

Booth's East London

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## BOOTH'S EAST LONDON.<sup>1</sup>

THIS is by far the most important English contribution to economics since the publication of Toynbee's lectures in 1884. The two books have much in common ; both illustrate the new interest that is beginning to show itself in the direct study of the actual facts of social life. They differ, indeed, in method. Toynbee's work was the first attempt in England to trace the historical origin of existing conditions, while the aim of Mr. Booth's book is to obtain, by laborious inquiry, a more accurate description than was previously possessed of the conditions themselves. But the historical method and the method of observation — which from the biological sciences is now passing over into the sociological — are closely allied. Those who pursue them agree in the expectation that from the sequence and coexistence of facts something will be learned of their causal relations.

The first volume of *Life and Labour of the People* is a most admirable performance. There have been earlier essays in a similar direction, e.g. the reports of Mr. Leoni Levi ; but none of them has been on anything like the same scale, and none has established conclusions of anything like the same solidity and completeness. Mr. Booth has furnished us, not so much with a collection of facts to support this or that theory, as with a great positive addition to our knowledge, far transcending in importance most abstract argumentation.

The book is divided into three parts : "The Classes," "The Trades" and "Special Subjects." Of these the first, by Mr. Booth himself, is by far the most striking. The London school board employs in East London sixty-six "visitors," or attendance officers, who call at every house and draw up lists of children of school age. Each of the visitors has but a few streets under his care ; and as most of them have been employed in the same district for several years, they have acquired very complete information as to the condition of the people. From the lips of these officials, Mr. Booth and his secretaries took down a description of almost every house and its inhabitants, — a task whose magnitude we realize when we are told that it dealt with a population of 900,000, living in 3400 streets, and that it occupied the greater part of two years. The data

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Labour of the People*. Vol. I: *East London*. Edited by Charles Booth. Contributors : Charles Booth, Beatrice Potter, David F. Schloss, Ernest Aves, Stephen N. Fox, Jesse Argyle, Clara E. Collet and H. Llewellyn Smith. London, Williams & Norgate, 1889. — 598 pp. With a colored map.

thus obtained, being corrected and supplemented from other sources, serve as the basis for a division of the population into eight classes, which may be presented as follows :

- A. 11,000.  $1\frac{1}{4}$  per cent of the population. *Lowest class of occasional laborers, loafers and semi-criminals.*

This class, though it receives accessions from all the others, is largely hereditary in its character. It is not scattered uniformly over the whole area, but is found in a number of more or less isolated settlements.

- B. 100,000.  $11\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. *The very poor*, with casual earnings.

This class is composed chiefly of casual laborers. The adult men, about 24,000 in number, of whom as many as 6000 are sometimes employed at the docks (p. 190), "do not on the average get as much as three days' work a week."

- C. 75,000. 8 per cent. } 204,000.  $22\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. *The poor*, with weekly

- D. 129,000.  $14\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. } incomes of 18s. to 21s.

- c. Maintained on *intermittent earnings*, and composed of laborers whose work is necessarily intermittent, with a large contingent from the poorer artisans, the street sellers and the smaller shopkeepers.

- d. Maintained on *fairly regular earnings*, and composed chiefly of laborers in permanent employment.

- E. 377,000. 42 per cent. *Regular standard earnings* of from 23s. to 30s. weekly.

This includes the more prosperous laborers, a large proportion of the artisans, the best class of street sellers and general dealers, a large proportion of the small shopkeepers, the best-off among the home manufacturers and some of the small employers.

- F. 121,000.  $13\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. *Upper working class*, earning above 30s. weekly.

This includes foremen over laborers and the more comfortable among the artisans, together with a number of small employers.

- G. 34,000. 4 per cent nearly. *Lower middle class.*

Shopkeepers and small employers, clerks and subordinate professional men.

- H. 45,000. 5 per cent. *Upper middle class.*

The servant-keeping class. But of these more than two-thirds are to be found in Hackney, the more genteel northern part of East London.

