

by no means, account for a rise in the expenses of the poor equal to above forty-one per cent.: to other causes, therefore, must they attribute this amazing increased expense, than those which arise from the dearness of provision; assuming it as a fact, that the price of bread-corn may be taken, with some degree of accuracy, as a sign of the price of most of the necessary viands which feed our numerous poor; and those, who know how the poor live, know, also, that bread, in fact, constitutes near two-thirds of the expense of a poor family for provisions: the increased expense of the years 1783, 1784, and 1785, does not, therefore, arise from the increment of necessary expenses in provisions.

Neither does it arise, in any great degree, from a deficiency of work, or decrease of the price of labour; — the price of labour remained much the same as in 1776; and, in this period, the American war had begun to drain the nation of its population and money, but no great effects had then been felt from it: in the last period, the nation was recovering from its losses; manufactures were again thriving, and the sensible part of our countrymen were looking up to agriculture, as a means of recruiting those sources which the waste of war had diminished.

Although, that an increase of expense, rather more than proportional, took place in the great manufacturing-towns, is plainly proved from this abstract, in which Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, certainly more than keep pace with other towns, where the poor are not employed by manufactures; yet to be certain how this fact will apply, and what principle may be collected from it, the returns from the same manufacturing-towns, of the expenses of the poor, should be seen, for the last two or three years, during which, our manufactures have flourished exceedingly: from many instances within the county of Suffolk, the poor-rates continue increasing, although the poor are, or might be, in full employ; for instance, Glemsford, rising gradually from 404*l.* 5*s.* 8*d.* in 1774, to 456*l.* 7*s.* 4*d.* in 1776, to 551*l.* the average of the three years,
1783,

1783, 1784, and 1785, to 1062*l.* 6*s.* 4*d.* in 1790, as appears by Mr. Butt's account, in vol. xvii. p. 497, of the Annals of Agriculture; and a similar rise, but in a less proportion, takes place at Melford, Clare, &c.; if this is the case in general, other causes than want of work must be sought for.

Another observation must also have struck these gentlemen, or, at least, those among them who act as magistrates in the counties where their respective qualifications, as members of parliament, lie; that the money expended in *setting the poor to work throughout the kingdom* is but little more than what is spent in *entertainments at meetings* relative to the management of their affairs; not *two-thirds*, of what comes under the article of *overseers journeys, and attendance on magistrates*; and about *one-fourth* of the sum which is the total under the column of *law-expenses*: they must also recollect, that the first section of the 43d of Elizabeth gives authority to the overseers to raise weekly, or otherwise, by taxation of every inhabitant, a convenient *stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron*, and other necessary ware and stuff to *set the poor to work*; and that this application of the money, raised by assessment, is the *primary object* in view of the legislature, in that act of parliament, under the authority of which, they perceive, by their printed abstract, above two millions to be annually raised on his Majesty's subjects, through that part of the kingdom subject to the operation of the act; they must also know that the application of competent sums of money, toward the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other of them being poor and not able to work, and also for putting out children to be apprentices, was a *secondary* consideration of the legislature, and by no ~~means~~ comes into the foreground of the piece; and that law-expenses, expenses of overseers in attendance on magistrates, expenses of entertainments, &c. were not in view, or, at least, like all objects in the back-ground, where the perspective is well preserved, were but dimly and indistinctly seen; but that present practice has so reversed all regularity and order

order in the present system of the poor-laws, as exhibited to the committee, that the great object of Elizabeth's legislature is now thrown into the back-ground, and the whole order of the picture reversed: the conclusion, that must be obvious to every one, is, that the 43d of Elizabeth, like Mr. Gamon's Act, respecting outside passengers in stage-coaches, although the law of the land, is not the practice of the land.

The total sum falling under the column of expenses of entertainments, 11,713*l.* certainly is not much for the number of parishes in England and Wales; but it leads to the expenses contained under the heads of law-business, attendances on magistrates, journeys, &c. These two columns form no inconsiderable total, 80,285*l.*; when a vestry, which ought to meet and conclude the business of their meeting in a part of the church appropriated for that purpose, adjourns to the neighbouring ale-house, the trifle which they expend of the poor's rates is not all; parish-business is the object; at a meeting of parishioners, having a common topic to converse about, some soon become interested in defending their opinions; more talk requires more liquor, and their determinations are made, not like those of their German ancestors, *deliberant dum fingere nesciunt: constituunt dum errare non possunt*; but they reverse the order, they deliberate, while they are sober, and determine when they are drunk; hence journeys to magistrates, orders of removal on doubtful settlements, appeals to sessions; thence to the King's Bench; hence attorney's bills, and enormous assessments. Was no order of vestry good, or no parish-officer to be indemnified in expending the parish-money in law-contests, unless by an order of vestry, signed before noon, in the parish-church, after regular notice given, and no adjournment allowed, much of the article of expense would disappear.

Another use may also be made of this abstract: there are some very able, although not accurate, observers of what respects the poor, who have imagined, that ~~the~~ great increase of our expenses, relating

relating to them, has arisen from temporary want of work. It may be recollected, that this cannot happen where the employment is agriculture, because this occupation always requires nearly the same number of hands all years, and is independent of any desultory call for work; which may, as all manufactures do, the demand of which is uncertain, give full employment to the poor some years, and leave them to subsist on the poor's rates when the demand for the manufacture ceases; a comparison being made of the medium of net-expenses of the poor, from the returns made to parliament in 1776, and the medium of 1783, 1784, and 1785, taking the total of five or six of those parishes, which may be known, by the person making the comparison, to depend principally, or entirely, on agriculture; the increase on the last medium will be found to rise from thirty to above forty per cent. more than the expense was in 1776, a rise by no means to be accounted for on the principle of the advanced price of the necessaries of life during this interval; and the idea of want of work in these parishes, which are thus selected, as being employed in agriculture, must be thrown out of the case; the effect then must have arisen from some other cause; a cause, I fear, neither tending to the comfort of the poor, nor the credit of the overseer.

That column which contains the medium of expenses not concerning the poor, viz. repairing churches, roads, &c. salaries to ministers, &c. amounting to 44,231*l.* certainly ought not have made its appearance in this abstract, because no part of the money collected by assessments for the relief of the poor ought to have been applied to purposes specifically different from those to which the rate is appropriated by the 43d of Elizabeth, and which purposes have their different funds provided for them by other authorities: the church-wardens rate repairs the church; the surveyors rate repairs the roads; and the ecclesiastical estates are amply sufficient for providing and paying salaries to ministers: it is, therefore, some matter of surprise, why the poor's rate is clogged with such

such a considerable sum, which is foreign to its proper application : in well-regulated parishes such charges on the poor's rate are not admitted ; and many blanks, consequently, appear against individual parishes under this column.

No abstract of the returns made to the second question appears, which inquires what number of poor received constant, and what number received occasional, relief ? A question of, at least, equal importance to any of the others, as the aggregate would have been nearly, if not fully, a return of all the poor throughout England and Wales ; or, at the least, it would have informed us of the number of those who have been at any time, within the three years, a burthen on the public. Why the committee did not inform themselves of this fact, it is no easy matter to guess ;—possibly, the returns were too incomplete to afford any certain information ; but, if that were the case, the question should have been repeated from year to year, until the returns had been accurate and full ; because this fact must be known before any radical cure can be attempted, as it leads to a certain knowledge of the extent of the disease.

The report from the committee, appointed to inspect and consider the returns made by the ministers and church-wardens, relative to charitable donations, for the benefit of poor persons, in pursuance of the 58th chapter of the same year, states, that it appears by a former report, made under the said act, the 23d day of May, 1787, that, out of near thirteen thousand parishes, from which returns of charitable donations have been required, there were only fourteen parishes that had made no such returns.

That the committee directed an abstract to be made of the returns ; but finding, on inspection of the abstract, that a great number of the parishes had made defective returns ; some by not naming the persons who gave the charities ; others by not naming the trustees ; others by not describing whether the donations were in land or money ; others by not describing the produce of the money,

money, lands, or rent-charges, so given; the committee directed their chairman to write circular letters to the ministers and churchwardens of all the parishes, &c. where such omissions appeared, requiring them to send more perfect returns.

The committee then reports, that about 4065 letters had been sent, that answers had been received to about 3376 of them, many of which had given the explanation required; and many others had stated that they could give no farther information.

That the committee have caused the produce of the said charities, in land and money, as far as they can be collected from the said returns, to be cast up in each county; by which the annual amount of the produce of the money and land, through England and Wales, appears to be:

MONEY.			
England,	£ 46,173	9	9
Wales,	2,070	0	8
		<hr/>	
		48,243	10 5
LAND.			
England,	£ 206,301	8	8
Wales,	4,166	0	2
		<hr/>	
		210,467	8 10
<hr/>			
Making together a total of £ 258,710 19 3			

And that the committee had reason to believe very considerable farther sums will appear to have been given for the like charitable purposes; whenever *proper means* can be found for investigating and completing those discoveries, by extending the inquiries to corporations, companies, and societies of men, as well as feoffees, trustees, and other persons.

The committee also observes, that, upon the face of the said return, many of the charitable donations appear to have been lost, and many others are in danger of being lost, and that the matter

seems to be of *such magnitude* as to call for the *serious and speedy* attention of parliament, to amend and explain the act, by specifying, with certainty and precision, the objects to which they may think fit to direct their inquiries, in order to procure full and satisfactory returns, and *the establishment of such measures as may be effectual for the relief of the poor persons who were the objects of the said donations*; and for carrying the charitable purposes of the donors into execution.

The committee appears to have been strongly impressed with the idea, that much information on the subject was intentionally withheld, and that a more minute investigation was necessary to acquire a sufficient insight into this important branch of the revenue belonging to the poor. When it is recollected, that the inquiry on this head was made with a view to the best of purposes, that of regulating the application of these estates, which had, from most distant times, been left by charitable donors to the use of the poor; and that the information is required from *those who are the proper guardians of these estates*; and the questions are accordingly applied to the ministers of parishes and the church-wardens; it is a matter of surprise that such faulty or deficient returns were made; but is it not matter of greater surprise, that the committee should stand in need of more full and satisfactory returns, in order to *establish such measures as may be effectual* for the relief of the objects of the said donation, while the statute of charitable uses, passed in the 43d of Elizabeth, is the law of the land? and which was passed with a view of snatching these estates from the hands of those harpies, who would *then*, as they will *now*, if they can, divert their produce from the poor into their own pockets. This statute passed in the same year as the leading statute which respects the poor, and forms part of a plan, at the time in contemplation; and a very prudent part it is, to make as productive as possible that revenue which the poor could claim *as their right*; at the same time as they took from the pockets of their richer fellow-citizens, what that revenue might, when

when applied according to the intention of the donors, fall short of supplying their absolute necessities.

