

**VAGRANCY; BEING A REVIEW OF
THE REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON
VAGRANCY (1906), WITH
ANSWERS TO CERTAIN CRITICISMS**

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Vagrancy: Being a Review of the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy (1906),
with answers to certain criticisms by Sir William Chance

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SIR WILLIAM CHANCE

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ANSWERS TO CERTAIN
CRITICISMS

BY

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PREFACE.

THE following essay contains the substance of two papers which I read this year before the West Midland and North Western District Poor Law Conferences. These papers were intended to supplement each other, but I hope I may be serving a useful purpose in combining them into one paper, with certain additions, so that it may form a complete review of the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy.

Of course, it is far better that those who are particularly interested in this important social question should read the Report itself; but a handy pamphlet drawing attention to its main points and answering certain criticisms which have been made upon its proposals may be found of service.

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I have to express my thanks to Mr. F. L. Turner, whose invaluable services to the Departmental Committee as its Secretary cannot be over-estimated, for the kind help which he has given me in the matter.

W. CHANCE.

November, 1906.

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VAGRANCY.

THE Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy was a unanimous one. This is a fact which should, I think, commend it to the most careful consideration of the country. When representatives of the Home Office, of the Local Government Board, and of the Prison Commissioners are united in their recommendations (for Mr. Simpson's memorandum is only a criticism of detail, and Captain Eardley-Wilmot's memorandum does not affect any of the recommendations), the evidence must have been very strong to bring about so striking a unanimity on so very complicated a subject.

To begin with, history shows very clearly that the question of vagrancy has never at any time been dealt with in a thoroughly scientific manner.

“ From the very start of the system—under which the vagrant ceased to be regarded simply as a criminal to be repressed, and became partly chargeable to the Poor Law authorities—his treatment has followed no general principles, but has been practically left to the whims and wishes of local administrators. The orders of the central authority, which were issued to secure uniformity of treatment, have wholly failed to do so; and a similar absence of consistency in the enforcement of the law has characterised the action of the police and the magistrates. Between the Poor Law and the police the vagrant has flourished. It