There seems no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of these figures, and it would be difficult to exaggerate their significance. Perhaps the conclusion most surprising to the general public is the very small number, comparatively, of the loafing and semi-criminal class. "The hordes of barbarians of whom we have heard, who, issuing from their slums, will one day overwhelm modern civilization, do not exist. There are barbarians, but they are a handful, a small and decreasing percentage, — a disgrace but not a danger" (p. 39). Two other conclusions, more cheering than might have been anticipated, are that over

55 per cent of the working population belong to families receiving each more than 21s. a week, and that about 70 per cent can count upon steady employment. I cannot help thinking, however, that, in reaction from the usual melodramatic presentation of East London life, Mr. Booth has commented upon his statistical results in a tone somewhat too optimistic. To say, for instance, of the 200,000 "poor," that "they are neither ill-nourished nor ill-clad, according to any standard that can reasonably be used" (p. 131), is probably to create a more comfortable impression in the minds of Mr. Booth's readers than the author wishes to convey. "Poverty" Mr. Booth defines as an average weekly income of from "18s. to 21s. for a moderate family" (p. 33). But it is noticeable that in the table of household expenditure (p. 138) on which Mr. Booth bases his remarks as to standard of comfort, the average weekly income ascribed to classes C and D is 23s. 6d. Half a crown a week makes a considerable difference. But even with the additional half-crown, a family must needs be very small to secure adequate food and clothing together with fuel and houseroom in London. Mr. Booth's opinion in this matter may usefully be compared with the estimates of Mrs. Barnett in *Practicable Socialism* (1888).

There is another way in which Mr. Booth has unintentionally supplied a sedative to the troubled consciences of some of his readers, and that is by his language in reference to class B: "It is doubtful if many of them could or would work full time for long together if they had the opportunity . . . The ideal of such persons is to work when they like and play when they like; these it is who are rightly called the 'leisure class' amongst the poor" (p. 45). It is not surprising that people are beginning to say: "The distress of the very poor is their own fault. Mr. Booth has proved that they don't want to work." But surely this is to disregard the fact that such moral qualities as shiftlessness and idleness are themselves to a large extent not ultimate facts, but the product of circumstances. It is indeed a defect running through the whole book now before us, that it confines itself too narrowly to the individualist point of view; it describes the condition of the individual and the consequences which flow from it, without attempting to penetrate any further. So in this case. In every class there are doubtless many who fall to a lower social position from sheer incapacity or laziness, and there is nothing more to be said. Of such, class B is doubtless to a large extent composed. But the faults of the class as a whole are certainly in part the result of the character of modern industry. Take for instance the docks,—and what is true of the docks is true *mutatis mutandis* of several employments of unskilled labor: "Twenty years ago a man could be sure of fairly regular employment, say for ten months out of the

twelve, and for nine to ten hours a day, and was accustomed to earn on an average 20s. to 25s. a week."<sup>1</sup> Then came the introduction of steam navigation and the ever-increasing rapidity of commercial operations; and the sons of the regularly employed men of 1869 became the incompetent loafers of 1889 as directly as if the companies had designed it. This mental result of material conditions is recognized by Miss Potter in her paper on the docks: "The casual by misfortune tends to become the casual by inclination. The victims of irregular trade and of employment given without reference to character are slowly but surely transformed into the sinners of East-end society" (p. 201). It is a pity that such considerations as these are not put forward more prominently in Mr. Booth's description of the classes.

Part II, "The Trades," is made up of six chapters on the chief branches of employment, together with a chapter on "Women's Work." Each is the result of careful investigation, and one or two spring from personal experience. No such thorough and systematic studies of industrial conditions have ever before been made in England, and they deserve the most careful attention. I must however limit myself in this place to a brief account of their contents. The first, Miss Potter's chapter on "The Docks," is written in a more popular style than the rest, but is also less complete. It gives a clear enough picture of the conditions of labor before the great strike; but it dwells too much on the surface. Without suspecting it, Miss Potter gives us only one view of the situation, that of the dock officials, from whom her information was obtained. According to this view, affairs were in a hopeless *impasse*, and nobody in particular was to blame for anything: the "uncontrolled competition of metropolitan industry" led London ship-owners and merchants to play off docks and wharves against one another, while at the same time the volume of business at the port of London was decreasing. As to diminishing the irregularity of employment,—the chief evil, so far as the dockers were concerned,—that was impossible. Had it been possible it would have been attempted: "I think we may rest assured that if a practical plan were suggested by which this might be effected, the employer would be the first to take advantage of it; for the loss entailed by the bad work of the casual is a fact unpleasantly realized in the balance sheet" (p. 205). This simply means that by the continuance of the system of casual employment the directors thought that they got their labor more cheaply, and certainly saved themselves a good deal of trouble; but they did not at all realize that their action was immoral. Before many months had