This statute empowers the chancellor or keeper of the great seal, and the chancellor of the dutchy of Lancaster, for the time being, within the dutchy of Lancaster, to award commissions to the bishops of every diocese, and to other persons of good and sound behaviour, or any four or more of them, authorizing them to inquire, as well by the oaths of twelve men or more of the county, as by all other good and lawful means, of all and singular such estates, and gifts, &c. and of all abuses and breaches of trust respecting them; an useful and necessary commission, which, if issued in those instances where the committee suspects information to be held back, would be equal to every good effect, and preclude all necessity for more acts of parliament on this head, either to compel a discovery or to enforce an application of the rents and profits of those estates, to the purposes for which they were originally granted.

L E T T E R XXII.

THE History of the Poor-Laws, with observations, is the first publication of any consequence on this subject, which appeared in his present Majesty's reign; and the same author's name being in the title-page as in that well-known book, Burn's Justice, the reader has reason to expect much information on the subject, nor will he be disappointed. Burn lays the foundation of his inquiry in remote antiquity, informing us how the poor were maintained in this country as soon as we began to enjoy the first dawn of civilization, and proves that the ecclesiastical revenue was subject to the burthen as far as one-fourth of the produce at first, and one-third afterwards. To this purpose he quotes Kennet's Impropr.

14, 15, and says, that the poor also received some portion of their maintenance from the alms of the people and from the monasteries.

He then recites, rather fully, all the statutes relative to the poor, dividing them into three heads; servants, &c. vagrants, and impotent poor.

Observations on the statutes form the fifth chapter; and here I must express my disappointment, in not receiving any information from this able writer, at what time, and by what means, the poor in particular, and the nation at large, lost their hold on that portion of the ecclesiastical revenue, which he states them originally to have enjoyed. The author of Burn's Ecclesiastical Law was assuredly able to give full information on this important subject; and it was a necessary part of his plan, because he is obliged to lay the foundation of the compulsory maintenance, which they now partake of, *in the custom of begging*; a practice which, in his chapter on farther regulations, he very strongly deprecates, and is of opinion it should be utterly abolished: whereas, the custom of begging has its most natural foundation in the want of necessary relief; an exigency, urgent in proportion as they were deprived of their share of this eleemosynary revenue; which being withdrawn gradually by the ecclesiastics, the poor were encouraged from the pulpits to beg that maintenance of the people at large, which they had been accustomed to receive from the estates of the church in a certain proportion, and which being exhausted, they then might reasonably have been permitted to ask alms from the people, and not before. On this topic he is silent, and tells us, "That the minister *was to take* all opportunities to exhort the *people to be* bountiful: — houses were *to be* provided for them by the devotion of *good people*, and materials *to set* them on such work as they were able to perform: — then the minister, after the Gospel, every Sunday, was specially to exhort the *parishioners* to a liberal contribution: — next, the collectors for the poor, on a certain Sunday in every year, immediately after divine-service, were to take down, in writing,

writing, what every person was willing to give weekly for the ensuing year; and, if any should be obstinate and refuse to give, the minister *was gently to exhort him*; if he still refused, the minister was to certify such refusal to the bishop of the diocese, who was to send for and exhort him in like manner; if he still stood out, the bishop was to certify the same to the justices in sessions, and bind him over to appear there; and the justices, at the sessions, were again gently to move and persuade him; and, finally, if he would not be persuaded, then they were to assess him what they thought reasonable towards the relief of the poor: and this brought on the assessment in the fourteenth year of Queen Elizabeth." Such is Dr. Burn's deduction of the compulsory maintenance. Now, it is observable, that whatever of compulsion there might be in this duty of the minister, who, it is stated, *was to take all opportunities to exhort*, it did not receive its sanction from the law of the land, until the 27th year of Henry the Eighth; therefore, many centuries before that period, it was a voluntary act on the part of the ecclesiastics, who gradually withdrew that portion of their tithes, belonging to the poor, from their use, as they were able, by their influence, to persuade the parishioners to reinstate by their alms; and hence arose the necessity of our present poor-rates.

That the poor were, during the times of popery, maintained chiefly by the religious houses, is stated as a vulgar error: "Their hospitality was to the rich; they were great inns; they entertained those bountifully who could be bountiful to them again." With this observation the former part of our inquiries perfectly agrees.

Another fact this treatise states as remarkable, is, "That every proposal which hath been made for the reformation of the poor-law hath been tried in former ages, and found ineffectual."

The antiquity of settlements is deduced from the more antient statutes, and proved not to have originated from the statute passed in the reign of Charles the Second: the doctrine of removals is also traced from the same sources. But thus much is clear; that, from
whatever

whatever source the idea of them originally sprung, they are themselves an abundant source of expensive litigations.

The origin and progress of the office of overseer is ingeniously traced from the church-wardens, who were the original overseers, and still by statute-law continue so; because the management of the poor, Dr. Burn says, was, at first, *solely an ecclesiastical matter*, "in aid of the church-wardens, collectors were appointed, and afterwards the overseer."

Begging is traced from the first statute in the 23d of Edward the Third, "when none under the colour of pity and alms were to give any thing to such as might labour, under pain of imprisonment;" to the last act of parliament in the 17th of George the Second, which makes it the first step towards vagrancy, "persons begging within their own parish, being deemed idle and disorderly persons, and to be sent to the house of correction."

Badging of the poor, which is directed by the 8th and 9th of William the Third, is supposed to have sprung from the military institution, when the nobility distinguished their followers with peculiar ensigns.

What observations there are in Burn's tract, respecting the vagrant-laws, relate chiefly to their extreme severity; it is a matter of self-gratulation to the writer of these pages, that, in a former part of them, he should have fallen into a train of similar sentiments on this head. Rating the wages of servants by statute has also fallen under our consideration; no additional information is to be found in his observations on these statutes, except the assertion, that, by the experience of four hundred years, it appears, that the regulating the prices of work leaves no room for industry and ingenuity; "for, if all persons, in the same kind of work, were to receive equal wages, there would be no emulation."

The clothing of the poor, in ancient times, is discussed; and, from the argument, it appears, that the statutable clothing, in the reign of Edward the Third, for handicrafts and yeomen, was not to exceed

exceed 4s. 6d. a yard, or thereabout, estimating by the money of the present times; for which price a strong and warm clothing might still be purchased.

This tract then gives an account of the different schemes for reforming the poor-laws, and goes at some length into Lord Hales's, Sir Josiah Child's, Mr. Cary's, Mr. Hay's, Mr. Alcock's, Anonymous, Lord Hillsborough's, Sir Richard Lloyd's, Mr. Fielding's, and Mr. Cooper's, plan; all which have been already explained in the former pages of our strictures on this subject. We then come to the seventh chapter, in which the author proposes farther regulations:

"Thus," he saith, "hath the wisdom of the nation in parliament, and of individuals, been employed in providing properly for the poor; and yet they are not properly provided for." The fact is true; but it ought not to induce an opinion, that it is impossible to meliorate their situation and lighten our burthens.

Two particulars, he says, should be rectified, until time and experience suggest farther alteration: first, to prevent the nuisance of common begging:—the means he proposes are, give them nothing: "if none were to give, none would beg, and the whole mystery and craft would end in a fortnight:" and, in order to bring this about, he would have all who relieve a common beggar be subject to a penalty. Surely the principles of liberty, policy, and humanity, all equally militate against such a regulation; experience also has proved its insufficiency for the purpose: in times of ignorance the experiment was made, and found ineffectual. By the 23d of Edward the Third, none was permitted, under colour of alms, to give any thing to such which may labour, under the pain of imprisonment. This statute was repealed by Edward the Sixth.

The other fundamental defect is, according to this writer, in leaving the whole management to those annual officers, called overseers of the poor; and the practical duty of such an officer is ironically pointed out with some humour: "He is to keep an extraordinary

dinary look out, to prevent persons coming to inhabit without certificates, and to fly to the justices to remove them; and, if a man brings a certificate, then to caution all the inhabitants not to let him a farm of 10*l.* a year, and to take care, to keep him out of all parish-offices; to warn them, if they will hire servants, to hire them half-yearly, or by the month, by the week, or by the day, rather than by any way which shall give them a settlement; or, if they do hire them by the year, then to pick a quarrel with them before the year's end, and so to get rid of them: to maintain the poor as cheap as possible they can at all events; not to lay out two-pence in prospect of any future good, but only to serve the present necessity; to bargain with some sturdy person to take them by the lump, who yet is not intended to *take* them, but to hang over them *in terrorem*; if they shall complain to the justices for want of maintenance, to send them into the country a begging; to bind out poor children apprentices, no matter to whom or to what trade, only take care that the master lives in another parish; to move heaven and earth if any dispute happens about a settlement, and in that particular to invert the general rule, and stick at no expense; to pull down cottages, to drive out as many inhabitants and admit as few as possibly they can;" with many other ironical directions, reminding the reader of Swift's Advice to Servants; by which it is apparent, that this our great luminary in the duty of magistrates knew well that the office of an overseer was sometimes neglected, sometimes perverted, and but seldom properly executed.

He, therefore, is of opinion, that the office should not be entirely abolished, but that a general superintendant over a certain number of parishes, as the justices in sessions shall find most convenient, should be appointed; and that the overseer should collect the rate, and it should be applied under the direction of the superintendant, whose business he more particularly points out.

To assist this purpose, he recommends monthly sessions to the justices, at which the church-wardens, overseers, and superintendant,

dant, should attend, give in their report, and receive farther orders: and those who think themselves aggrieved at these district-sessions should have a right of appeal to the quarter-sessions.

To insure attendance, he proposes that the justices should be allowed half-a-guinea a day out of the county-stock; and says, that these monthly sessions might also be useful to carry into execution the acts of parliament, respecting the highways, then in force, together with that variety of business, which is now the employment of justices at their common meetings or special sessions.

A curious instance is mentioned from a book of "the Police of France," written about 1753, which proves, that at the same time the French were anxious that their police, respecting the poor, should be put on the same footing as our English poor-laws, several proposals were published in London, recommending such a method of maintaining our poor as was then practised in France; viz. by general hospitals in provincial towns; exemplifying, in a very strong light, the truth of Horace's maxim,

Laudet diversa sequentes.

