

distress generally rouses the human mind, or the faculties of the body, to great active exertions. From amidst those scenes which have required vast exertions to preserve human life, very few have been saved, in proportion to those who have perished. Disastrous voyages, shipwrecks, retreats of armies before a conquering enemy, all prove how few have magnanimity of soul to bear up against extremity of distress: and, of all those circumstances which drive the human mind to apathy or despair, poverty, and its lowering concomitants, cold, hunger, and thirst, are the most formidable; because, in proportion as these debilitate both the body and the mind, does the urgency of the case require the greater activity of exertion: it may, therefore, with great reason, be asserted, that an increase of distress will not occasion an increase of industry.

If the case of the poor in Scotland and Ireland be produced as a proof, that leaving them to private charity would have a better effect than the rates of England, the answer is obvious; that, in Scotland, they are not left to private charity, in their principal cities, but are admitted to a provision out of the funds of the general-session of those cities: and that they emigrate from the Highlands, and the country where agriculture and manufactures do not find them sufficient employment, to those countries where there is employment: and the emigration of the useful subjects of a country has never yet been produced as a proof of the excellence of its internal economy.

Ireland presents, in your accurate and particular account of its internal police, no very flattering prospect of the situation of the poor, either with respect to their modes of life, their moral habits, or their industry. In the first instance, they are, in general, what the English peasantry were five hundred years ago: the cottage, which affords neither window or chimney, where cows, calves, pigs, children, men, and women, all lie on straw together, on the same floor; their raggedness, which approaches to nakedness, and.

and the general difuse of shoes and stockings, give one no refined ideas either of their cleanliness or their comforts : and a country where pilfering is carried to that excess, that turnips are stolen by the poor in cart-loads, and acres of wheat carried away in a night, is not a country of well-regulated police or good moral principles : neither will the dance in the evening, or the last polish which they receive from the danting-master, who is essential to their system of education, compound for that excess of laziness, and that weakness in their exertions, when *encouraged* to work, which has occasioned you to doubt of the heartiness of their food, — potatoes, oatmeal, and milk ; although the athletic forms of the men, and the swarms of children in their miserable cottages, bespeak vigour and health. I must conclude, therefore, that, were the law to take the forty-third of Elizabeth, together with the consequence flowing from a strict execution of it, the poor, as well as the rich, would find their scale of comfort and prosperity rising from the change : and were we, in this kingdom, to call the parochial clergy to our assistance, in preserving an execution of the laws respecting the poor, more consistent with the original intention and obvious meaning of those laws ; which are calculated to encourage a spirit of industry, not of idleness ; of economy, not of profusion ; a spirit of honesty, not of theft ; of religion, not of atheism ; of subordination, not of riot ; and if the legislature of this country should ordain such to be their line of duty, which certainly is their line of conscientious and honourable interest ; the scale of prosperity and comfort among *our* poor would also rise, and that of the expense attending their maintenance and relief would gradually subside.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

THE laws and ordinances of all countries, towards the first periods of their civilization, partake of the rough and ferocious nature of the times and of the inhabitants ; who, being lately emerged from a wild and savage state, although they may be awake to some of the advantages arising from subordination, are not sufficiently refined to be bound by silken chains. But, as society advances, and the social blessings of civilization by degrees unfold themselves, those laws which regulate the multitude take a milder tone, and obedience to them is secured by inclination, as well as duty, until luxury and dissipation, sure prognostics of a falling state, occasion the legislator again to stain the pages of the penal code with blood.

Such has, in part, been the progressive temper of the statute-laws of this country. We find, in past ages, the lower classes of people restrained by a variety of ordinances, which breathe but little of the spirit of humanity ; while they strongly prove, that *here* no portion of those absurd ideas, which have involved France in a scene of horrid anarchy, at any time prevailed. The earliest regulations of written law, which affect the mass of the people, compelled “ those who rank in the class of labourers and artificers, who were able in body, and within the age of threescore years, not living in merchandize, exercising any craft, or having of their own whereon to live, to work, at regulated prices, on pain of imprisonment, and of being burnt with a hot iron.”

Vagabonds, or valiant beggars, as the old acts of parliament call them, were treated with greater rigour : they were to be instantly committed to gaol, to be fed with bread and water, to be set in the stocks, beaten with whips through the towns where they were taken, and

and then sent to the place where they last lived ; and this for the first offence.

For the second offence ; to be scourged two days, to be set in the pillory, and one ear to be cut off. * *

In short, the category of punishments inflicted, by authority of law, on this description of persons, is too irksome to be dwelt on : but it is such as plainly proves, that our ancestors had no idea of the Gallic principle of equality, of weighing number in the balance against property ; for, we perceive, the multitude is to be restrained by these laws respecting labour, and to be punished for a breach of them : — property is exempted.

With respect to those poor who, from age, sickness, or accident, had become impotent, and were compelled, by necessity, to ask alms, they were to subsist on such as they could obtain by begging within certain limits, which seem to have been the hundreds, or towns, where they were born, and, in succeeding times, where they had lived the last three years ; and, if these real objects of compassion wandered beyond those limits, or such as the justices of the peace, within the district, should allot to them, they were to be punished by imprisonment and the stocks, and their children, under the age of five years, might be taken from them, by any person, to be brought up to any honest labour.

Such were the restraints and disabilities under which the lower classes of our fellow-creatures lived in the days of our forefathers ; and such were the punishments to which they were subject for a breach of those laws ; which laws lean to oppression, not to humanity ; to servitude, rather than to freedom.

The lenient spirit of more polished times tacitly relieved them, by degrees, from a great portion of these restraints, by ceasing to inflict the punishment annexed to a breach of the law ; and, by so doing, the spirit of the times outstripped the attention of the legislature, to the happiness and ease of the people.

