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The Church and the Poor.

A SERIES OF HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

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VI.

The End of the Middle Ages.

FROM the coming of the Friars to England about A.D. 1224 to the Reformation is almost exactly three hundred years. This period is one of great interest; but its adequate study, and still more an adequate presentation of its leading features within the space of a few pages, involves very considerable difficulties. It witnessed certain social movements of great importance, and writers upon the period are not entirely agreed as to the chief causes of some of these. Of course, the sources of our information for this epoch are far more full than are those for any previous epoch which we have considered. Because my space is limited, and because I wish to deal as clearly as I can with the main features of this period, I shall confine myself almost altogether to what took place in England, and to showing how the Church in our own country attempted—and unfortunately to a great extent failed—to meet the rapidly changing conditions in the social life of the people. To form a just estimate of the Church's work it is most important to have as clear as possible an idea of those conditions.

The period is divided into two almost equal parts by the "Black Death," which ravaged this country as it did others about 1348-49, and by which it is estimated that between a third and a half of the people of England perished.[1] The economic results of this terrible scourge were immense. One of these was naturally an immediate scarcity of labour,[2]

[1] Green, "Short History of English People," p. 241, says "more than half"; Cunningham, "Western Civilization," p. 144, says, "about a half."

[2] Preamble to "Statute of Labourers," 23 Edward III., A.D. 1349.

another was a very rapid rise in the price of food.[1] These changes were not entirely due to the Black Death, because for some time previous to this very considerable alterations had been taking place in the manorial system—for instance, many of the serfs had already begun to pay a money commutation in lieu of work; in other words, they had commenced to pay rent instead of rendering personal service.[2] After the Black Death the peasants still desired to pay the same rent they had previously paid, but the landlords found that as prices had doubled they could only hire labourers by paying them double wages. This was probably the root cause of such movements as the Peasants' Revolt; the Poll Tax was only the match which set fire to a seething mass of industrial discontent. Parliament, which at this time represented simply the interests of the landlords, tried to interfere. It attempted to regulate wages *before* it regulated prices.[3] Consequently the peasants found they could not procure even food for the amount of wages which Parliament tried to force them to accept. Another method attempted by the landlords was to refuse commutation payment—*i.e.*, rent in lieu of service; but men who had once tasted freedom would not be driven back into slavery.

Thus, as labour could not be obtained at the old rates, and as service could not be re-exacted without violence and murder, another plan must be tried: either new arrangements must be made with labour, or less labour must be employed. Some landowners granted land on lease to tenants for a rent, and then the tenant had to find the labour. Here we have the origin of the modern tenant-farmer, as a kind of middleman between the landowner and the labourer. Other landowners found that, as wool was growing in demand, sheep-farming paid better than

[1] By an Act of 1363 an attempt was made to regulate the price of provisions.

[2] Meredith, "Economic History of England," pp. 43 *et seq.*; Nicholls, "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., pp. 30 *et seq.* See also Trevelyan, "England in the Age of Wycliffe," p. 185.

[3] The Statute of Labourers was passed in A.D. 1349, and amended in 1350-51, while prices seem to have been first regulated in 1363.

arable farming, because much less labour was needed.[1] But this meant that a large number of people were thrown out of employment. The landowners also, for the purpose of increasing pasturage for sheep, began to enclose common or waste land on which the serfs had pastured their cattle; this, again, pressed heavily upon the poor.[2]

Side by side with these movements among the peasantry, there proceeded throughout this period many changes in town life. The genesis and growth of the English town—to which we find no exact parallel in other countries—is a most interesting subject.[3] While the struggle of the townsmen for freedom and self-government was on the whole peacefully effected in England, on the Continent, especially on the Rhineland, it was frequently marked by considerable bloodshed. Among the many causes which contributed to the growth of the towns, two stand pre-eminent: one being the development of trade, the other being the desire for freedom. If a serf or villein could prove a residence in a town of a year and a day, he therewith became free of his owner.[4] Consequently the towns became a refuge for very different kinds of characters, some of these being very undesirable. The struggles between the original inhabitants who owned land in the town and the people who for various reasons flocked into the town, were frequently severe. And it will easily be understood that in those days, when scientific sanitation and the conditions of public health were unknown, the poorer quarters of the towns became hotbeds of sickness and misery.[5] In their earliest days the Franciscan Friars did a noble work among the sick and the

[1] The history of the English wool trade from the thirteenth century is full of interest. See Thorold Rogers, "Economic Interpretation of History," pp. 9 *et seq.*

[2] Meredith, "Economic Interpretation of History," pp. 42 *et seq.*, 115 *et seq.* This was the subject of legislation as early as the Statute of Merton in A.D. 1235.