The French mode, he very properly observes, will annihilate all family-connections, and will create a *populus virorum* and a *populus mulierum*, which, at the same time that it lessens the number of the poor, will tend to depopulate a kingdom.

A county, instead of a parish, settlement, provided the poor could be maintained on a county-plan, he thinks might be advisable; but that the idea of settlement should not be abolished, "only restrained, to the place of birth, or of inhabitancy for one or more years, and that such a restriction would tend to abolish certificates, by destroying the cause of requiring, granting, or denying, them." How this would be effected by restraining settlements to the place of birth or inhabitancy, for one or more years, I confess myself not able to see; that the number of law-suits, to ascertain the

settlement, might be diminished, is plain, but that certificates, to authorize the pauper to live elsewhere, would be as necessary as at present, is also equally obvious.

A reduction of all the poor-laws into one is recommended; as is also a reduction of the highway-laws into one. The last alteration has been effected by the 13th of the present king, chap. 58, and has undoubtedly much simplified their use and operation, and rendered them, in most instances, a practicable and useful code:—equally good effects would arise from a simplification of the poor-laws. A code of acts of the legislature, militating in some instances with each other, whose several dependencies and connections are not easy to be discovered by a superficial observer or temporary officer, who must pick his duty out of the Statutes at Large, forms no bad apology for ignorance; and ignorance, at the same time that it excuses neglect, becomes also a cloak to interested mistakes.

These are the chief notices which the author of the History of the Poor-Laws has made on the subject; there are some other observations on the defects of the law, under the administration of justices of the peace, which do not immediately relate to the poor, and, therefore, may very properly be passed over, more especially, as it is apparent from the small sale of the book, although sanctioned by his well-known name, that it is by no means a subject which has excited much attention, or is generally studied, although it very intimately concerns all classes of people.

In 1764, a pamphlet, published by Becker, Observations on the Number of the Poor, and on the heavy Rates levied for their Benefit, starts an idea on the subject, that, whether true or not, proves some theoretic principles in the second part of Paine's Rights of Man to have no claim to originality.

But this writer so entirely loses the avowed purpose of his pamphlet in the title-pages; so neglects the interests of the *real* poor, in attending to the political consequences resulting from the num-

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ber of *genteel* poor, that it is futile to follow him in a subject which opens a field of argument vastly too extensive for this publication, foreign to its intention, and mischievous in its discussion.

L E T T E R XXIII.

IN 1767, the Farmer's Letters to the People of England appeared, which, among a variety of topics treated with much spirit and strength of argument, afford a few strictures on the poor, and the laws respecting them: the prevailing ideas shall be shortly mentioned, although the propriety and justness of them cannot be fully admitted.

The author considers the poor-laws of England as universally encouragers of idleness, drunkenness, and tea-drinking: he wishes for a total abolition of them, and for a new code, on the principle that those only should be maintained at the public expense who cannot maintain themselves, and that such maintenance should be in hundred-houses of industry.

Is it not the principle of the existing code that those only who cannot maintain themselves should be maintained at the public expense? And, if the parishes agree in thinking them adviseable, may not hundred-houses of industry be now the means? Why then abolish the old laws to make new ones on the same principle? Would a man of sense pull down a family-mansion, in good repair, to build a new one on the same principle? Surely not.

A prevailing idea in this publication seems to be, that the poor should have no certainty of provision except from their own industry. But is not such the theoretic principle of the existing poor-laws, as far as is consistent with humanity? If practice has departed

ed from the principle, blame the execution of the laws, and not the principle.

Dr. Price's Observations on Reversionary Payments, Annuities, &c. were published in 1772. The principle of some of those useful societies called box-clubs originated from a plan intended for the benefit of the labouring-poor in this very excellent publication. The following is the calculation alluded to :

“ Let the society, at its first institution, consist of a hundred persons, all between the age of thirty and forty, whose mean age may, therefore, be reckoned at thirty-six ; and let it be supposed to be always kept up to this number by the admission of new members, between the ages of thirty and forty, as old ones die off : let the contribution of each member be 4*d.* a week, making, from the whole body, an annual contribution of 85*l.* 17*s.* : let it be supposed that seven of them will fall every year into disorders that shall incapacitate them for seven weeks ; 30*l.* 12*s.* of the annual contribution will be just sufficient to enable the society to grant to each of them 12*s.* a week during their illness, and the remaining 55*l.* per annum laid out, and carefully improved, at the rate of three and a half per cent. will increase to a capital that shall be sufficient, according to the chances of life in the tables three, four, five, to enable the society to pay to every member, after attaining to sixty-seven years of age, or upon his entering into his sixty-eighth year, an annuity, beginning with 5*l.* and increasing, at the rate of 1*l.* every year, for seven years, until, at the age of seventy-five, it will be a standing annuity of 12*l.* for the remainder of life. Were such a society to make its contribution 7*d.* a week, an allowance of 15*s.* might be made, on the same supposition, to every member during sickness, besides the payment of an annuity, beginning with 5*l.* when a member entered his sixty-fourth year, and increasing for fifteen years, until, at seventy-nine, it became fixed for the remainder of his life at 20*l.*”

If

If society has a right to expect from its constituent parts every exertion in their power to maintain themselves, before any individual has a claim for any part of their maintenance on society in the aggregate, an universal plan, obliging those members, who have nothing to subsist on but their labour, to lay up a small part of its produce, while in health, against the day of sickness and want, would be no unjust obligation, but would, on the contrary, be founded on a strictly equitable principle; and, if the foregoing calculation is right, it would be no inconsiderable assistance in sickness, and through the declining years of age: besides, the plan is easy of execution, and is at present, in many places through the kingdom, executed voluntarily by the poor, being encouraged by the subscription of men of substance; and very good effects arise from it, not only in relief of the poor subscribers themselves, and in relief of the poor's rates, but also in the preservation of good order among the lower classes of society, who, having men of principle for their charitable subscribers, trustees, and directors, are less likely to be incited to insurrections and disturbances than those who, having no communication with any classes of men superior to themselves, are easily led on to those riotous proceedings which are a scandal to good government.

Mr. Hanway, in his strictures on the causes of dissoluteness which prevail among the lower classes of people, laments that the number of country-gentlemen is so much reduced that they can no longer form a body of reserve to defend the cause of virtue, or furnish the means of its defence. He asks, what is the situation of a free people, when a gentleman of education, of five hundred or one thousand a year, who should be one of their chief guardians, brings himself and family into an expense which requires three times his income? He who might be a sovereign in his own demesne, and look down on what the world calls greatness, is now lost in the mass of splendid vanity, and bewildered in trifles.

With

With reason might this worthy philanthropist make the foregoing remark. From this cause no inconsiderable degree of the dissoluteness which prevails in the country arises. Good examples are of great force, and such the country stands in need of. Were the examples which the clergy set in private life equally moral as their exhortations to their parishioners from the pulpit, even in that case the instances of moral conduct among that class of society, to which the labourer looks up with respect, would not be sufficient: they want stronger incitements, and a greater number of respectable examples; their immediate pay-masters and employers are not sufficiently raised above them, and too much mix with them in concerns of interest, to be respected as patrons; it is the hospitable country-gentleman, the respected magistrate, who understands, and is attentive to, their real interests, that are wanted, as constant house-keepers, in the country: but the presence of such at their country-residences cannot be commanded, and will not be voluntarily accorded, unless our huge overgrown metropolis, resembling the poet's greatness, void of wisdom, should meet with the same fate, and

Fall by its own weight.

In the same year as the two last publications which have been noticed made their appearance, there came also from the press an anonymous treatise, called, *A View of real Grievances, &c.* in which are a few just and pointed remarks, founded on truth and actual observation. "Many small country-villages can date the commencement of poor-rates from the introduction of public-houses, which corrupt the morals, impair the health, impoverish and reduce the poor to the greatest penury and distress." But the expense of government ~~is so~~ enormous, that the excise is too considerable an object not to be encouraged at all events, and no tax that swells it will be taken off, to save the lower class of people from destruction. This writer is also of opinion, that the laws
relative

relative to parish-settlements are a very considerable cause of the increase of the poor-rates.

Mr. Kent, in his Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property, is of opinion, that the great increase in the poor-rates arises from the rise in the value of the produce of land, which, he says, is full sixty per cent. and that the rise in the price of labour is not above twenty. Another cause is, the disadvantage the poor labour under in carrying their penny to market: formerly they could buy their butter and cheese of the farmer; now they are driven to the shop-keeper: they could formerly have their wheat ground; they are now driven to the miller and baker. The remedy he proposes is, that gentlemen of fortune take on themselves the superintendence of country-business: let them act as guardians for the poor, reduce the size of farms, increase the price of labour, and the industrious poor will find a support by such encouragement: but he professes he knows no law which can force people to be industrious.

This assertion of Mr. Kent's, respecting the advanced price of the produce of the land, compared with the advance of wages, demands proof before it ought to be reasoned from as a principle; and at present it stands a mere *gratis dictum*, as advanced by him. Adam Smith goes more minutely into the question, which requires a decided judgement before consequences are deduced from it. The disadvantages the poor lie under in going with their penny to market are great; but it is much to be doubted whether, at any time, they could buy the produce of land immediately of the farmer, unless from their master: the quantity wanted by each individual is too small, to suppose that the farmer could allow that loss of time which would be necessary to deal to each one his trifling dole; and, if they lay in a stock, waste will make a greater consumption in their earnings than the advanced price of the shop-keeper.

The first edition of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* appeared about this time; a book uni-

versally commended for the solidity of its principle, the clearness and accuracy of reasoning it contains, and the fair investigation of the subject which the learned author treats of. Some opinions which respect the poor, in this treatise, may, therefore, with propriety, be taken as so many aphorisms, and quoted as such, leaving the reader to trace the deductions this great writer has made in his own volumes, if he doubts the principles of his judgement. As the axioms, on the subject of the poor, which can be collected from these volumes, are scattered throughout the whole work, they shall be inserted, as they occur, in turning over the pages of Adam Smith's most luminous tract on the Wealth of Nations.

"A man must always live by his work, and his wages must be, at least, sufficient to maintain him; they must even, upon most occasions, be something more, otherwise it would be impossible for him to bring up a family, and the race of such workmen would not last beyond the first generation." B.i. c. 8.