<sup>1</sup> The London *Times*, August 29, 1889, p. 8: a summary of the evidence before the House of Lords Sweating Committee.

passed, however, we find the *Times* writing thus in its leading article of August 31, 1889 :

It is all very well for the directors to plead that there is an enormous surplus of such labour, and that the men they employ are at least better off than if they had no employment at all. But the fact remains that *they have encouraged the growth of this wretched and shifless class* by their daily distribution haphazard of an uncertain quantity of employment, and that *the relations established between them and these casual labourers are of a thoroughly demoralizing and inhuman kind.*

The *Times* is neither more moral nor more sympathetic than the average common-sense middle-class Englishman ; it represents his opinions only too faithfully. The fact is that the strike forced the general public for the first time to look closely at the conditions of dock labor, and the moral sense of the community declared that, come what might to dividends or trade, such a state of things could not be allowed to continue. This was a lesson which the dock directors, when they gave Miss Potter their account of the situation, had yet to learn.

The chapter needs supplementing in several ways before it can be regarded as an adequate survey of the problem. For instance, it was declared at the time of the strike, upon the high authority of Mr. Thomas Sutherland, M.P., the chairman of the P. and O. company, that "probably one-half of the capital outlay of the London and St. Catherine Dock, and East and West India Dock Company may be considered obsolete for all practical purposes," and that it was upon this capital, sunk on obsolete arrangements, that the directors were trying to earn profits.<sup>1</sup> This of course did not make it any better for existing shareholders, many of whom had acquired their stock recently, but it needs to be mentioned before we can understand what "making no profit" really means. Again, it would have been worth while to have laid more stress upon the part played by excessive competition in reducing the profits of the two great dock companies. The rivalry between the London and St. Catherine company and the East and West India company ; the time of high profits before and after the opening of the Suez canal ; the construction by the former company of the Victoria and Albert docks, and by the latter of the Tilbury docks ; cut-throat competition and the disappearance of profits ; — this is a sequence of events which would have shown itself sooner or later even if the volume of trade had not diminished. It contains in it no factor peculiar to the docks : it does but illustrate a danger common to all forms of permanent investment under modern conditions. First high profits ; then specula-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the *London Spectator* for August 31, 1889, p. 260, foot-note.

tive investment ; then an excessive supply of the particular service or commodity ; and then reckless competition to obtain business on any terms. In America we have become familiar enough with the result of such competition in the shape of railroad discriminations. And like American railroads, the London docks also are beginning to find that safety lies in combination. Since 1888 the two great companies have, I understand, been working under a joint committee, have been able in consequence to raise their rates and have obtained a profit.

The next chapter, on "The Tailoring Trade," is also by Miss Potter, but gives the impression of a more thorough study of the subject. The leading characteristic of the industry is thus summed up :

We have here a new province of production, inhabited by a peculiar people, working under a new system, with new instruments, and yet separated by a narrow and constantly shifting boundary from the sphere of employment of an old-established native industry. On the one side of this line we find the Jewish contractor with his highly organized staff of fixers, basters, machinists, button-hole hands and pressers, turning out coats by the score, together with a mass of English women, unorganized and unregulated, engaged in the lower sections of the trade ; whilst on the other side of the boundary, we see an army of skilled English tradesmen [artisans] with regulated pay and restricted hours, working on the traditional lines of one man one garment [p. 209].

