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## THE C.P.A.S. AND THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE.

BY THE REV. ALFRED THOMAS, M.A., F.R.S.L.

**L**IFE has been so kaleidoscopic during the last decade, and the public memory is so short, that it is needful to remind our readers of the Society's active interest in and achievements by way of improvements in the social conditions of our land.

Happily there is now no monopoly of the social conscience. The pulpit and other public utterances bear abundant fruit on every side, as seen daily in the abolition of slums and the provision of artisans' and other dwellings in a special degree as part of the five years' plan. It is not the purpose of this article to ignore the social implications of the Oxford Movement, the special contributions made by Broad Churchmen under the leadership of Frederick Denison, Maurice and Charles Kingsley, the Christian Social Union that owed so much to the late Canon Scott Holland, or the similar enterprises originated and maintained by Free Churchmen. God be thanked and praised for all such work as theirs. It is designed to emphasise the fact, since so many have come apparently to regard the C.P.A.S. as a mere medium for the conveyance of money grants to Parishes, that actually the Evangelicals, of which School of Thought it is so representative, were really the pioneers in social reform. When the Society came into existence in 1836 its first task was to institute an enquiry in all the industrial centres as to the social, moral and spiritual conditions of the people, and the earlier records of the Society furnish eloquent and detailed information on these points. Thus a century ago the Christian public was educated on the social question and the necessary support accorded the Society's first President—the great and saintly Earl of Shaftesbury—by means of which he was the better enabled to pursue his epoch-making reform measures. At its Annual Meetings he never grew listless. Reports did not symbolise dry figures to him, but startling facts. He saw beyond the mere tabulated statements harvest fields of Christian labour. Incidentally the unfairness of Charles Dickens's remark that the Evangelicals were so concerned with what he called Foreign Missionary work that they paid little or no regard to the religious and social needs of the masses in the homeland becomes the more apparent. It is true that these investigations in more recent years have been undertaken by other bodies, notably Government Departments, to whom, moreover, the initiative has passed in consequent developments, largely by reason of their greater financial and more powerful administrative resources. But from time to time, even during the last thirty years, Conferences have been held, when the prevailing social conditions occupied the closest attention. Moreover, up to the present day, scarcely a Lantern Address is delivered by the

Organising Secretaries, who are in intimate touch with all parts of the country, but what views are displayed that depict the industrial life of the workers and their housing conditions. When the history of the last fifty years comes to be written, no descriptive account will be complete without adequate mention of the continuous crusade maintained by the C.P.A.S. in the interests of social justice. Categorically speaking, the Society practically concerned itself as early as 1856 with juvenile depravity and profligacy, no fewer than 20,000 children under seventeen years of age being estimated as passing through the Nation's gaols at the time, besides the cases summarily disposed of. This was the direct outcome of parental neglect, and the C.P.A.S. strained its resources accordingly by seeking to uplift home influences through the parochial system and the ministerial and domiciliary labour of their grantee clergy and lay agents. In its earliest reports, hints are also to be seen at the necessity and advantage of probationary methods in this connection. They also truly supply examples of brands plucked from the burning that would have vividly served the picturesque pen of a Harold Begbie, intent upon *Broken Earthenware*, or the author of *God and the Slums*. The Ragged School Movement owed much to our oldest Home Mission Society in the Church of England, which it has exhibited as the Church of the poor man in particular, though seeking the salvation of all. As far back as 1856 the Temperance Cause was championed. The twin social evils, gambling and impurity, have ever been denounced. Evening and Adult Schools were opened in its earlier days, the sufferings and trials of the unemployed and their children ever mitigated, the evil influences of Mormonism resisted, maritime populations and seamen when in home ports were cared for bodily and spiritually, soup kitchens time after time opened, barge-men and boat-men ministered to similarly, Reading-rooms and Coffee-rooms for working men opened to counteract beer shops, Sunday Schools fostered, Female Refuges organised, Rural social amenities improved, Industrial and Reformatory Schools supported, Penny Readings and lending libraries instituted, and later Literary and Debating Societies, the truth that increase in the density of any population implied an increase of mortality insisted on, cleanly habits and thrift inculcated among the people by Clergy, Lay Agents and District Visitors, the connection with the work of popular education ever closely maintained, miners and their families succoured in days of strikes and other times of distress, the sick and the down and out relieved by gifts of money and in kind, long ere Public Assistance Committees were dreamt of, and factory legislation advocated. In fact the Society, directly or indirectly, according to its means and opportunities, ignored no movement designed for the social amelioration of the people. It was, moreover, as the foregoing selected details and others that could be cited amply indicate, the forerunner in works of prevention, rescue and mercy that have since been shouldered by separate organisations created for certain specific purposes.