"In Great Britain the wages of labour seem to be evidently more than what is precisely necessary to bring up a family." B.i. c. 8.

"Lord-Chief-Justice Hale, who wrote in the time of Charles the Second, computes the necessary expense of a labourer's family, consisting of six persons, (the father and mother, two children able to do something, and two not able,) at ten shillings a week, or twenty-six pounds a year." B.i. c. 8.

"In 1668, Mr. Gregory King, whose skill in political arithmetic is so much extolled by Dr. Davenant, computed the ordinary income of labourers and out-servants to be fifteen pounds a year to a family, which he supposed to consist, one with another, of three and a half persons: both suppose the weekly expense of such families to be about twenty-pence a head." B.i. c. 8.

"The

“ The real recompense of labour, the real quantity of the necessaries and conveniencies of life, which it can procure to the labourer, has, during the course of the present century, increased, perhaps, in a still greater proportion than its money-price.” The foregoing maxims, with respect to the wages of labour, are admirably elucidated in chapter the 8th, book the 1st, of this excellent work.

“ Since the time of Henry the Eighth, the wealth and revenue of the country have been continually advancing ; and, in the course of their progress, their pace seems rather to have been gradually accelerated than retarded. The wages of labour have been continually increasing during the same period ; and, in the greater part of the different branches of trade and manufactures, the profits of stock have been diminishing.” B. i. c. 9.

“ A little grocer will make forty or fifty per cent. upon a stock of a single hundred pounds, while a considerable merchant, in the same place, will scarce make eight or ten per cent. on a stock of ten thousand. The greater part of the apparent profit on a little stock is wages.” B. i. c. 10.*

“ The produce of labour, which arises from the leisure particular employments allow of, comes frequently cheaper to market than would otherwise be suitable to its nature.” B. i. c. 10.

“ The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable.” B. i. c. 10.

“ In Great Britain, the wages of country-labour approach nearer to those of manufacturing-labour, than they are said to have done in the last century, or in the beginning of the present.” B. i. c. 10.

“ The very unequal price of labour which we frequently find in England, in places at no great distance from one another, is pro-

* By this is meant, payment to the little grocer for loss of time in retailing his commodities in small quantities.

bably owing to the obstruction which the law of settlements gives to a poor man, who would carry his industry from one parish to another, without a certificate." B. i. c. 10.

" To remove a man who has committed no misdemeanor from the parish where he chooses to reside, is an evident violation of natural liberty and justice. The common people of England, however, so jealous of their liberty, but, like the common people of other countries, never rightly understand in what it consists, have now, for more than a century, suffered themselves to be exposed to this oppression, without a remedy. Though men of reflection also have sometimes complained of the law of settlements, as a public grievance, yet it has never been the object of any general popular clamour, such as that against general warrants; an abusive practice, undoubtedly, but such an one as was not likely to occasion any general oppression." B. i. c. 10.

" The obstruction, which corporation-laws give to the free circulation of labour, is common to every part of Europe. That, which is given to it by the poor-laws, is, so far as I know, peculiar to England; it consists in the difficulty in which a poor man finds in obtaining a settlement, or even in being allowed to exercise his industry in any parish but that to which he belongs." B. i. c. 10.

" The complaint of workmen, that rating of wages by act of parliament puts the ablest and most industrious upon the same footing with an ordinary workman, seems perfectly well-founded." B. i. c. 10.

" The money-price of coarse cloth in the fifteenth century, compared with the money-price at present, cloth is cheaper now than formerly, and probably much better." B. i. c. 11.

" The same comparison is made with respect to stockings, and to the same effect:—a pair of stockings for a poor servant did then cost as much as a bushel and a half of wheat." B. i. c. 11.

" Neither

“ Neither wind nor water mills of any kind were known in England so early as the beginning of the sixteenth century.” B. i. c. 11.

This assertion cannot be intended to extend to corn-mills; and yet, by the wording of the sentence, it extends to wind and water mills of all kinds; it should, therefore, be qualified in a future edition: water-mills most certainly were in use before the conquest, although the first instance of the writ *scēta ad molendinum* appears, by Fitzherbert’s *Natura Brevium*, to have issued in the 29th of Edward the Third.

“ All those improvements in the productive powers of labour, which tend directly to reduce the real price of manufactures, tend indirectly to raise the real rent of land.” B. i. c. 11.

“ The whole annual produce of the land and labour of a country, or, what comes to the same thing, the whole price of that annual produce, naturally divides itself into three parts, the rent of land, the wages of labour, and the profits of stock, and constitutes a revenue to three different orders of people; to those who live by rent, to those who live by wages, and to those who live by profit.” B. i. c. 11.

“ The interest of those who live by wages is as strictly connected with the interest of the society as those who live by rent.” B. i. c. 11.

“ The wages of the labourer are never so high as when the demand for labour is continually rising, or when the quantity employed is every year increasing considerably; when this real wealth of the society becomes stationary, his wages are soon reduced to what is barely enough to enable him to bring up a family, or to continue the race of labourers; when the society declines, they fall even below this.” B. i. conclusion of c. 11.

“ The proportion between the price of provisions in Scotland and England is the same now as before the great multiplication of banking-companies in Scotland; and corn is, upon most occasions, full

full as cheap in England as in France, although there is a great deal of paper-money in England, and scarce any in France." B. ii. c. 2.

"It is not the number of ale-houses which occasions a general disposition to drunkenness among the common people; but that disposition, arising from other causes, necessarily gives employment to a number of ale-houses." B. ii. c. 5.

"The money-price of corn regulates that of all other home-made commodities; it regulates the money-price of labour, which must always be such as to enable the labourer to purchase a quantity of corn sufficient to maintain him and his family, either in the liberal, moderate, or scanty, manner, in which the advancing, stationary, or declining, circumstances of the society oblige his employers to maintain him." B. iv. c. 5.

"The real value of every other commodity is finally measured and determined by the proportion which its average money-price bears to the average money-price of corn." B. 4. c. 5.

"A tax on the necessaries of life operates exactly as a direct tax on the wages of labour." B. v. c. 2.

"But it is different with taxes on luxuries, even on those of the poor; although these might somewhat increase the distress of disorderly families, and thereby diminish somewhat of their ability to bring up children, they would not, probably, diminish much the population of the country." B. v. c. 2.

"Under necessaries, the author comprehends not only those things which nature, but those also which the established rules of decency, have made necessary to the poor; as linen, soap, leather shoes, in England; all other things he calls luxuries, without meaning to throw the ~~smallest~~ reproach on the temperate use of them, such as beer, ~~ale~~, tobacco, tea, sugar, spirituous liquors B. v. c. 2.

L E T T E R XXIV.

FROM the date of these last-mentioned publications, no other tract of any notice appeared, until Mr. Gilbert's exertions in the House of Commons again roused the public attention to this important object. The schedule of inquiries transmitted by the House to all the magistrates, the clergy, church-wardens, and overseers of the poor, throughout England and Wales, compelled a scrutiny into that subject; which, having been the concern of every one, had become the care of no one. The result of the inquiry alarmed the public, and their minds were agitated on two very important considerations: the first was, the extent of the evil; a fact established by the returns required by the legislature to the questions asked; it appearing, that a sum exceeding two millions was expended annually for the relief of the poor; and that this sum had increased by hasty strides, being an excess of nearly one-third of the total expended on the same account eight years before. The other point, on which the public attention rested, was the plan proposed by Mr. Gilbert to remedy this alarming evil. Several publications appeared on this topic, which, in general, condemned the means proposed, allowing, at the same time, every merit of good intention to the proposer. Those tracts which passed the press, for the purpose only of criticising Mr. Gilbert's plan, may be passed over in silence, unless they elucidate some principle on the subject of the ~~laws~~ or management of the poor. But, before these publications are noticed, it may be proper to give a summary abstract of the bill which Mr. Gilbert offered to the legislature of his country, to be passed into a law, and which he introduced to the attention of the public by a pertinent and sensible pamphlet, well calculated to explain the evils he wished

wished principally to regulate, and the means by which he intended to correct them.

The bill, by its preamble, stated the fact that gives rise to the regulations proposed: "That the rates and assessments for the employment and relief of the poor have, for many years, been greatly increasing; notwithstanding which, many sick and impotent persons are left to perish, or endure great necessities, for want of timely and effectual assistance; and others, who are healthy and able to work, are not properly employed, but are permitted to contract habits of idleness, and at length to become vagrants and thieves."

It then proceeds to state the remedy, intended to be passed into a law by the legislature, viz. the uniting and incorporating several parishes, for the purpose of maintaining and employing their poor, upon one common fund, under the direction and superintendence of gentlemen of character and fortune, residing in or near such parishes, and employing permanent and able officers and agents for the purpose.

This method the preamble states to have been found, by experience, better to answer the purpose than any other mode.*

The enacting-clauses contain the means proposed to carry this system into execution. The following are the heads of those clauses very briefly stated:

Justices at quarter-sessions to appoint a day for choosing commissioners, who are to take an oath prescribed, and choose a chairman, and appoint a clerk and two agents, and receive information on oath from high-constables, church-wardens, overseers, &c. and shall unite the parishes into distinct districts, not exceeding thirteen parishes in a district, nor less than three; but their powers

* The *experience* alluded to, most probably, was collected from the instances of the incorporated houses of industry in Suffolk, Norfolk, and elsewhere, throughout the kingdom.

shall not extend into any district whose poor are provided for under any special act of parliament.

These commissioners shall appoint not more than forty, nor less than twenty, committee-men in each district; shall limit their qualification by estate; and shall fix the salary to be paid to the district-agent; and the committee-men shall be chosen by such as are qualified in a manner required by the commissioners, who shall also make a report of what they have done, in this respect, to the justices of the peace of their respective counties; and shall deliver such reports to the clerk of the peace, which shall be printed, and a copy sent to every acting-justice of the peace, and to every high-constable; and the magistrates, at their quarter-sessions, shall pay, out of the county-money, the commissioners their reasonable expenses.

If two-thirds of the persons, qualified to be district-committee-men, are of opinion to adopt the provisions of the act for incorporating the district, that district shall then be declared incorporated, and shall proceed to ballot for a committee, and elect overseers.

The overseers are to return, on oath, the names of such as are qualified to be balloted for as committee-men. The mode of balloting is described, and subjected to certain regulations. The committee-men, when elected, are to take an oath to execute the trust reposed in them impartially.