The English workman makes hand-sewn garments for the better shops, which supply customers ready to pay a good price for a good article ; the Jewish contractor, machine-made "balloons," chiefly for the supply of wholesale houses with cheap ready-made clothing. So far as East London is concerned, it is this "ready-made" or cheap "bespoke" trade, in the hands of a compact Jewish community resident mainly in Whitechapel, that we have chiefly to consider. There are 901 workshops, of which 685 employ less than 10 hands, 201 from 10 to 25, and only 15 over 25. Most of the shops are overcrowded and insanitary ; and at busy seasons the hours of labor are excessively long. But there is little or no "sweating" as it is commonly understood, *viz.* the squeezing of profit out of the actual worker by an idle middleman. The middleman, as distinct from the wholesale house on the one side and the labor-contractor on the other, has disappeared. In the vast majority of the shops, the contractor, or employer, works fully as hard as his employees, his standard of living is practically the same, while his profits are precarious and seldom greater than a fair reward for the labor of organization. As to the 15 shops employing more than 25 persons, here the contractor does probably make a very fair income.

But on the other hand the condition of his workpeople is better: the workshop is more healthy and comfortable, partly because he can afford to engage special premises for the work, partly because it comes under the supervision of the factory inspectors; and employment is more steady. The great evil of the situation is just the opposite: it is the ease with which men can set up as independent masters, and the consequent multiplication of small shops. The work of these shops is the manufacture of coats. In the manufacture of cheap trousers and waistcoats there is another set of conditions. Here the competition is between the labor of gentile women, the wives and daughters of irregularly employed laborers,—the vast majority of them working in their own homes for wholesale houses or distributing contractors,—on the one side, and on the other, provincial factories, also chiefly employing women. The distributing contractor here also is disappearing; and the miserable wage of the women in East London is due largely to the competition of the factory where the conditions of life are certainly far higher.

"Bootmaking," by Mr. Schloss, and "The Furniture Trade," by Mr. Aves, are two of the longest papers in the volume, and in each case the manufacture is so subdivided, that it is well nigh impossible to give a brief summary of the chapter. In the first of these trades hand-sewn boots made to order occupy somewhat the same position as the better class of coats among tailors; while machine-sewn ready-made boots correspond to the "balloons." In the latter field it is as easy as in tailoring to set up as a small contractor employing half a dozen hands, though here the contractor does not undertake the whole manufacture, but only a branch of it, such as the making of uppers (the contractors and employees in this case being generally women), the lasting or the finishing (chiefly in the hands of Jews). In the last two branches, the "team-system"—an extreme application of the principle of division of labor—has been introduced during the last few years. It is thus described by Mr. Schloss:

A series of operations, formerly entrusted collectively to a single artisan, is split up in such a manner that one part of the work—that which requires the greatest degree of skill—is performed by a workman who, possessing a relatively high degree of ability, is fairly able to insist upon an adequate remuneration, while the remainder of the work is placed in the hands of men whose greatly inferior competence in their craft forces them to accept a much lower rate of wages [p. 270].

Readers of Mill may remember with what respect Mr. Babbage is quoted as having pointed out "an advantage derived from division of labor not mentioned by Adam Smith," *viz.* the classification of work-



people according to ability. The effect of this in the boot trade is to substitute for a body of fairly skilled all-round workmen, receiving a tolerable remuneration, a small number of highly skilled men with a relatively high wage, and a great mass of miserably-paid unskilled labor. As newly arrived Jews will accept lower wages and work longer hours than English workmen, another result is that the industry has been largely transferred to foreign hands. Still the master lasters and finishers, with but few exceptions, make no considerable profit. "What the man has to gain by being a sub-contractor instead of a journeyman is chiefly an increased chance of continuous employment" (p. 294). The busy season lasts only from four to six months; and although some few are able to fill up the slack time by alternative employments, "some hundreds of the lasters" (and the same seems to be true of the finishers), "men often of considerable skill in their craft, can for many, and those the bitterest, months of the year obtain little or no employment, and frequently suffer great privations" (p. 268). The furniture trade has much the same general characteristics, — extreme subdivision, and the multiplication of small shops working not for the retailer or private customer but for the wholesale dealer. It also is localized in a small area, chiefly Bethnal Green and Shoreditch. In marked contrast to the prevalent tendency towards the large or factory system of manufacture in most other branches of industry, all the forces in this trade tend to the strengthening of a system of manufacture so small that it may often be called domestic. This development is encouraged by the growth of sawmills tenanted largely by small sawyers and turners "to the trade," and by the creation during the last thirty years of a conveniently near market in the warehouses of Curtain Road. The level of comfort and wages, however, is considerably higher than in the tailoring and bootmaking trades, owing to the greater skill required and to the greater steadiness of employment, which is affected but little by the seasons. Many of the better men earn as much as they did fifteen years ago, and as there has been a considerable fall in prices, their earnings go further; but they certainly have to work at a greater pressure.