The Earl of Shaftesbury's funeral was attended by more than

one hundred representatives of Religious and Social Organisations, with most of which he was connected in some measure. The tradition and remembrance of "his enthusiasm for humanity" have characterised and energised this Home Mission Agency ever since. It has touched life at every point, and illumined it—no such organism has done more to relieve the gloom and degradation of slumdom and other mean streets. In fact it may be truly, though not boastfully, said that more social gems glisten in its crown than that of any other Church Home Missionary Organisation, when its history for the past 100 years is fully regarded.

At the present time, roughly speaking, those interested in the welfare of working people and the submerged tenth may be divided into two categories, viz. (1) those intent only upon the spiritual application of the Gospel and (2) others not satisfied with the progress so far made from this point of view, and who are most enthusiastic in implementing only the social implications of Christianity. Thus, in the recoil from "other-worldliness," the pendulum has swung to another extreme.

The C.P.A.S. seeks to preserve a due perspective and equipoise. In the desire for better houses on earth, "homes fit for heroes to live in," it is not oblivious to the Mansions in the skies. Social teaching and practice, however laudable in theory, that omit the spiritual aspects will soon prove defective.

Suffice it to say that the C.P.A.S. yields to no one in its fervent desire to remove, so far as possible and advisable, any glaring economic fallacies and inequalities, to heal all the festering social sores of our modern civilisation, to find the key that exactly fits the lock in our social system, while all the time it realises that no such reforms will "build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land" unless men's hearts and lives are changed by Divine Grace. So the Society's Mission to some six millions of people must ever remain predominantly spiritual in its extensive operations among the slums in the centre of large cities, the poorer suburbs and the new housing areas outside the cities and parishes in populous industrial centres. By its grants, the hard-pressed Clergy are enabled to "hold the fort" among smoking chimneys, the spires of whose Churches may be seen like the fingers of hands pointing upwards and heavenward, above the sooty roofs of houses and at times gilding the landscape.

#### THE BROKEN AND BLEEDING.

Our cities and large towns teem with the broken and bleeding in the battle of life. There are crowds with broken hearts, wills, hopes and bodies, like birds with disabled wings. They have lost the power of aspiration, they are bereft of ambition. Such are some of the types to be met with in the pilgrim way, together with a great host of God's erring children, lost and lone, who have been maimed and mauled by the Evil One and who either lie in pathetic impotence or painfully crawl along against the odds of a terrible spiritual bereavement. What can we do now but humble ourselves

for the past and endeavour by God's help to accomplish more for His Kingdom in the days to come? Let us, in the process of the preparations for this historic Centenary celebration, open our eyes, that we may more fully perceive the need and open our hearts more in sympathy after the example of the Compassionate Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep. Seek more fully to imitate Him by the bestowal of self-denying gifts, zealous co-operation, bold advocacy and fervent prayer. The cause for which Jesus left Heaven and came down to earth deserves all possible support. Thus, too, will gratitude be practically expressed to the Society and it will be the more enabled to go from strength to strength.

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THE GREAT FRIENDSHIP. By Robert Hamilton Moberly, M.A.  
*Hamish Hamilton. 4s. 6d.*

The Bishop of London introduces this book and the author in a characteristically kindly preface. He is Principal of Bishop's College, Cheshunt. The book is devotionally helpful. The author seeks to be both Catholic and Evangelical. His standpoint may be gathered sufficiently from the following quotation with reference to the Mass. He discusses the word in its original use and continues: "Neither in its original meaning nor in its actual associations is there anything to which the strictest Evangelical need take exception. None the less, the word was avoided by the compilers of our Prayer Book, and the avoidance must have been deliberate. No doubt there was prejudice in this, but there was real wisdom. . . . But much false and harmful doctrine had grown up around the word. The offering of 'Sacrifices of Masses' for the departed had come to be regarded, both popularly and by theologians, as an *addition* to the one perfect sacrifice of our Lord, and also as having power to save sinners from the consequences of their sins without any of the cleansing discipline of penitence on their part." He thinks it would be wise to refrain from the use of the word and closes with this significant admission: "It is not in fact a Catholic term, for it is known only to the Churches of the West. Eastern Christendom has never used it."

A. W. P.

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