When the major part of the districts have adopted the provisions of the act, it shall be declared established throughout the whole county or riding.

The district-committee-men are empowered to appoint a district-agent: they are to forfeit for non-attendance; and each district is to be a corporation.

All the clergy are qualified to be chosen committee-men for the district in which they do duty, for the time being, although not possessed of the qualification by estate.

New committee-men to be elected every year.

Parishes are to choose three overseers, in the manner prescribed by the bill, from whom the committee are to fix on one, who is to be allowed a salary; and, from the time of the appointment of such new overseers, the duty of the old ones is to cease.

The duty of the new overseers is to inquire into the condition of the work-houses, and of the poor, within their respective parishes; and to make a report thereof to the district-agent, and also of all alterations that may happen in any particular; and to obey the orders and commands of the district-agent or the district-committee.

The district-agent is to lay such reports before the district-committee; and to inform himself of all particulars with respect to the condition of the poor, as to their maintenance, employment, &c. which he shall also report to the district-committee at every meeting.

The property of all work-houses shall be vested in the district-committee, with all the furniture, stock, and instruments of trade, which have been bought and supported by the poor's rates and assessments:—which work-houses, &c. they may sell and dispose of, and the money arising from the sale to be applied in aid of the poor's rates.

And the district-committee are empowered to erect houses of industry where they cannot purchase or hire convenient buildings for that purpose; and also to purchase or hire land, and to contract for waste or common grounds, with the consent of the lord of the manor.

The district-committee to become additional trustees of any sums of money, left in trust, to be laid out in the purchase of lands for any infants, lunatics, idiots, &c. in case the same shall exceed the sum of 20*l.* until such sums of money are laid out in the purchase of lands; and the money, in the mean time, shall be laid out in the public funds, in the names of two or more persons,

sons, one to be named by the persons interested, and the other by the district-committee, or any ten of them; and the interest, in the mean time, to be applied to the use of the persons interested.

As soon as the house of industry shall be fitted up, and furnished, for the reception of the poor, in the manner directed by the act, no poor person is to receive any pay, pension, or relief, except in cases of violent sickness or sudden accidents.

Where, by the laws now in force, magistrates are empowered to proceed, on the complaint of the overseers of the poor, with respect to any bastard-child, they are then to proceed on the complaint of the district-committee.

The district-committee is empowered to apply what sums of money they may occasionally think proper towards paying the weekly contributions of such of the poor as are engaged in clubs and friendly societies, for establishing funds, by weekly contributions, to their relief and support when disabled by sickness or accidents, and also for the purpose of paying teachers, and providing books, for the instruction of children at Sunday-schools. The district-committee is also required to provide a school for the education of poor children.*

Every district-agent shall, with the assistance of the clerk of the district, keep, in a book, an exact account of all expenses attending building, furnishing, and providing stores and utensils for the house of industry, and of the maintenance of the people residing therein, and of all other expenses respecting the poor, and shall lay a state of such expenses every month before the committee; and shall, in order to fix a proper measure of distribution from the parishes within the district, procure an account of the medium-expenses of the poor of every parish, within the years 1783, 1784, and 1785, for which returns have been made to parliament, and lay the same before the committee, who are to inspect and examine such returns, and make them as perfect as possible: and, to that

purpose, they shall be empowered to summon before them such persons as have been parish-officers for those years, and all other persons who can give them information on the subject, who are to attend, and answer all questions relative to the subject, on oath, under pain of commitment for non-attendance, and of indictment for perjury if they speak falsely.

After the provisions of the act are adopted within any district, the sums to be annually raised for the relief and maintenance of the poor shall not, in any parish, exceed the annual sum so raised therein upon the medium of the said three years. The district-agent shall also, at the end of every quarter of a year, a week at least before the meeting of the next monthly committee, make an accurate account of the expenditure within the said quarter, and lay it before the said committee, that they may be enabled to make an order for the levying the poor's rates; and the district-agent shall also settle the quota of each parish, and lay the same before the committee for their allowance, which shall be notified to the overseers of the parish, who are to assess and collect the same, and pay it to the district-agent.

And, to raise money for buildings, &c. the committee may borrow a sum not exceeding four years poor-rates, and assign over the buildings, &c. and all or any part of the poor-rates, as security for the principal borrowed and interest.

No fees or perquisites shall be received for any business done, by virtue of this act, by any agent, overseer, clerk, or others. The appeal to the poor's rates to be to the quarter-sessions.

If any district-agent, or overseer, on requisition from the district-committee to come to account, shall refuse so to do, he shall be committed to the common gaol for a space not exceeding six calendar-months, or until he complies. All penalties inflicted by the act shall be recoverable before any justice of the peace.

These are the heads of all the material clauses in Mr. Gilbert's bill; there are some others which relate to the interior regulation
of

of the houses of industry, and also two schedules of the rules, orders, by-laws, and regulations, which are referred to by the act; but the whole plan itself, a plan of that magnitude, as to involve in it consequences, immediately affecting the liberty and comforts of not less than six millions of our fellow-subjects, and a considerable part of the property of the remainder of our countrymen, was overturned, on a motion for the second reading of the bill, by a division of the House of Commons, of thirty-four members who were against the bill, to ten who were for it; only forty-four members being present.

Mr. Acland's plan, for rendering the poor independent on public contribution, stands next in order of time, having made its appearance in 1786.

The mode, after Mr. Gilbert's bill failed, he offers to secure that independence to the poor, which, he professes to hold out to them, is the establishment, throughout that part of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws, of a general society, on the principle of the box-clubs; by which the members become entitled to a certain weekly salary, during sickness or incapacity to work, through accident or old age, on the payment of a certain sum of money weekly.

Another part of the plan he offers, is to secure to the poor their natural right of earning their bread where they are best able to do it, by abrogating the laws respecting settlements.

The only observation I shall at present venture on this subject is, that box-clubs have been in many places voluntarily instituted by the poor themselves; and experience has proved such institutions beneficial; and that what has in many places been done voluntarily might, without injustice, become obligatory to all; more especially if such obligation was counter-balanced by their recovering the liberty they have by nature, and which ought not to be taken from them by the laws of society, of getting their bread where they best are able.

An anonymous pamphlet, introducing a sketch of a bill for the relief and employment of the poor, appeared the same year Mr. Gilbert's introductory plan was published.

The writer reduces the complaints to two heads ; first, the great misapplication of the parish-money ; secondly, the general neglect of the parish-officers in employing the poor. He also affirms, that an increase of the impotent poor, beyond a certain proportion, is an impossibility, except in case of a pestilential disease : therefore he is of opinion, that the increase of the poor, which is so much talked of, is mere sound, and signifies nothing. He also says, that the only proper objects of charity among the poor are those who would work, but are not able.

The act he proposes is revisionary of the forty-third statute of Elizabeth ; the spirit of which is to be the main object of the act proposed ; and only such of the regulations in the other statutes are to be adopted as have a manifest tendency to the same principles ; but the act he proposes is, at the same time, undoubtedly *visionary*, for it is to *execute itself* ; that is, it must leave nothing to the discretion of those who are empowered to execute it.

Thoughts on the Cause of the Increase of the Poor, 1787. This pamphlet asserts, that the increasing burthen of the poor's rate arises from the absorption of smaller farms in greater, and by depriving the poor labourer of a portion of land round his cottage. Whether such an effect could arise from such causes, if they *universally* took place, shall not now be agitated, because it is apprehended the facts are by no means *general* ; but the increment of the poor's rate is *universal* ; and as considerable in those parishes where the smaller farms have *not* been absorbed by the greater, and where the cottager has *not* been deprived of his garden, as where these circumstances have taken place.

Mr. Godschall, in his general plan of parochial and provincial police, complains, and with much reason, of the negligent execution of the poor-laws, and with great truth and propriety inveighs
against

against the swarm of ale-houses that infest all our towns, and deprave and impoverish the labouring poor. This pamphlet was published in 1787.

The Rev. Joseph Townsend, of Pewsey, in Wiltshire, tells us that the poor-laws, so beautiful in theory, promote the evils they mean to remedy, and aggravate the distresses they were meant to relieve.

“ They are not only unjust, oppressive, and impolitic, but proceed on principles which border on absurdity; because they say, that in England no man, even by his indolence, improvidence, prodigality, and vice, shall suffer want.”

He says also, that the distress of the poor does not arise from the high price of corn, soap, leather, candles, salt, &c, as will appear from the high price of labour, which has advanced in the proportion of six to four within a century; and, for this assertion, refers to Sir William Petty.

That, under the present system, the master must either connive at the neglects of his servants, or maintain them without work; that the laws discourage improvements in agriculture; waste-lands would otherwise be tilled, as they are exempted from the claims of the church seven years, but not from the demands of the poor; that a fixed and certain provision for the poor weakens the spring of industry.

The law of settlements has restrained the poor to their own parishes, where they are regarded with an evil eye, and has prevented them going elsewhere, where they would be received with joy; parish-workhouses disarm the magistrate, and intimidate the poor; badging the poor is also strongly reprobated; county-workhouses are liable to still stronger objections; and farming the poor is the top of the climax of oppression and absurdity.

Such is Mr. Townsend's *Philippic on the present system of the poor-laws*, contained in a publication which made its appearance in 1787, in which are many very sensible observations on the subject;

ject; although it is conceived, that very few of those, who are in the practice of experiencing the execution of the system, will join in such an unqualified invective.

The reform proposed is, to abolish the whole system of compulsive charity; to promote voluntary contributions, as in the early days of Christianity; to encourage industry, economy, and subordination; and to regulate population, by the demand for labour; to establish work-shops in every parish, to train children to useful labour; to cause friendly societies to be established and regulated by the legislature; and, as long as it shall be expedient, to retain a given proportion of the poor's rates, the disposal of which should be wholly at the discretion of the minister, church-wardens, and overseers, subject only to the orders of a vestry; to lay a tax on horses, to drive farmers to use oxen, which will increase the quantity of food for the poor; to inclose commons, and relieve the poor by voluntary contributions.