Mr. Fox's chapter on "Tobacco Workers" is more cheerful, revealing to us as it does a labor market where fairly good wages are obtained. This seems to be due, primarily, to the circumstance that all the work of the trade (with the exception of a small part of the cigarette making) is necessarily carried on in factories. This, again, is accounted for by the fact that the annual excise license and other excise regulations make necessary a certain amount of capital, "ranging probably from £50 to £60," before setting up in business. An additional reason is that the manufacture of tobacco requires heavy and expensive machinery. The

domestic workshop, the chief difficulty in the three preceding trades, cannot make its appearance. The factory system, bringing the operatives together in considerable numbers, has facilitated the formation of strong trades unions, which have been able to keep up wages ; and it has also facilitated government inspection as to sanitation and hours of labor. The excise tax, often supposed to be an evil, in that it prevents a man from "rising in life" and becoming a master on his own account, is shown to be a blessing, precisely for that very reason. Mr. Fox seems to think that the only persons who have to complain at present are the manufacturers, who are played off one against another by the retail dealers ; and he suggests that they should follow the example of their men and organize. Even that grievous thing, a "combine," may have a good side.

Passing over the small group of silk operatives, numbering in all some 1674 (of whom 1260 are weavers), residing in Spitalfield, and employed chiefly in the manufacture of silk for neckties and scarfs, we come to Miss Clara Collet's chapter on "Women's Work." This deals with the making of shirts, ties, trimmings, umbrellas, corsets and stays ; with furriers (employed largely by small "chamber masters"), the making of boxes, match boxes ("the last resort of the destitute, or the first occupation of little girls expected to make themselves useful between school hours"), brushes, matches and confectionery, and with a few minor industries. Miss Collet has succeeded in saying much that seems to be both new and true on a somewhat hackneyed subject. She remarks, for instance, that where a trade is irregular, the employment of outdoor hands has at least this good result, that it enables the employer to keep a small indoor staff permanently employed. Irregularity in the employment of married women who work at home is at least a lesser evil than irregularity in the employment of girls. It is a striking fact, again, that among factory workers there is a general uniformity of wage, although the match girls and jam girls have neither to exercise so great skill nor to work so hard as capmakers and bookbinders. The explanation is that the former, with many others employed in such rough work as ropemaking and the like, come from a lower class and earn their own livelihood ; the latter, with those employed in other genteel occupations, are the daughters of clerks or upper-class artisans, living with their parents and competing with one another only to procure dress and luxuries.

It will be convenient to postpone for a moment Mr. Booth's chapter on "Sweating," which opens Part III, and look next at Mr. Llewellyn Smith's chapter on "Influx of Population." This provides a much-needed corrective for the vague ideas that were prevalent as to the connection

