

It took over a century and a quarter to give effect to the Old Age Pensions idea in the English-speaking world. In this, as in many other phases of 'advanced' legislation, New Zealand led the way. She boldly plunged in while others stood upon the brink, hesitant and trembling. Several Australian States have paid her the flattery of imitation. A few Continental countries have made well-meant and partially successful efforts to cope with the problem of old-age poverty. In France and Germany, State provision for the aged poor was hastened by the sharp spur of popular upheavals—in France by the revolution of 1848, in Germany by the dangerous Socialistic agitation of the seventies and the eighties. The French system is a contributing one—a modified State Savings Bank, that yields a squalid average pension of only 6s 6d per month. Its operations are of no importance, and it treats poverty by homoeopathic doses of State relief. The German scheme is one of compulsory national insurance. It is, like the French, a contributing system, is a miracle of ingenious cumbersomeness, requires a standing army of officials to keep the accounts of the various workers, and acres of buildings to house the dockets in, and, generally speaking, it is an example, not for imitation, but for a warning to all the nations of the earth that have to provide for the declining years of the indigent poor. The Danish scheme, like the New Zealand one, dispenses with contributions. 'The Danish Government,' says the author of 'The State and Pensions in Old Age,' 'have attempted to create a distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor by confining the pension to those who have avoided pauperism during the ten preceding years, and relegating the remainder to the Poor Law.' This principle is as yet in the experimental stage.

England is the wealthiest country in Europe. But want of the most abject order jostles its rank and money-bags. One great obstacle in the way of dealing with old-age poverty in England is the vastness of the mass of pauperism which has been for over three centuries eating like a cancer into the vitals of the nation. It came in with the Reformation and is the dread legacy which it has left to the English people. It dates from the days when HENRY VIII. suppressed and plundered the monasteries and the guilds, which were, in effect, the insurance companies, the benefit societies, and the old age pensions institutions of the middle ages. HENRY VIII. created English pauperism; EDWARD VI. punished it with legal and actual slavery; ELIZABETH perpetuated it. To this hour there is no civilised country in the world over which the shadow of pauperism hangs so darkly. The number of indoor and outdoor paupers in the country of over sixty years old represents nearly twenty per cent. (one in five) of the total population of the same age. If we take separately those above sixty-five years old, the ratio to the total population of the same age rises as high as twenty-five per cent., or one in four. Last year the number of paupers in England alone was 774,636 in a population of 32,611,033. The actual sum levied as Poor Rates in the previous year was no less than £23,161,007—a contribution equal to 15s 2d per head of the entire population.

No civilised country on this planet stands in greater and more urgent need of an effective Old Age Pensions system than England. Mr. CHAMBERLAIN'S tardy scheme, that has just passed its second reading in the House of Commons, proposes the present customary age limit of sixty-five years, and a pension of five shillings a week, to be provided partly from the rates and partly by a contribution from the Treasury amounting to £6,500,000 per annum. Contributing systems of providing for poverty in old age have not been, and are never likely to be, a success. And Mr. CHAMBERLAIN'S device for providing funds for his Old Age Pensions idea by a protective tariff—involving a complete change in the long-established fiscal policy of the country—is equivalent to making the scheme a contributing one. The average British worker leads a hand-to-mouth existence. His chronic condition is such that a slight rise in the price of the necessities of life is a calamity; it is impossible for him to make any provision out of wages for illness or old age; and he cannot be expected to toss up his cap and huzza over a legislative proposal which, if carried into effect, will increase his daily cost of living, with no compensating advantage beyond the remote prospect of a benefit at sixty-

five which in the country might make existence tolerable, but in the city (where he most does congregate) will merely enable him to enjoy starvation a little better than before. Other sources of opposition to the measure are pretty sure to make themselves felt. Continental and colonial Governments are free to build anew from the foundations of things. But the British must make his legislative experiments slowly and cautiously. He must respect the Things-that-be. And the new Pensions scheme will need nice adjustments if it is not to conflict with such existing institutions as the Insurance and Friendly Societies, and with that hideous fetich, the Poor Law, which remains to this hour practically the same terror and oppressor of decent poverty that it was in 1834. Unless they have recently changed their attitude, the Friendly Societies and the Insurance Companies are distinctly hostile to any Old Age Pension scheme. And, generally speaking, those devourers of the poor man, the Money-bags and the Vested Interests will set their faces against any measure of permanent relief that will involve additional taxation. Altogether, and judging from the meagre details before us, we are inclined to believe that Mr. CHAMBERLAIN'S scheme will pass through much tribulation in the British Parliament. The ultimate success of some scheme for the reform of the Poor Law and the decent maintenance of the aged poor may, however, be regarded as certain. The English people must at least weary of the post-Reformation principle of treating paupers as criminals or as animals of inferior clay, and a better state of things must come, even if it comes slowly.

## Notes

### A Legendary Tale

We are, no doubt, fast advancing towards a period when the science of history is making its mark—a period of which it is becoming daily more and more true that many of

'The legendary tales that pleased of yore  
Can charm an understanding age no more.'

The head of the long human procession has got there already, but those in the rear still cling to myths and fancies—to the sort of 'history' that calls the imagination, and not reason, into active play. It we can trust a report in the 'Pahiatua Herald' of May 18, the public there were treated to some 'history' of this kind at at one of the local churches on the previous evening. It was all about the early British Church; and the legendary tales of its Eastern origin, its foundation by St. Paul, Aristobulus, etc., and its non-Roman character were calmly set forth as iron-clad and unassailable facts of sober history! As a cool matter of fact, writers of history—and not of unhistorical romance—have long ago relegated these fables to the department of literature that is adorned with the adventures of Jack the Giant-killer and the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

We need not here go beyond the testimony of Protestant historians of the first eminence. Milman, for instance, says that the story of the apostolic origin of the early British Church 'has not the slightest historical ground,' and that it 'is a fiction of religious national vanity.' Canon Bright passes it by as 'a pious fancy' and refers contemptuously to 'the Greek fiction about Aristobulus ordained by St. Paul as a bishop of Britain.' Haddan and Stubbs dismiss the whole story of the Pauline conversion of Britain as 'a gratuitous assumption.' 'The story,' says Haddan, 'must first have feet to stand on before it can be needful to waste time in knocking it down.' The same two authors refer to the 'groundlessness of the so often alleged "Orientalism" of the early British Church,' and Haddan declares as 'utterly groundless' the 'idea of a specially Greek origin of the British Church.' Pearson, Warren, and other noted Protestant authorities on that period also contribute their quota of dynamite to blow into smithereens 'the beautiful mediæval romance' that was spun before a Pahiatua audience as a piece of genuine history. The doctrine, the ritual, the hierarchy, the version of the Scriptures used (the *Vetus Itala*), the Mass, the altars, the monastic institutions, the pilgrimages, the penitential canons of the early British Church were (as shown by Bede and Gildas) Roman through and through. Their bishops, too, were in communion with the Holy See, and three of them attended the Council of Arles. In

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