

**THE POOR LAW REPORT OF 1909; A  
SUMMARY EXPLAINING THE DEFECTS  
OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM AND  
THE PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF  
THE COMMISSION, SO FAR AS RELATES  
TO ENGLAND AND WALES**

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The Poor law report of 1909; a summary explaining the defects of the present system and the principal recommendations of the Commission, so far as relates to England and Wales by Helen Bosanquet

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**HELEN BOSANQUET**

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BY  
HELEN BOSANQUET

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## PREFACE

IN attempting to summarise and explain within moderate compass the main recommendations of the Report of the Poor Law Commission and the grounds upon which they are based, it has been necessary to make considerable omissions. In order that the reader may know in general what has been omitted I have appended a table showing the contents of the Report itself, but will also call attention to the chief points here. In the first place, I have refrained from introducing many technical details, which, however important in themselves and to those actually engaged in administration, seemed not essential to the understanding of the general position. In the second place, I have also refrained, and this time with more reluctance, from attempting to summarise those sections of the Report which are mainly historical, or descriptive of conditions outside the immediate sphere of the Poor Law itself. More especially of importance are Chapter 1 of Part VI. and Part VII. The first of these contains in a concise and interesting form a mass of information

concerning industrial developments since 1834, which is here for the first time made accessible in a consecutive narrative, and is of special significance in connection with the history and present position of unemployment. The second, Part VII., which is a comprehensive survey of the charities of the country and their administration, is no less important from the point of view of the charitable relief of distress ; and if the reader of the following chapters fails to find them convincing, he may confidently look for their fuller justification in the Report itself. The marginal references are to the Parts, chapters and paragraphs of the Report.

Notwithstanding all omissions, however, I hope that I may have succeeded in making clear the main intention of the Report. That intention, in few words, is to substitute a vital and organic system of combined public and voluntary assistance for the mechanical routine of the Poor Law on the one hand, and the confused chaos of charity on the other. If this intention is to be carried into effect it can only be by the combined effort of all who are interested in bringing help and strength to the poorer and weaker members of the community.

ONSHOTT,

*February, 1909.*



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# THE POOR LAW REPORT OF 1909

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

WHAT is the Poor Law, and who are the people to whom it applies?

Every civilised country has a different answer to give to this question, but in their main outlines all answers will coincide.

In the first place, the law which we in England call the Poor Law, but which receives more appropriate names in other countries, is that law which regulates the administration or distribution of assistance from public funds to private individuals on the ground of their failure to provide for themselves.

In the second place, the ultimate fact upon which all systems of public assistance are based is the fact that there are in every country persons who, for one reason or another, are found to be without the necessaries of life, whether provided by their