between East-end conditions and the "attraction of population" from the rural districts. Mr. Smith shows that the percentage of the population of East London and Hackney born outside of London is actually less than the percentage for the whole of London; for while in London as a whole only 629 out of every 1000 are natives of the metropolis, in East London the numbers are 720 out of 1000. It must be observed, however, that these figures do not give an entirely adequate representation of the migration from outside; they have to be compared with this further fact, mentioned by Mr. Smith, that among *adult male* inhabitants only some 46 or 47 out of 100 were born in London itself. Mr. Smith however reassures us with regard to one field of employment, at any rate, in which country labor was supposed to play an important part,—the docks. He shows good reason to believe that there is now but little movement in that direction: thus, out of 514 of the more regularly employed casuals in the West India dock, 361 were born in London; and of the 153 outsiders, only 17 had resided in London less than ten years (3 less than 5, and 1 less than 1). It is to be regretted, I think, that with these very important conclusions to present, Mr. Smith, and still more Mr. Booth, should have weakened the force of their argument by a too evident desire to take a cheerful view of the situation. This has led to some very inconclusive statistical reasoning. Mr. Smith (p. 505), and Mr. Booth, following him (p. 555), estimate the gain in population due to immigration by (1) taking the excess of births over deaths during the decennial period, 1871–1881, (2) treating that as "the natural growth" of the population at the beginning of the period, (3) adding "the natural growth" to the population in 1871, and then (4) subtracting this total from the population of 1881. The result is called the "net-influx"; and by this process it is brought down to some 10,000 a year. But this includes, as part of the natural growth of the population of 1871, the children born to the immigrants to London during the next ten years; and, as the great majority of immigrants are adult, in many cases young men who marry within three or four years of their arrival, this is a not unimportant consideration. But, not content with minimizing the inflow, in more than one place our authors seem inclined to maintain that it is actually *balanced* by an outflow! Thus, after mentioning the figures before cited as to the number of persons born outside of London, Mr. Smith continues:

The facts would seem *at first* to be conclusive evidence of a *considerable* inflow of population from other parts [surely it proves at least as much as that]. But a very large part of this admixture of population merely results from *the ordinary ebb and flow of labor*, set up by numberless industrial causes in all parts of the kingdom alike [p. 504].

Mr. Booth goes still further :

Influx cannot be completely studied apart from efflux. Population flows out of, as well as into, the great cities, *so that the movement looked at rationally is a circulation* [Mr. Booth's italics], which is not only healthy in itself, but essential to national health. . . . Influx in each case is balanced in large measure by efflux of some kind [pp. 554, 555].

The chief arguments adduced by Mr. Smith are that in the whole of England and Wales only 720 persons out of 1000 were living in the county of their birth, and that in the seven greatest Scotch towns only 524 out of 1000 were natives of the town. But the Scotch case only proves that what is true of London is also true of all great cities ; and the other fact is perfectly consistent with an influx to the cities. There is evidently much truth in the proposition that there is an efflux as well as an influx ; but stated as it is by our authors, it tends to obscure the significance of one of the most marked of modern tendencies,—a tendency which shows itself in America almost as much as in England,—that towards the increase of the urban at the expense of the rural population.

The concluding paper in the volume is again from the pen of Miss Potter and describes "The Jewish Community." This community numbers in all from 60,000 to 70,000 persons, of whom perhaps 30,000 were actually born abroad and have come to England since 1881. For the present the flood is at an end, though it will probably set in again with any renewal of the *Judenhetze* on the continent of Europe. The newcomers are willing to work as "greeners" for some small labor-contractor in the coat or boot trade ; but in most cases they seem to succeed after a time in pulling themselves up into a better position and starting in as small masters themselves. How they manage to do it Miss Potter thus describes :

It is by competition and by competition alone that the Jew seeks success. But in the case of the foreign Jews, it is a competition unrestricted by the personal dignity of a definite standard of life, and unchecked by the social feelings of class loyalty and trade integrity. The small manufacturer injures the trade through which he rises to the rank of a capitalist by bad and dishonest production. The petty dealer, or small money-lender, . . . suits his wares and his terms to the weakness, the ignorance and the vice of his customers ; the mechanic, indifferent to the interest of the class to which he temporarily belongs, and intent only on becoming a small master, acknowledges no limit to the process of underbidding fellow-workers. In short, the foreign Jew totally ignores all social obligations, other than keeping the law of the land, the maintenance of his own family, and the charitable relief of co-religionists [p. 589].

These evil tendencies are unfortunately strengthened by the policy of the Jewish Board of Guardians, — the dispensers of the charity of wealthy English Jews towards their miserable fellow-believers. Out of some £13,000 to £14,000 expended annually in relief, about one-half seems to be lent or given in the form of business capital, enabling the workman to rise into the position of a small master. The recipients are not pauperized; but the class through whom they make their way upward are still further degraded (pp. 573, 574).