The Rev. T. Haweis, rector of Aldwinkle, All-Saints, in 1788, offered a plan to the public, under the title of "Hints respecting the Poor, submitted to the Consideration of the Humane and Intelligent." He recommends box-clubs, to which the poor shall all be *obliged* to contribute, not less than one thirty-sixth, nor more than one twenty-fourth, of their earnings; all menial servants and young unmarried people, to pay one eighteenth of their wages and earnings; and every occupier of lands and tenements, to pay one twentieth of his rent; the minister, church-wardens, and overseers, to be a body-corporate for the management of the fund, and to have associated with them a person chosen by the poor, who contribute to the fund; the payments to be made by weekly contributions, and masters to be responsible for the quota of their servants and labourers; and each parish to be distinct from any other, and no association of counties, hundreds, or districts. From this fund the poor are to be relieved, with a sum not above four shillings a week, at the discretion of the body-corporate, without interference of a magistrate;

magistrate; but, in particular cases, where the established rate of relief is not sufficient, the minister, during divine-service, is to mention the particular case to the congregation, and the church-wardens to collect for that particular case a free benevolence.

Begging to be restrained by a penalty on the *giver* to those who beg, and settlements to be abolished; but whoever migrates must give to the parish-officers an account of what parish he removed from, and where he paid his last contribution; and, if the officers of the parish do not choose to admit him as a parishioner, they must give to the officers of the parish, where he last contributed to the parish-fund, a memorandum or note, promising to pay them the portion of his earnings; and, in such case, he shall continue a parishioner of the parish whence he migrated.

All bastard-children to be deemed parishioners where their mothers are settled; but the fathers liable, as at present, to maintain them.

Such are the general heads of this plan, the minute organizations of which are not necessary to be noticed in the cursory view which is meant to be taken of these publications; the author also compares the sum of the proportion of contributions, proposed to be raised by his plan, with the amount now levied by the poor's rate in his parish, to shew the advantage and facility of the scheme proposed; and adds some well-founded remarks and sensible reasons in support of his proposals.

L E T T E R XXV.

SOON after the second reading of Mr. Gilbert's bill was put off, *fine die*, in the House of Commons, William Young, Esq. now Sir William Young, Bart. member of parliament for St. Mawe's, brought

brought in a bill, which he had previously introduced to the notice of the public. by a pamphlet, entitled "Observations Preliminary to a proposed Amendment of the Poor-Laws;" which publication was corrected and enlarged in a second edition, whence a short summary of the principal heads of the act he proposed shall be taken.

The preamble states, that many poor persons become chargeable for want of employment where they are settled; who, if permitted to inhabit elsewhere, would not be chargeable.

Therefore be it enacted, that no person be removed to his place of settlement, until he be actually chargeable.

Provided that such person attends the summons of two magistrates, and makes oath of his last legal settlement; otherwise he shall be removed to his settlement, it being ascertained by other means; and attested copies of such examination shall be given to the parish-officers of the parish into which such pauper is come to reside, and to the pauper himself, which shall be admitted as evidence of his last legal settlement in all courts, &c.

* Residence ten years in any parish, without being chargeable either to the parish in which they reside or to that where their legal settlement was, shall obtain a settlement in such parish for a pauper and his children.

No person, from the date of the act, to gain a settlement by paying taxes, by service, nor by apprenticeship, unless with consent of the parish-officers, signified in writing; but this act to have no retrospective view.

Bastards are to be settled with their mother.

Overseers removing a pauper are to be reimbursed by the parish to which he belongs: reasonable charges of maintenance and removal to be settled by one magistrate.

All contracts for maintaining the poor, allowed by the 9th of George II. to be void, and so much of that act to be repealed; but contracts for the maintenance of poor children above the age of

of seven to the age of seventeen, with the consent of the vestry and the parents of the children, shall be valid.

No publican shall be a parish-officer.

The overseers, &c. shall give a true account to two justices every six months, at stated times, of all ware, implements, tools, &c. for setting the poor to work; and also of all materials and stuff manufactured; and such justices are empowered to order the overseers to purchase other ware, implements, and tools, out of the money collected by the poor's rates; which order they must obey under a penalty not exceeding ten pounds.

The overseers are to register in a book, the names, sex, age, if married or not, — and children, their names, sex, and age, — of all poor persons receiving relief; and shall produce this book twice a year, at stated times, to two justices, at their petty-sessions, under the same penalty.

Two justices, at such special sessions, are to be empowered to order the overseers to bind out any poor children they think proper; but no person, unless living in the place of his legal settlement, is compelled to take such apprentice.

A vestry shall be empowered to fix a rate of wages, from the 30th of November to the 28th of February, which a majority of them shall agree on, to be paid to such poor people as cannot find work, and to send them round in rotation to the parishioners, proportionally as they pay to the rates; to be employed and paid, in the proportion of two-thirds by the person employing, and one-third by the parish-officers, out of the rates; which proportion, if any parishioner refuse to pay, a justice of the peace shall levy treble the amount.

A superintending-overseer, with a salary, may be appointed for a parish, hundred, or division, by two justices, at their petty-sessions; the salary to be paid by the overseers of the respective parishes out of the money collected by the rates; the duty of such overseers is described at large in the bill, and power is also given to the ma-

gistrates to remove him for misbehaviour, and he shall also be liable to a penalty not exceeding ten pounds for every offence; and no person is to obstruct him in his office under a similar penalty.

The penalties levied, by virtue of this bill, to be paid one half to the informant, and one half to the overseers of the parish where the offence shall be committed.

An appeal to the sessions given to persons aggrieved.

Sir William Young's preliminary observations to this bill contain much instructive matter, and prove, that the mover of the bill well understood the subject he brought forward to the consideration of the House; the attention his pamphlet, at the time of its publication, attracted, was such a test of its merits, as to occasion a wish that the limits of this tract would permit a recital of the greatest part of its contents; but, as the sincerity of unqualified praise is always suspicious, it will therefore better become the writer of these pages to mention an instance or two in which it is presumed Sir William Young has drawn a conclusion that the premises stated by him will not warrant.

He says, in page 23, that an avidity to increase income has introduced the inclosure of commons and wastes, which has tended to increase the poor's rates; and instances six parishes in Buckinghamshire, which were not inclosed in 1776, when the aggregate of the poor's rates in those parishes was 756*l.* 16*s.* 1*d.* but were inclosed in 1786, when the aggregate amounted to 1485*l.* 3*s.*; therefore he concludes, that inclosing wastes increases the poor-rates.

By the abstract of the returns made by the overseers, presented by order of the committee, the expenses of a great number of parishes have increased in a similar ratio between the two periods of 1776 and 1785, where ~~there~~ has been no inclosure of waste, equally as in these ~~six parishes~~ where inclosures have been made; therefore one fact opposes and destroys the other, consequently no such conclusion can be drawn.

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The consolidation of farms, which this enlightened senator states to have arisen from the necessity that part of the landed interest, who spend their time in our luxurious metropolis, feel to increase their incomes, is alleged as another cause of our increased expenses with respect to the poor; but the instance brought to elucidate the assertion is not in point; nor is it the practice, when one farm is increased to five hundred pounds a year by the consolidation of ten small ones of fifty, to pull down nine farm-houses; but, on the contrary, to put labourers into them; and the stock of the ten farms, which, when in the hands of ten little farmers, probably did not amount to two thousand pounds, increases in the hands of a capital farmer, of five hundred a year, to at least double the amount; and, where there is the greatest stock, there will be, *cæteris paribus*, the greatest employment: but this argument has been so ably handled by other pens, as to require no assistance I can give it; thus much, however, is certain, that where a consolidation of small farms proceeds to that excess, as to preclude the labourer's expectation of raising himself in the world, — honest ambition, the best spur to industry, is nipped in the bud.

The public had already received, from the pen of the Rev. Mr. Howlett, vicar of Great Dunmow, Essex, several tracts on the regulation of the internal police of the kingdom; more particularly on the subject which has just been mentioned, as glanced at by Sir William Young, viz. the effects arising from inclosures; which this very accurate investigator, and minute inquirer into facts, states to have been, improved agriculture, plenty and cheapness of provision, population, private and national wealth. In 1788, he turned his attention to the causes of the increase of the poor, and produced a pamphlet, entitled, "The Insufficiency of the Causes to which the Increase of the Poor, and of the Poor's Rates, have been commonly ascribed: the true one stated, with an Inquiry into the Mortality of Country-Houses of Industry, and a slight View of Mr. Acland's Plan, for rendering the Poor independent."

Four principal causes, Mr. Howlett says, have been assigned for the increase of the poor, and of the expenses for maintaining them: 1st, Our injudicious system of poor's laws, and their defective execution; 2d, the great number of ale-houses; 3d, the growing wickedness and profligacy of the poor; 4th, the ingrossing of farms. — The first cause has been assigned by Mr. Townsend and Mr. Gilbert, whose arguments and conclusions Mr. Howlett attacks, and then draws an inference; that, "upon the whole, though our poor-laws may be imperfect, and their execution defective; we have yet been presented with no satisfactory proof that any of these deficiencies are so great as to have caused that rapid increase of our poor and of our poor-rates, which have taken place;" and he is of opinion, before we ascribe these evils to the spirit of our laws, or their execution, we should inquire how the matter stands in other kingdoms of Europe, where no such laws exist; — he gives an instance of a parish in Edinburgh; another in Glasgow; where the expenses for the maintenance of the poor have increased very considerably; and concludes this head of his inquiry with extracts from some letters of Monf. Pataud, vicar of the parish of Paterne, in the city of Orleans, which state the population of that city at fifty thousand persons, of whom one-third receive charitable assistance; and that there is collected, by various means, and expended for their maintenance, about fifteen thousand pounds a year, and many, nevertheless, perish for want. From information contained in these letters, Mr. Howlett also concludes that five millions sterling are raised for the poor throughout the kingdom of France; and then asks if England cannot raise two millions better than France can five?

In the second section, he expresses his doubts of Mr. Godschall's opinion of the fact, that ale-houses are much increased in number throughout the kingdom; and conceives, on the contrary, that the number is considerably decreased; at least they are so in the hundred of Hockford, in the county of Essex; therefore he concludes,

as far as ale-houses are concerned, if the reasoning alluded to be just, our poor's rates ought to have been gradually diminished.

In the third section, the wickedness and profligacy of the poor are considered: the increment of which the author does not, upon the whole, consider as equal to the increment of their expenses or actual distress; although he acknowledges that there are some considerations which incline him to think, that there is really a greater degree of moral depravity and a greater frequency of vice among our poor than there were formerly; but this increase he, with great humanity, argues to have been the *consequence* of their poverty, not the *cause* of it. In the pursuit of this investigation he takes notice of, and treats with no great respect, the opinions of Mr. Firmin, Mr. Locke, Lord-Chief-Justice Hale, Sir Josiah Child, Mr. Defoe, Mr. Godschall, and others, who, respectively, at different times, from 1678 to the present period, have declared themselves of opinion, that the relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners have occasioned a general aversion to honest employment.