[3] Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 *et seq.*

[4] Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 64.

[5] The death-rate from the Black Death was much greater in the towns than in the country.

wretched; and they generally fixed their houses among the worst of the slums. Those who would understand the social life and especially the social difficulties and evils of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries must pay particular attention to the conditions existing in the towns, and to the changes which took place in these. I use the term "changes" rather than "development" because there appears to have been a diminution in the relative importance and influence of the towns towards the end of the fifteenth century.[1] There seems to have then arisen a tendency for manufacturing industries to desert the towns for the country; also it appears to have become more difficult to induce substantial men to undertake the burdens of municipal government.[2]

One means whereby we may gain much insight into the conditions of any period is by studying the various laws—for the correction of evils, the regulation of life, and the protection of property—enacted within it. A study of certain Acts of Parliament passed during the period we are considering is extremely instructive. I would now draw attention to a few of these connected with our present subject, say from the middle of the fourteenth century. By Acts passed in 1335 and 1350 for the freedom of buying and selling,[3] we have an assertion of the great principle that privileges were not to be enjoyed by one class to the injury of another. In 1349 we have the celebrated "Statute of Labourers," by which, among other things, it was enacted "that because many valiant beggars, as long as they may live of begging, do refuse to labour, giving themselves to idleness and vice . . . none, upon pain of imprisonment, shall, under the colour of pity or alms, give anything to such which may labour, or presume to favour them in their sloth, so that thereby they may be compelled to labour for

[1] Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 123. The national consciousness grew, and the nation rather than the town became the centre of interest.

[2] Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 124.

[3] By the Act of 1335 (9 Edward III.) it was enacted "that all merchants, strangers, and denizens . . . may freely, without interruption, sell to what persons it shall please them."

their necessary living." Two points in reference to this statute should be noticed: first, it is not prohibited to help those who are not able to work; secondly, no statutory provision is made for these.[1] By the same law it was enacted that "no man pay, or promise to pay, any servant any more wages, liveries, meed, or salary than was wont"—*i.e.*, before the Great Plague; also it was further enacted that "butchers, fishmongers, hostelers, brewers, bakers, pulters, and all other sellers of all manner of victual shall be bound to sell the same for a reasonable price."[2] A copy of this statute was sent to each of the Bishops to be published in the churches, with the request that he would "direct the parsons, vicars, ministers of such churches and others under him, to exhort and invite their parishioners, by salutary admonitions, to labour and observe the ordinances aforesaid, as the present necessity requireth."[3]

It is one thing to pass a law, it is another thing to get it obeyed; and apparently very great difficulty was found in getting the people to obey this particular law, for in less than two years[4] another Act was passed amending and continuing it. In the preamble to this Act it is stated that "servants having no regard to the said ordinance, but to their ease and general covetize, do withdraw themselves . . . unless they have livery and wages to the double or treble of what they were wont to take before." The Act then proceeds to define with great particularity the various scales of wages which shall be paid to various classes of workers.[5] In the same Act we have what may perhaps be regarded as the first trace of the "law of settlement," which has continued in force down to the present time; for it directs that "none [of the workers] go out of the town

[1] It is apparently still assumed that the resources of charity will suffice.

[2] But the "reasonable price" is not fixed or defined as by the Act of 1363.

[3] Nicholls, "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., p. 39.

[4] In 1350-51 (25 Edward III.).

[5] *E.g.*, "a mower of meadows is to be paid 5d. for an acre, or 5d. a day; reapers of corn 2d. an acre in the first week in August, 3d. in subsequent weeks; a master-carpenter is to have 3d. a day, a master-mason 4d., and their servants 1d. The pay of a common soldier at that date was 6d. a day, or about 5s. of our money" (Hume's "History," vol. ii., p. 496).

where he dwelleth in the winter, to serve the summer, if he may serve in the same town."