I have reserved until last the consideration of Mr. Booth's practical conclusions, based on the evidence thus collected. They will be found in his chapter on "Class Relations" at the end of Part I, as well as in the chapter on "Sweating," before referred to, and in his concluding remarks. I am afraid it must be said that Mr. Booth is more convincing when he sets forth the results of his investigations, than when he comments upon them. An example is furnished in what he says of sweating. He points out, what is abundantly manifest from the sections on the tailoring, bootmaking and furniture trades, that the sweater of the popular imagination — the grinding middleman fattening on the profits he sweats out of wages — has no existence; the true sweater, as the name is employed in the trades themselves, usually without any particularly bad connotation, is the small, struggling master. He tells us that it is "the multiplication of small masters" which really leads to the sweating evils of long hours, low pay and unsanitary conditions" (p. 488); and again, that "the trades of East London present a clear case of economic disease, and the multiplication of small masters is the tap-root of this disease." He offers the very practical suggestion that the work of the factory inspector should be facilitated by obliging every owner of premises used for manufacturing purposes and also the employer, when any labor other than that of the wife is employed, to take a license. Thus, when Mr. Booth has the facts in his mind, he recognizes distinctly that certain forms of industrial organization have evil results.

But our author is a statistical economist only by grace; by nature he would appear to belong to that larger body of "common-sense" persons according to whom the one explanation of every difficulty is that all cannot be equal, and that the "fittest" come to the top. And sometimes nature is too powerful for grace: as where, speaking of the evils which exist in the sweated industries, Mr. Booth tells us that "many or *perhaps most* of them are not due *in any way* to the manner of employment. Their roots lie deep in human nature." And again, with more emphasis: "Such troubles have not, *on the whole*, much to do with any system of employment: they are part of the general inequalities of life" (p. 487). It is not that there is no truth at all in this view of the matter; but it

is surely stated too broadly here, and it is precisely passages of this kind that are so eagerly seized upon by the apologist for things as they are. Moreover, such undue emphasis on one side of the problem seems to prevent the writer from taking a concrete view of the situation when he comes to make his final suggestion. With class A, he tells us, nothing is feasible except its destruction; it must be "harried out of existence" by the enforcement of sanitary, police and school regulations. But with class B the case is different: they are the incapables, who cost more to the community than they produce, and who pull down, by their competition, classes C and D. If only B could be removed from the scene, C and D would get on well enough. Let the state, then, take charge of them, — they are but 100,000, — and remove them from the sphere of competition. The practicability of this plan for saving individualism by a large dose of socialism, as Mr. Booth himself describes it, I need not here consider. But the point I would ask Mr. Booth's attention to is this: Granting that such a disappearance of class B for a time would be in many ways a relief, is not the present organization of industry of such a kind that it would at once begin to grind out another class B? Mr. Booth has examined (pp. 147, 148) into 1600 families belonging to classes A and B. Of these, 60 were loafers, and there were 231 "whose poverty was the result of drink or obvious want of thrift." But 441 "had been impoverished by illness or the large number of those who had to be supported out of the earnings"; and if you abolished class B to-day, men of class C, from sickness or from having large families, would begin to renew it to-morrow. It is still more significant that there were 878 "whose poverty was due to the casual or irregular character of their employment, combined, more or less, with low pay." Even if these are now not fit for anything better, still, as we have seen in the case of the dockers, their very shiftlessness or laziness is itself in some measure the result of irregular employment. It is in economics as in philosophy: free will and necessity are both true; circumstances are as men make them, and men are as circumstances make them.

If I have dwelt unduly on what seem defects, it is because the book is packed so full of useful matter that it is impossible to furnish an abstract of it. In spite of all its limitations, it gives us a foundation such as we never had before both for practical action and for economic speculation. I trust Mr. Booth will have strength and perseverance to go on with his task. I must not omit to add that the book is accompanied with a wonderful map of East London, wherein each street is marked according to the class of its inhabitants. This should be the model for many a similar chart in our great cities, which would be of no little service in the practical work of charity.

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