The question, whether the absorption of smaller farms in larger has tended to increase the number of poor and their expenses? occupies the fourth section. Mr. Howlett enters fully into the subject; and proves, by fair deduction of argument, that, allowing the number of labouring-families to be increased, by the small farmers being reduced to labourers, to the amount of even forty or fifty thousand, yet, as the call for labour in husbandry has, by the same means, been increased, and the number of poor added to the total being not a hundredth part, it will, at the most, allow for an increment of expense amounting to ten thousand pounds a year. To prove this, these facts are stated:— 1st, that the number of labourers, forty years ago, was five millions; 2d, that the poor cost the kingdom, at that time, a million sterling; and that the practice of engrossing farms may have converted farmers' families into labourers to the amount of forty

or fifty thousand. Mr. Howlett gives every commendation to the ingenious manner in which the Editor of the Annals of Agriculture has treated this subject, in vol. vii. p. 516. — Having, in the first part, offered his objection to the causes assigned by many eminent men, who have given their opinion on this subject, as being inadequate to the effect attributed to them; he proceeds, in the second section, to state what appears to him *alone* sufficient to have raised the expenses of the poor much higher than they have risen, to place them in a situation equally comfortable with what they possessed forty or fifty years ago, “*This is none other than, that the price of labour has not advanced in proportion to the advance in the price of provisions.*”

To detail the train of arguments followed by our well-informed and ingenious investigator, would extend this part of the present inquiry to too great a length; and, to mutilate arguments, where one doubts of their solidity, would not be candid: let it suffice, therefore, to drop the subject at present, stating only the result of the author's opinion, in his own words: — “Upon the whole, there is a long and uniform chain of evidence to establish *our main point*, that the increasing miseries and expenses of the poor have been owing to the greater advance in the price of provisions, either gradual, or sudden and temporary, than in the price of labour.”

In the next section, Mr. Howlett conceives it necessary to obviate a very natural conclusion from the doctrine he has attempted to establish, *viz.* that, if the price of labour has not increased in an equal proportion with the price of provisions, it is an evidence of the declining prosperity of the kingdom, and a certain indication of ruin: this he by *no means* admits to be the case, and accounts for the exception to the rule by collateral circumstances, as the increase of people and the simplification of labour by the use of machines, and concludes with this observation: — either raise
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the wages of the poor, or give them provisions as they had them forty years ago.

The remaining part of this publication, which relates principally to an examination of the plans that have been offered, particularly Mr. Gilbert's, and the invalidation of those reasons which that gentleman has advanced for conceiving a good opinion of houses of industry, as to the object of a diminution of the expense, by pointing out the precariousness of such a diminution continuing, and by meeting the good effect which they have occasioned in lessening expense, with instances of increased mortality, especially among children, cannot be now dwelt on; as it is the purport of this tract to weigh the general sentiments of the kingdom, on the leading points of the police respecting the poor, in a balance compounded of the sense of the legislature, as collected at different periods, and the opinions of individuals, who have given us their sentiments in print, on this important topic, rather than to cavil at any of those opinions that militate with the writer's ideas; which, until the subject is fully investigated, have not the sanction of solid judgement, nor the light of clear information.

That many more tracts than those which have passed, as it were, in review on this subject may have been written, and that more rays of light might have been collected on a topic which is so much the concern of every man, and appears to be the immediate care of no man, cannot be denied. Many pamphlets have survived by name only, but not a single copy of them can be found: possibly, had they contained any matter worthy of notice, they would, by some means or other, have been preserved to us, either in the volumes of the reviewers, or by subsequent editions: but it appears absurd to regret the want of that information which the age, contemporary with the writer, did not think worth handing to posterity; and the only apology to be made is for that inattention, if such be the fault, which has ne-

glected to take notice of what would afford solid information; which, it is hoped, will not be found to be very considerable, more especially when the plan of these letters is considered, which is calculated to bring to the mind what the legislature has done, and sensible men have written, on the subject, from the time that the police of the poor first claimed the attention of the community.

Some stress has been laid on the increasing population of the kingdom as a cause of the increasing expense in maintaining those who class under the title of labouring poor: the progression of that increase in our number shall now be shortly stated, as it will be at least satisfactory to know the degree: we may afterwards reason on the effect.

Lord-Chief-Justice Hale and Mr. Gregory King agree in asserting, that the population of England, on the arrival of the Normans, in the year 1077, might be about 2,000,000.

From a computation which appears accurate, or as nearly so as the nature of the case requires, or can be expected to be, the population of England and Wales was, in the year 1327, about 2,092,978.

In 1583, the number of people amounted to about 4,688,000.

In 1662, Mr. Graunt calculated the population at 6,440,000.

In 1690, Mr. Gregory King calculated them at 5,500,000; but he estimated four and a half to a house, whereas it is supposed that the number of inhabitants were, to the number of houses, as about five two-fifths to one, which would increase the number to about seven millions. — Mr. Chalmers's estimate.

Mr. Howlett calculated them, a few years ago, at 8,691,597: — the Editor of the *Annals of Agriculture*, 8,500,000: — Dr. Price, about the same time, at only 5,000,000: but the concurrent opinions of political arithmeticians agree, that the higher numbers are nearest the truth; and that Mr. Howlett's proportion of five and two-fifths to a house is as exact a ratio of inhabitants to dwellings

lings as can easily be pointed out. In the parish of Clare it was, in 1786, very near the truth, the dwellings being 201, — the inhabitants 1077.

The following deviation from the proposed line of this inquiry shall close this paper :

Mr. Howlett having appeared, in the last number of the *Annals*, to doubt the validity of an observation, which has fallen from me, with respect to the call for labour being of a more constant nature, and less desultory, in agriculture than in manufactures; the observation shall be repeated in the expression made use of on the occasion: and, to prevent the effect which might arise in the minds of those who pay any attention to the subject, from the respect due to the opinion of the gentleman who doubts the propriety of the idea alluded to, the assertion shall be re-examined by the test proposed by himself. — The passage alluded to is as follows:

“ Some have imagined that the great increase of our expenses, relating to the poor, has arisen from temporary want of work: it may be recollected, that this cannot happen where the employment is agriculture, because this occupation always requires nearly the same number of hands all years, and is independent of any desultory call for work, which may, as all manufactures do, the demand of which is uncertain, give full employment to the poor some years, and leave them to subsist on the poor's rates when the demand for the manufacture ceases.”

Mr. Howlett says, and it must be allowed as a fact, that, near the commencement of a lease, a greater quantity of work is done in a farm than towards the conclusion: but this corroborates the assertion alluded to, which respects the kingdom at large; for innumerable leases are constantly commencing and expiring: the whole quantity of work done in agriculture, one year with another, must therefore be nearly the same; and, though individual parishes may find some difference, the aggregate of work throughout the kingdom

dom must be at all times equal; and this is not only *possible* or *probable*, but *inevitable*; but the universality of the cause, both in respect to time and place, producing an effect directly opposite to that which would arise from a cause affecting time and place partially only. If, throughout England, all leases were to commence at the same time, and expire at the same time, the effect Mr. Howlett contends for would happen, and the difference in the demand for labour might at times be great; but the fact is different, so is the effect.

Mr. Howlett says, seasons occasion a difference in the demand for labour.— So they do. But the *quantum* of earnings remains the same at the end of a year: for instance, in a wet summer, during the actual falling of the rain, the application of industry to the works of the field is suspended; but the call for labour is proportionably greater when the earth is fitted to receive again the labour of the husbandman; and probably the demand increases in a greater *ratio* than the time lost: we know how difficult it is to keep land clean in a wet season; we know that a greater burthen of straw is grown, which occasions a greater demand of labour to harvest, and also to thresh; a greater demand for work brings a greater price; hence the advance of price in the harvest and the barn repays the loss of time, and the quantity of labour done throughout the year remains the same.

The idea of "the earth being fast bound in chains of frost for three or four months in the year, which defy the mattock, the spade, and the plough," cannot be allowed, in all its latitude of assertion, to take place in England: few farmers discharge their labourers for a frost; and in that time of the year, when we have reason to expect such ~~chains of~~ frost, the plough suffers no imprisonment, for it would not otherwise be at work; the mattock and the team can still find ~~work~~, a snow only can prevent them being employed, and that but for a few days; the spring of industry will, when affected by such a mere temporary cessation, immediately afterwards

afterwards re-act with greater force, being excited by a brisker demand.

Difference of produce, except in the case of hops, which are too confined and local a culture to reason from generally, can very little affect the quantity of labour throughout the year; a wet season generally produces worse crops throughout the kingdom at large than a dry one, although not in quite so great a disproportion as Mr. Howlett asserts; but a wet season produces a greater demand for labour to keep the land clean, and also in hay-time, in harvest, in threshing, although the produce of corn is less; therefore, speaking generally throughout the kingdom, the less productive the crop, the more the labour.

In short, Sir, had not the cavil fallen from so able a critic and so respectable a man, I should not have thought my observation required a defence; it is to vindicate the general rectitude of the sentiments which have escaped from me on this subject in his and your readers' minds, that I have revised what I had advanced, and remain of opinion, that reason is on the side of my observation, and believe that experience will not contradict it.

L E T T E R XXVI.

FROM the information contained in the preceding pages of these letters, and from the evidence which they have opened to our knowledge of what has been done by our legislators, and written by the enlightened part of our countrymen on this subject; although that information cannot claim the merit of minute detail, nor the evidence that specification of particulars which would have disgusted the many, although it might have been approved of by a few; it is conceived several useful inferences may be deduced, that
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may serve as a ground for maxims, which, if called into action, by the energetic power of the legislature, may probably produce an improvement in the moral habits of the poor, lead them on to the enjoyment of a greater share of the comforts of life, and diminish, at the same time, the expenses of their maintenance.

That those, who are in such a state, with respect to the riches of this world, as to have no other property than that which their labour can produce them, claim as a right, in all civilized nations, however the laws which respect property may be modified, protection from personal injury, is a position which cannot be doubted; no social compact can otherwise be supposed to exist between man and man.

