

Miss Macarthur said that the subject of women, children, and the aged was an inexhaustible one, and on almost any one of these heads one could speak for a week instead of twenty minutes, but she was limited that afternoon not so much by a time allowance as by the fact that they had to consider the position of women, children, and the aged and infirm in relation to destitution and pauperism. She took it that everybody present was desirous of safeguarding the mother and the child. Whether that was to be done by one method or another left, of course, scope for difference of opinion.

Many were apt to think of the Poor Law and pauperism as having to deal with persons reduced to destitution by unemployment, but they had heard from Mr. Lansbury that something like one-third of all pauperism was connected with sickness. That did not mean that sickness was the cause of this proportion of destitution. The fact was that this proportion of people who were destitute were also sick. There was very little doubt that all kinds of sickness ought to be dealt with by one authority. Besides the sick there were three large sections equally helpless with an equal claim on the community. These were:—

1. All necessitous mothers having young children dependent upon them.
2. Children.
3. The aged and infirm.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

The total number of widows with children getting relief from the Poor Law every year in the United Kingdom was estimated to be about one hundred thousand. How were these women treated at the present time? In many cases every attempt was made to prevent their applying for relief. They were told that they ought to be able to keep one or two children by their own earnings. It was rather an ironical commentary upon that statement that when women's wages were discussed they were told that whereas men had to support a family a woman had only herself to maintain, and therefore she ought to accept lower wages. In the case of the widow, what chance had she of being able to maintain herself and children as well?

Women, when they point out that they cannot do this, are usually offered the workhouse. All knew what terrors the workhouse held for the average woman, and especially for the mother of young children. Some received a dole of outdoor relief, always insufficient, which, in very many cases, was in effect a rate in aid of wages. Usually 1s. or 1s. 6d. per week was allowed for each child. It was generally admitted that there was no more pernicious principle than this system of a rate in aid of wages. The result was that women were driven out