There can be no doubt that vagabondage and disorder were the chief evils of the time. In an Act of 1 Richard II. we are told that "villeins withdraw their services and customs from their lords by the comfort and procurement of others, their counsellors, maintainers, and abettors which have taken hire and profit of the said villeins and land-tenants."[1] Professor Thorold Rogers feels sure that this "refers to the company of poor priests whom Wicliffe had appointed, and who were the channel by which communications were kept up among the disaffected serfs."[2] There is more than sufficient evidence to show that the lower classes were seething with a spirit of dissatisfaction when the Peasant Revolt under Wat Tyler broke out in A.D. 1381.[3] That the real cause of this revolt was the attempt of the lords, against the growing spirit of freedom (which was active not only in England but in France and Flanders), to enforce the old conditions of serfdom there can be no doubt. The object of the revolt was simply to abolish the conditions and incidents of villeinage.[4] The demands of the peasants, it may be remembered, were four: (1) The total abolition of slavery for themselves and their children for ever; (2) the reduction of the rent of good land to 4d. an acre; (3) the full liberty of buying and selling, like other men, in all fairs and markets; (4) a general pardon for all past offences. I must not dwell upon either the incidents or the results of the revolt, but must pass on to point out how one or two other Acts of Parliament at the end of this fourteenth century throw further light on the condition of the people. In A.D. 1388 an Act was passed which by some is regarded as marking the first step in our present Poor Law; it is also interesting as containing the first

[1] Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. i., pp. 48, 49.
[2] "Economic Interpretation of History," p. 29.
[3] See Trevelyan, "England in the Age of Wycliffe," chap. vi.
[4] In the preamble of an Act of 1377 it is stated, "Complaint has been made by the lords of manors, as well men of Holy Church as others, that the villeins on their estates affirm them to be quite and utterly discharged of all manner of serfage, etc." (Trevelyan, p. 193).

recognition of the "impotent poor" as a class.[1] One reason for this Act was probably that people were being drawn from the rural districts into the towns for the sake of higher wages and greater comfort. The Act prohibits servants and labourers from wandering, whether in search of employment or for some other cause. It also states that "beggars impotent to serve shall abide in the cities and towns where they be dwelling; and if the people of these cities and towns will not, or may not, suffice to find them, that then the said beggars shall draw them to other towns within the hundred, rape, or wapentake, or to the towns where they were born." It should be noticed that side by side with this enactment again no provision is made for the sustenance or relief of these people: they are simply left to chance or casual charity. The only object of the Act is apparently to prevent them from wandering.[2] Three years later we have another Act which may have been partly designed to meet the inconveniences occasioned by the last; for in A.D. 1392 it was enacted that in every appropriation of the revenues of any parish church to some cathedral, or monastic, or other religious institution, "the diocesan shall ordain a convenient sum of money to be distributed yearly of the fruits and profits of the same, to the poor parishioners in aid of their living and sustenance for ever."[3]

Even before the arrival of the Black Death, as we have seen, emancipation from villeinage had made very considerable progress; but like every other social change, however excellent in itself, it was at least temporarily attended by various evils. So long as the serf remained a serf he was sure of, at least, bare sustenance from his master;[4] when he became a free labourer he was dependent upon himself, and that in an age in which

[1] Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 55 *et seq.*

[2] Ratzinger apparently holds that during the fourteenth century in England the clergy and monastic institutions looked well after the needs of the poor; but in the fifteenth century he admits things in this respect changed for the worse. It must, however, be remembered that he holds a strong brief for the Church ("Armenpflege," pp. 426 *et seq.*).

[3] Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 54.

[4] Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 27. See also Meredith, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

there was no Poor Law to fall back upon. The man who has been practically a slave is by no means always at once ready to occupy and use wisely a position of freedom. He has to learn to use his freedom, which means to depend upon himself. It is facts like these which explain many of the social difficulties of the end of the Middle Ages. An Act passed early in the fifteenth century[1] reveals another difficulty of this period. Its object was to check the exodus from the country to the town, to stem the growing dearth of agricultural labourers. By this Act it was ordained "that no man or woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall put their son or daughter of whatsoever age to serve as apprentice to no craft nor other labour within any city or borough, unless he have land or rent to the value of twenty shillings by the year at least."

