year thousands of acres pass out of cultivation and an increasing stream of people swarm to the overcrowded cities. England—the land of England—is owned by an infinitesimal residue of the population which is crammed within its borders. It has passed from the people. A few thousand individuals hold it all.

The Bitter Cry for Food.
What has been the result? According to a report made by a Parliamentary committee in 1902 there are 2,500,000 acres of land lying waste in Great Britain. Over

two and a quarter millions of people are in sore straits to keep hunger at bay, and land in abundance, on which they might themselves—or many of them at least—produce the food they need, now yields nothing. The cry that now resounds throughout London—throughout England—is for food—money to buy food for the workers. "Every unemployed man, be he Duke or docker," says Sir John Gorst, "should be set to work producing food." But, say the advocates of this method of making the unemployed self-supporting, land necessary for the establishment of such a system can only be acquired by government aid and government machinery. Private philanthropy is unequal to the task. What Harold Begbie characterizes as "thinking ineptitude" turns a deaf ear to such appeals. Last year England's butter, bacon, cheese and egg bill, paid to foreign producers, amounted to \$24,000,000. It is confidently asserted that under proper management England herself could supply the greater

ESTIMATED UNEMPLOYED IN UNITED KINGDOM.	
London	750,000
England (outside of London)	1,400,000
Scotland	200,000
Ireland	150,000
Wales	40,000
In the cities	2,500,000
In the country	1,000,000
Deaths from starvation and want	100 per week

part of such foods. Anyhow, it is urged, it would be far better to set unemployed applicants for relief at such work instead of restricting them to picking oakum, breaking stones or chopping kindling wood. Another scheme which has been put forward for relieving the strain of an overstocked labor market and providing a profitable national investment in the afforestation of waste lands. It finds many able supporters who point to the example of Germany, where the forest industries are under state control, and yield a profit to the government of \$9,000,000 annually besides supporting 60,000 workmen and their families. England imported last year \$50,000,000 worth of timber, of which \$18,000,000 went for firewood. The latter, at least, it is stated by competent authorities, could all be raised on land now lying waste.

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In London, passes might be written and still they would convey only a faint idea of the reality. In one district alone, West Ham, the authorities report \$8,000 are in the direst want. Many of the houses are bare, not merely of furniture, but of food, and in such circumstances as these starving women, lying upon the boards of an empty room, have brought infants into a world unwilling to receive them. Shoeless and in rags, hundreds of children go hungry to morning school. In the playgrounds they do not indulge in the healthy rough-and-tumble games that characterize the pastimes of the well-nourished child. They stand shivering in the cold and damp, dragging their miserable clothing closer around them for warmth. The cosy schoolrooms are veritable heavens for them, for many have no fires at home, and they make up for their restless, comfortless tossing at night by falling asleep in school. "I have not the heart to wake him," said one teacher, indicating a little bare-footed fellow fast asleep at 19 in the morning. "Poor little chap, he has a rough time of it! He goes to the dock gates in the afternoons and begs food from the men fortunate enough to be returning from work."

Most of the pawnshops are full and refuse to accept more pledges, so that this last resource of the destitute is denied them. Many empty houses have been broken into by homeless wretches that they might at least find shelter, and possibly sleep, on bare floors and wooden benches. Less fortunate than these, on bitter nights when the spectacle of a homeless dog would awaken pity, scores of human derelicts may be seen huddled together for warmth on the seats and benches, or stretched out on the bare grounds in the parks. The law requires the police to keep them moving, but they have not the heart to do it. They look the other way and pass them by.

In all of the slum districts similar scenes are witnessed. Cases of actual starvation are frequent, and in many others, to which officialdom gives another name, lack of nourishment has been the accelerating cause of death. One poor woman, leaving her starving husband in the empty, desolate house, sought all day in vain for work. Convinced that when she returned home her husband would be dead, she decided to seek reunion with him in another world by plunging into the Thames. One hesitates to describe her rescue as merciful. When she was taken to her home it was to find a corpse on the garret floor. Such is life in London in the opening days of the year of our Lord, 1905. (Copyright, 1905.) E. LISLE SNELL.

By J. K. Hardie, Member of Parliament

THE difficulty of dealing with the problem of the unemployed in England is two-fold.

(1) The community has not yet accepted the idea that the state is responsible for putting useful work at remunerative wages within the reach of every competent citizen.

(2) There is a tendency to deal with the unemployed problem as if it referred to wretches and loafers.

These, however, are the products of unemployment. Before we can get rid of their presence we must tap the source whence they come. I would leave them to be dealt with by the poor-law authorities, conferring upon the latter such powers as might be necessary.

I am mainly concerned with the capable and willing worker who is deprived of an opportunity of working for his living. If the loafer problem will very soon assume very small dimensions.

The question must be regarded from two points: (a) immediate relief for those who are on the verge of starvation; and (b) some permanent and systematic attempt to grapple with the whole question. The educational authorities should provide meals for children attending schools in all the poor districts. Those who can pay should be charged; those who cannot should have free tickets.

Salaries to Mayors a Solution.
Another way to provide funds, and one which has been adopted in Bradford, Yorkshire, is for the borough council to vote a salary to its Mayor on the understanding that he devotes the money to this purpose.

Next the government, acting through the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, or the Commissioners of Crown Lands, should acquire three large estates—one, say, in Wales, one in the Midlands and one in Scotland—and at once employ men in the preparation of these for the purposes of afforestation.

Had the Prime Minister acceded to the request for a special session to consider the question of the unemployed, this would have been among the proposals submitted to Parliament.

Without waiting for Parliament to meet,

however, the Commissioners referred to above have large areas at their disposal upon which many hundreds of men might be usefully employed.

In like manner the London City Council has vacant land in various parts of the metropolis, and this could be put to use at once on the same lines as have been so successfully tried in Philadelphia and other large American cities.

American Plan Good.
The American plan is for a committee of citizens to obtain the right to use such vacant land without paying rent. There are now over 3000 men, most of them married, at work in Philadelphia cultivating these vacant lots.

The committee provides them with maintenance and with implements, seeds and plants. The produce, when it ripens, is sold and the value handed over to those who did the work.

Mr. Joseph Fels, one of the promoters of this idea in America, has offered some-thing of the kind in London, and the Central Unemployed Committee is taking this up as one branch of its undertakings. Mr. Fels has bought 1000 acres of land in Essex for the Committee.

When Parliament assembles I hope to have more proposals ready to be submitted, not only in regard to the afforestation scheme, but also for doubling the number of families engaged in the cultivation of the soil.

If 1,000,000 workers could be added to those already engaged upon the land, with incomes averaging \$5 a week, we should thereby increase the purchasing power of the people by \$50,000,000 a year, which would go a long way toward relieving trade depression.

Since 1900 the incomes of the working classes, by reduction in wages, unemployment and short time, have been reduced by \$25,000,000 a year, to which fact much of the depression in trade may be traced.

Want More Philanthropists.
I would there were more men like Mr. Fels to help solve England's hardest problem, and I would like to see them flourish. It is a crying shame that in this dire hour of need an American should lead the way.

It is some eight years since Mr. Fels came to England. Success on both sides

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