This claim leads on to another, flowing from it as a natural and inevitable consequence; a claim to maintenance; when, by the loss of health, accidental debility, or age, their power to maintain themselves ceases; because, in this case, they would otherwise sustain a personal injury, from the modification of property by the laws of society; and in a similar proportion is their claim, as through any of these causes that power is diminished.

These are principles implanted on our minds; they are anterior to and vastly above all human laws; they form an impulsive duty as strong in its operations, and as lovely in its effects, as the *στοργή* in the animal creation: it is upon this basis, as upon an immoveable rock, that Christ builds his strongest moral exhortations, and calls this duty *charity*; tells us that it will cover a multitude of defects, that it binds us by a stronger obligation than any other moral or religious duty.

In all climes, through all ages, wherever civilization has spread a single ray of light, has this principle been inculcated; and that not as an optional service, to be done or neglected, at the will of the free agent, but as a bounden duty; one, the omission of which, is an affirmative offence; and thus preached the Apostles, thus the fathers of the church, and thus their successors.

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The fruit of their doctrines has been great, it has been worthy of the cause; it was the cause of human nature, of religion confined to no sect, sworn to no master; it was alike the cause of the Christian, the Jew, the followers of Mahomet, and Confucius; it was the cause of universal humanity.

But we will confine our view to the effect of the doctrine of charity in this island: and here reference must be had to our public archives, as well those which are still in the possession of the chapters in the different dioceses throughout the kingdom, those which are in the custody of the public in their several repositories, as those also in the possession of private individuals; recourse must also be had to printed books, to writers in past ages, whose labours have collected the gleanings of antiquity, and, by the means of the press, have preserved them for the perusal of ages then unborn; a kind of testimony, to which our laws, and the practice of our courts of law, give sanction; it being not unfrequently the best evidence the nature of the thing is capable of.

Do not all these, taken separately and together, inform us, that all the tithes in the kingdom, every acre of church-land, every thing moving from the produce of the land, assisted and cultivated by the labour of man, which is claimed by the church as tithe, whether prædial, mixed, or personal, takes its origin from this source; were they not all separately, and in the aggregate, the fruit of these doctrines; obtained from our rude and unlettered forefathers as acts of religious duty and moral obligation? If they were not, whence flowed they? From what law of society? From what human precept? A divine right cannot be claimed for them in any Christian country; our constitutional lawyers have uniformly asserted, that a divine right to tithes, certainly ceased with the Jewish theocracy, and they have not proved that it in fact ever existed.

These, therefore, must be taken as facts; that the law of God and of Christ have established the duty of charity in the breast of man; and, that the labourers in the Christian vineyard, have in
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this country cultivated this principle to a productive purpose; and that, in elder times, a distribution was made to the poor, of part of that estate thus obtained and invested in the ecclesiastics, by the donations of those who had landed possessions, in discharge of their religious and moral duties;—but those days have long since passed away;—and, in proportion as the refreshing streams were diverted from their proper current, the principle of charity, ever fruitful in means to accomplish its godlike purposes, has struck, like Moses, from the rock, other fruitful streams to refresh those who stand in need of refreshment; and, on the basis of fluctuating compassion, has founded a firm municipal right.

In remoter times, when the feudal tenures subsisted in this kingdom, which made no other consideration of man, than as an agent of defence or destruction; when the maxim, *detur fortiori* was paramount, every claim which the rights of nature or the constitution of the country held sacred; the voice of the laws or the claims of equity could be heard but seldom, amidst the din of arms; which the contentions among the descendants of William, the Norman, for the sovereignty of that kingdom, that he had wrested from its old possessors, occasioned; no wonder if, in such times, the more silent claims of the poor, for that dole which they had been accustomed to receive the distribution of, from the incumbent clergy, were of no avail; and that, when the immediate descendant of the alliance between the houses of York and Lancaster broke all bounds with the court of Rome, spurned the source whence he had personally received the title of *fidei defensor*, and divided the spoils of the monasteries among his unprincipled courtiers; no wonder that these claims should have remained dormant; and, having remained through so long a period in a state of rest, it should be held in these times useless, it not imprudent, to revive them.

Hence, therefore, may be dated the origin of the compulsory maintenance; hence, as from a channel whose sources have in past

ages been diverted from their natural and proper current, may be deduced that sterile appearance, which would have closed in scenes of blood or famine, and all its horrid accompaniments; if the legislature, in the age of Elizabeth, awakened from a long apathy to the sufferings of poverty, by those scenes of woe which the Queen's progresses through her kingdom offered to her view, and which occasioned that feeling exclamation, *Pauper ubique jacet!* had not opened, by the compulsion of legal authority, new sources to feed the wretched.

But the distribution of charity was not the total of the loss sustained by the poor; they were, during the earlier ages of this kingdom, used to receive advice, and the direction of their moral conduct, from the exhortations of the clergy; and that not from their pulpits only, but they were the private friends, the patrons, the counsellors, the confessors, of the poor; they held an amazing sway over their minds; a sway, I fear, ill exchanged, both here and in a neighbouring country, for that unhallowed indifference for every thing sacred which now prevails: but here, as there, while the clergy guarded the moral conduct, watched over the industry, the health, the economy, of the parish-poor, they protected their own estates from incumbrance; and, in proportion as their parishioners possessed the moral and economic virtues, in that proportion were the ecclesiastic estates productive to the respective incumbents; because the wants of the poor were less; and a probability of increasing the voluntary contributions of the more opulent parishioners was greater, as the respect the parish held the clergy in increased.

It was with a view to this influence, and to preserve the decaying authority and practice of the clergy in this respect, that those admonitions to charity from the pulpit were enjoined by the ecclesiastic courts, which Dr. Burn mentions; and which prove, that those courts, however *now* they may have fallen into disrepute, felt *then* strongly the obligation upon their suitors, to provide a fund for the poor, not merely to relieve the temporary necessities of

hunger, thirst, or nakedness, but to pour the balm of comfort into their minds, to instruct them in their duties to God and their neighbour, to fix in their hearts a confidence, that although they be poor, and negatived in every comfort of life, yet they may, by a pious and virtuous conduct, diminish the sum of their afflictions here, and lay up a certain treasure of happiness for the life which is to come.

L E T T E R XXVII.

ASSUMING therefore, at present, the foregoing state of the matter as fact, would it not tend in every respect to the advantage of the poor, and, consequently, of the kingdom, (for, alas, the necessitous are the million!) if the resident clergy, be they rectors, vicars, or curates, should have an active and directing control over the management of the poor in their respective parishes; that they may again, as they did formerly, by their precepts, their exhortations, and their examples, introduce such moral, economic, and industrious, habits among the poor, as may tend to make them more comfortable as men, and more respectable as citizens? at the same time, such a control would place the clergy in a much more respectable situation than they at present possess; and it would be a respect flowing from a proper cause; as it would engraft authority upon precept, united with example; and enable them to enforce, in practice, those moral duties, which many of them so eloquently inculcate from the pulpit.

Advertisements of associations, for the commutation of tithes, appear frequently in our public prints: whether a general commutation is practicable, or, if practicable, would be relished by the clergy throughout the kingdom, it is difficult to determine; but, if a commutation should take place, it certainly is worthy the consideration

sideration of the landed interest, whether they should choose to convey any portion of their estates in mortmain as a composition for tithes, free and discharged of *those services*, for which the *tithes themselves* were, by the possessors of those estates, *originally granted*; which services were, amongst other considerations, *that advice, that counsel*, that authoritative injunction, coupled with *example*, which would effect more, by means of good morals, to increase the comforts of the poor, diminish their expenses and the rate collected for their relief, than the whole of the ecclesiastic revenue, applied to the same purpose, under the present execution of the laws.* These sentiments, on the necessity of a national provision for the poor, flow from my pen, in direct opposition to the opinion, so warmly expressed on this topic by you, my friend, in your excellent publication on French agriculture, internal economy, and politics; and in opposition, also, to your idea, so frequently started in conversation, that the poor originally had no right to pecuniary assistance from the state; that they should be left to private charity. The reflection, *Mais cette exemple est un grand et important leçon pour nous; car, indépendamment des vices qu'elle nous présente, et d'une dépense monstrueuse, et d'un encouragement nécessaire à la fainéantise, elle nous découvre la plaie politique de l'Angleterre la plus dévorante, qu'il est également dangereux, pour sa tranquillité et son bonheur, de détruire ou de laisser subsister*, which the Committee of Mendicity, in the Constitutional Assembly of France, threw out with respect to the mischiefs of the English system, arose, from their mistaking the effect of the faulty execution of that system, for the code of laws itself; which remains in a great measure a dead letter. And it is

* I cannot conceal my opinion, that any general commutation for tithes, either in land, corn, or money, or any other valuable consideration, to be extended by force of law throughout the kingdom, would be prejudicial to the *laity*, should it meet, which is not very probable, the approbation of the possessors of tithes; and that the moral and religious duties of life would be less in practice, after such change had taken place, than they are now.

no improbable presumption, that, feeling, as they did, the sacred duty, to provide relief for the poor, they adopted the principle of the English system with their eyes open to the evils of it, because they knew of none better; although most certainly the same sacred duty which requires the expenditure of thirty millions of livres a year, would extend the expense to fifty millions, to one hundred, or to any indefinite sum, if necessity required it: and it was with *them* a sacred duty; for, having possessed themselves of the clerical estates, they could not, in justice to the body of their countrymen, take them to the use of the state, otherwise than as the clergy held them, subject, in some degree, to the maintenance of the poor.

In the mean time, it is the duty, as well as the interest, of those from whom this revenue is collected, there as well as here, to watch over the execution of the laws, and the expenditure of the revenue raised for the poor; which conduct will prevent such a necessity: but if, by negligence, extravagance, or peculation, the urgency of the case should require a larger sum to be raised; it will arise *there*, as it does *here*, from the pockets of those, by whose negligence, or misconduct, such urgency was occasioned.

As to leaving the poor to private contributions, it would, in our present state of civilization, refinement, and general apathy to religious matters, be a cruel and unjust dereliction. Were they to be supported by those alone who are the best members of the society, the compassionate, the religious, and those who live in retirement, would then witness such scenes of distress as would wring every penny from their pockets, or they must become immovable to every feeling of compassion; while the gay, the joyous, the unfeeling, — those who live in crowds, and in the bustle of the world, — would contribute not a farthing to those scenes of distress from which they are so far removed.

In answer to the supposition, that dire necessity will compel exertions of industry, it is much to be doubted whether extremity of distress