In the reign of Henry VI. we have another attempt[2] to regulate wages by enacting a new scale, which shows a very considerable rise upon the wages prescribed some sixty years previously. Under Edward IV. we meet with a revision of the sumptuary laws of Edward III., which again indicates an increase in the national wealth.[3] By the Wars of the Roses almost the last traces of feudalism passed away, and upon the close of these wars we see a rapid and practically continuously progressive development both of trade and of national wealth, though some of the old difficulties still exist, two of these being—first, the further conversion of arable land into pasture;[4] and secondly, the increase of "vagabonds and beggars." The two evils, we can easily see, were probably not wholly independent of each other.

It must be conceded that during this period the influence of the Church upon the social welfare of the people was relatively less than during the various epochs we have previously con-

[1] 7 Henry IV., cap. 17 (Nicholls, p. 66).

[2] 23 Henry IV., cap. 12. From this Act a carpenter's wage had risen from 3d. to 5d. a day, a labourer's from 1d. to 3d., the wages of a woman from 1d. to 4d.

[3] Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 84 *et seq.*

[4] By the time of Edward IV. the woollen trade had risen into great importance (Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 *et seq.*).

sidered. This was especially the case in the towns. Other influences, besides those we may term ecclesiastical (which are not always synonymous with religious), were growing in importance. The towns were more and more asserting their freedom against the overlordship of the great Barons or against the rights of the great monasteries, under whose protection they had frequently grown. Towards the end of the Middle Ages we certainly witness what may be termed a growing "secularization" of both life and authority.[1] We see this in many directions, and it was due to various causes. The Church in every country could not fail to be to some extent represented in the eyes of the people by the Papacy, as well as to be influenced by the vicissitudes and conduct of the Papal Court. While in outward magnificence the Papacy during this period may have actually grown, its *moral* hold upon the people was rapidly becoming weaker. The spread of such doctrines as those of Wicliffe—*e.g.*, that "dominion was founded upon grace," had far more than a theological influence; their social and economic results were very considerable.[2] Then many of the chief offices of State, which had formerly been held exclusively by ecclesiastics, were now frequently filled by laymen. Such offices had been held by Bishops and priests, not merely because of their superior education, but because it was considered that these were particularly bound to discharge their duties with the fear of God before their eyes.[3] To understand the life, and especially the economic life, of the Middle Ages, we must remember that while ideals and principles were very lofty, actual practice, especially as time went on, fell immeasurably below these. Too often a claim to authority and respect founded upon a spiritual position became a mere pretext to clothe an absorbing interest in worldly dignities and earthly gain. Then, to some extent,

[1] See Cunningham, "Western Civilization," pp. 138 *et seq.*

[2] There is a brief but clear account of Wicliffe's teaching and its social effects in Dr. Workman's essay upon "The Influence of the Christian Church on the Social Development of the Middle Ages," in "Christ and Civilization," p. 326 *et seq.*

[3] Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 140, 141.

the influence of the mendicant orders had a far-reaching effect towards a separation—frequently false in theory and detrimental in practice—of the sacred from the secular.[1] Also during the fourteenth, and especially during the fifteenth century, the conduct of the religious houses seems to have deteriorated; there was a falling off, not only in the management of their property, but in the discharge of their responsibilities both towards their serfs and towards the poor generally.[2] At one time the monks had been the best agriculturists; they had also assisted in the development of commerce. But now "the Church had ceased to be a leader in the arts of practical life, while her inability to utilize privileges and possessions to the best advantage under changed conditions was fatal to her position as the dominating influence over secular life in all its aspects."[3]

As an interesting example, not exactly of the dereliction of a positive duty, but of an increasing carelessness with regard to the social and economic welfare of the people on the part of the monasteries, I may cite the fact that these gradually ceased to pay the same attention to the repair of bridges and roads, of which in earlier times they had been extremely careful.[4] The welfare of the people depends to a great extent upon trading facilities, which in turn depend upon means of communication. At one time the building of bridges and the making of roads, and the keeping of both in repair, were widely regarded as acts of piety. But in the fourteenth century we meet with various complaints, especially in reference to the monasteries, that both bridges and roads had been allowed to fall into disrepair.[5] It was not, however, until A.D. 1555 that an Act was passed appointing road surveyors, and which "embodies the modern view of the nature of the obligations."[6]

Yet another example of the growing secularization of relief is furnished by the way in which hospitals and other institutions in towns for the relief of the sick and poor passed more and

[1] Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 145 *et seq.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 145.
[4] See Jusserand, "English Wayfaring Life in the Fourteenth Century."
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 64 *et seq.*
[6] Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 147.

more under either lay or civic jurisdiction.[1] The various trade guilds made provision not only for their own indigent members, but in certain instances for other poor and afflicted persons. It may have been through their association for these purposes in the guilds that municipal rulers began as such—that is, as representing the citizens and no longer merely the guild—to take an active part in the administration of poor relief.[2] There are instances during the fifteenth century of charitable institutions being not only controlled by the municipalities, but of such institutions owning (at least in part) their foundation to these bodies. An interesting early example of municipal relief is furnished by Southampton where, in the middle of the fifteenth century, "the townys almys were settled on a plan," and lists were kept of weekly payments, which seem to have furnished sufficient relief for about a hundred and fifty people.[3]

Upon the *fact* that, at any rate during the fifteenth century, the relief of the poor was slowly and very gradually falling into lay hands, there can, I think, be no doubt; though the change was very gradual, because by far the greater part of the relief given was still dispensed either by the clergy or by ecclesiastical institutions.[4] Upon the various *causes* of this change there is room for at least some difference of opinion. It is easy to throw the chief share of the blame upon the Church; and to speak of the rapacity of prelates and monks, and of the mismanagement of ecclesiastical property. To a certain extent these charges are no doubt true.[5] But other causes than these were at work, causes over which the Church had little or no control. Conditions both of life and trade were rapidly changing, and tasks for which the Church was at one time equal had to a great extent become beyond her power.[6] There

[1] Even Ratzinger admits, "Obwohl in England der Clerus die Bedurfnisse der Armen zu decken stets redlich be müht war . . . bildeten sich doch auch wie in den übrigen Laudern schon einege Laienvereine" ("Armenpflege," p. 431).

[2] Leonard, "English Poor Relief," p. 7.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 9. [4] Leonard, p. 17.

[5] Ratzinger, again, admits this ("Armenpflege," pp. 426, 429).

[6] Cunningham, "Western Civilization," p. 147. We must remember that, among other changes of thought, new ideas were growing in reference to the "theory" of charity.

have been parallels to these changes in other ages in other departments of life. One readily suggests itself. At one time the Church possessed almost a monopoly of the education of the people. I am not saying that when this was so the Church discharged her responsibility to the full; but she certainly did an immense amount of good work, for which she has not always received the credit. But with changed conditions this task became beyond the powers of voluntary enterprise. The State was compelled to step in and to take a very large share of the burden upon her shoulders. So it was with the municipal and national organization of relief, also with regard to the repression of mendicity, and with measures for the regulation of labour and wages. All these matters had to do with the poor and with poverty, and in regard to them the State began to take a larger and larger share.

Then there can be no doubt that both the medieval theory and medieval practice of relief, when tested by actual results, were extremely imperfect. As we have frequently seen, far too little was thought of the character and actual needs of the recipients, and also of the probable results of the charity bestowed. Almsgiving was regarded as a duty; but neither the organization of charity, nor the economic or moral results of charity, were carefully studied. There were districts in which there might be two or three rich monastic houses; in these districts far more than enough charity might be given, while in other districts the means for relief might be very small. In some districts relief might be had for the asking, in others hardly any relief could be obtained. There was no co-ordination of charity; and apparently neither individuals nor institutions took the trouble to ascertain what their neighbours were giving. They gave, and when they had given they imagined that their duty was done. If anyone wishes to learn how charity should not be given, and of the evils attendant upon unwise giving, they will find in the history of the later Middle Ages more than sufficient lessons upon both.

The Eve of the Reformation.

We are accustomed to regard the Reformation as almost wholly a religious or, rather, an ecclesiastical movement, produced entirely by what may be termed religious causes, and having certain ecclesiastical results—*e.g.*, the disruption of the Western Church. Such a view is very far from being the whole truth. Actually many of the causes of the Reformation—indeed, some of the most powerful among these—were not religious at all, and can only very indirectly be termed ecclesiastical; they were only ecclesiastical because they were connected with the financial arrangements of the Church.[1] Among the secular causes of the Reformation was the growth of both the idea and the fact of nationality which arose before or about this period in more than one European country.[2] This growth was accompanied by a diminution in relative importance of many of the great cities.[3] Another cause of the Reformation was a very widespread condition of economic, and so of social, distress, though this cause operated far more powerfully on the Continent than it did in England,[4] where, if the condition of the poorer classes during the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century was evil, it seems to have been far less evil than in Germany or Italy, or even in France.

We shall find that during the reign of Henry VIII. and his successors Act after Act was passed with the view of suppressing the mendicancy and vagabondage with which England (as other countries) at this period was rife. The undoubted enormous increase of this evil which took place at this time is sometimes attributed to the suppression of the religious houses, and to the consequent cutting off of the charities which these had disbursed. This may have increased the distress, but it cannot be regarded as its chief cause; for the increase of mendicancy took place in countries where the religious houses continued, also it began long before their suppression.

[1] Upon the whole subject of Papal exactions see "Cambridge Modern History," vol. i., pp. 665 *et seq.*

[2] Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 157 *et seq.* [3] Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 122 *et seq.*

[4] Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 431: "Das Englishe Wolk lebte vielmehr in Wohlstand."

The real cause was the rapid changes which were taking place in both the structure and conditions of society. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there had been widespread and almost constant warfare. These wars had found employment (as soldiers) for an immense number of men. Now that the wars were largely over we find not only widespread devastation and injury to agriculture and trade,[1] but also bands of men roaming over England and France and other countries without work, and many of them without either training or desire for work.[2] Then the conditions of trade were rapidly changing. The results of the discovery of the New World were beginning to be felt; capitalism, one of the chief bases of modern commerce, was growing;[3] the old trade guild system was breaking up; trade was leaving many of the towns, which had been its chief centres, for the country;[4] also in England the custom of pasture, in place of arable, farming was rapidly extending.[5] Then, as I have already noticed, the estates belonging to various ecclesiastical owners and corporations were not so well managed as formerly. This last may to some degree have been due to carelessness; it was also due to the growing exactions of the Papal Court, which became a more and more severe drain upon their resources, and so upon the life of the people whom they had supported either by work or by alms. There can be no doubt that these exactions—which were surely a financial as much as an ecclesiastical factor—were among the chief causes of the Reformation. Immense sums of money were constantly going out of the country to provide for the wars, the extravagances, and the luxuries of the Papal Court,[6] also for the ever-increasing number of Papal officials and agents, who

[1] "Cambridge Modern History," p. 501.

[2] The majority of these men would be paid, professional soldiers, who would be discharged when a war was over; in time of peace they were among the unemployed.

[3] Cunningham, 'Western Civilization," pp. 163 *et seq.*

[4] Innes, "England's Industrial Development," p. 125.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 137 *et seq.*

[6] Upon the whole subject see the "Cambridge Modern History," vol. i., pp. 665 *et seq.*

swallowed up the greater part of it before it reached its destination.[1]

It may, of course, be argued that the discovery of the New World and the consequent growth of trade should have improved the financial condition of the people. Undoubtedly it did so ultimately, as did the introduction of machinery two hundred years later; but both changes, as every other revolution in trade conditions, involved a period of temporary distress. People have to adjust themselves to new conditions, and the time of transition generally means a considerable amount of suffering.

I have entered somewhat fully into the conditions of this period because some knowledge of them is essential if we would understand the great changes which took place in the methods of dealing with the poor during the actual course of the Reformation, which must form the subject of my next article. It was not that the responsibility of supplying the needs of the poor passed entirely out of the hands of the Church into those of the State, though undoubtedly the maintenance of the poor, or rather of paupers—those incapable of supporting themselves—became gradually a civic rather than an ecclesiastical charge. The transition was a gradual one: it proceeded step by step. The men who framed the new legislation laboured under serious disadvantages, and they made many mistakes. These mistakes were due to various causes, some of which were beyond their control. They were ignorant of the laws upon which social welfare was based, and they sometimes showed themselves strangely ignorant of human nature, and especially of those rules and principles upon which character must be built up. They made law after law, and they tried method after method of dealing with both the deserving and the undeserving—with those who could not, and those who would not, try to maintain themselves in an honest calling. But this belongs to the next chapter.

[1] "The accounts of the Papal agent for first-fruits in Hungary for the year 1320 show that of 1,913 florins collected only 732 reached the Papal treasury" (*ibid.*, p. 667).