No

No law ought to remain unrepealed, which is not intended generally to be enforced; a partiality in this respect has not in view the welfare of the governed, and may descend to that *misera servitus ubi lex est aut vaga aut inconcinna*. The volumes of the Statutes at Large are, on that account, in some measure a grievance; because, in a code of positive institutions, many of them highly penal, which has swelled within this century to so enormous a bulk* those acts of parliament that, from their long disuse, as well as from the remote antiquity of their original formation, not being adapted to the spirit of the present times, may be called obsolete; and those also which are not commonly put in practice, but may, at the same time, be used as concealed arms by the malicious, to annoy their unwary and incautious fellow-subjects, as well as those which still remain the written law of the land, although not the practical municipal rule of the day, should not remain in our law-books; increasing the number of pages, which are, without them, too numerous.

Such are the reflections which have occurred to me, on the evidence before us, with respect to the state of the poor, as far as it relates to confining them to certain parishes, which we, in these days, call their places of settlement. But it is time to recollect, that, as the judgement should not suffer itself to be led captive by the imagination, so neither should the discursive researches of the antiquary lead the pen away from the more immediate purpose of this letter; which is intended to point out the present situation of the poor, both with respect to the law of settlements and certificates, as far as their situation may be affected, not only by the

* Pickering's edition of the Statutes at Large is comprised in thirty-eight volumes octavo; the last six volumes of which are remarkably thick, and in bulk near twice the quantity of paper in the first six volumes; and only the first nine volumes and about half the tenth include the acts of parliament to the end of the last century; the remaining twenty-eight volumes are filled with the acts of the present century, and fifteen of them with the acts of the present reign.

law of the land, but also by the practice of the magistrates; together with such alterations as may tend to increase the general stock of industry: permit me, therefore, after a quick retreat from this short digression upon the temper of former times, to re-enter on my subject, which regards those days in which we live, and also those which are to come, and may pass away before the view of our posterity.

Although the antiquity of restraints on the liberty of the poor to go from place to place, as they imagine they may best be able to find provision and employment, is of a date prior to the days of Elizabeth, yet the idea of a parish-settlement certainly arose from the parish-rate, enacted in the forty-third year of her reign; nor does it seem a remarkable circumstance, that some distinct rules should be drawn by the legislature how each parish might know its own poor, and be able to confine the expenditure of the rate to its parishioners only.

But this was not all: each parish being obliged to maintain its own poor, it was prudent to do it by their own officers, and under their own inspection: hence arose a restriction, that, however just it might be with respect to the interests of parishes one with another, is injustice with respect to the poor themselves, and a considerable obstacle to the encouragement of general labour and industry throughout the kingdom.

Confinement of the poor within their respective parishes, which is the principal object in the statutes 13th and 14th Charles II. cap. 12, is the restriction alluded to; because every person, whatever may be his ingenuity, industry, or abilities, falls under the scope of this law, if the parish-officers choose to complain to a magistrate that he is likely to become chargeable; unless such person occupies a tenement of ten pounds yearly value, or lives on property in house or land of his own.

Adam Smith attributes the very unequal price of labour in England, in places of no great distance from each other, to this cause;

cause; and he also says, that, to remove a man from the parish where he chooses to reside, is an abridgement of natural liberty.

Mr. Hay, in his plan, published in 1735, would have all notion of parochial settlement abolished, as being the root from which every evil relating to the poor sprung; every parish being in a state of expensive war with the rest of the nation, regarding the poor of all other places as aliens, and caring not what becomes of them; Mr. Acland, Mr. Townshend, Sir William Young, have also professed an unfavourable opinion of the law of settlements; and the last gentleman has offered to the House of Commons the heads of a bill, that would, in a great measure, have removed the objectionable restraints on so large a portion of our fellow-subjects, and would have simplified the law on this point; the expenses arising from which cost the occupiers of houses and land, throughout England and Wales, above fifty-five thousand pounds annually, in the years 1783, 1784, 1785; and it is much to be feared that these expenses are an increasing, not a decreasing, evil.

Neither the law nor the equity of this case seems to have been clearly understood by parliament, when the restrictive acts passed; they proceeded on this principle, that the object of expense between parishes was the only point of consequence to be considered; whereas, in fact, it ought not to have come into question at all: the 43d of Elizabeth, section the third, providing for any case where the inhabitants of a parish might *not be able* to maintain the poor, by calling in aid other parishes within the hundred; and the parish in which I am now writing is an instance in point, that this section has been frequently carried into execution; other parishes, within the hundred, having been called in aid to relieve the poor of Clare, the expression *not able* must be allowed to be of great latitude; the meaning annexed to the expression by the legislature cannot be easily defined; according to the common acceptance of the word, no such a case can well exist, every parish in the kingdom may be *able* to maintain its own poor; and, if *ability* is to be explained by *choice*,

few will be found *willing*: the word must therefore have some relation to moral convenience, and then it would depend on the quantum, or reasonable proportion, of his means of living, which moral obligations would induce a man to part with towards the maintenance of his poor neighbour; it must then be measured by the principle of charity. Possibly, was this undefined expression to be precisely explained by some rule of proportion to occupations in a parish, the contests between parishes would be at an end; and they would arise only between hundreds. Even this would greatly diminish the source of litigations; more especially if incorporations of hundreds, for the maintenance of the poor, should become general.

Therefore, as the law formerly stood, although not as it is now executed, the contest, if any, ought to lie between hundreds, and not between parishes. This alone would be a great relief, not only to the poor, with respect to general convenience, by increasing the market for work, but by the consequential diminution of the expenses of maintaining them; supposing it to be true, that, the more a poor family *earns*, the less parochial assistance it requires. If the contest lay between counties it would be better.

But there ought to be no litigations at all about the settlements of the poor; "*le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*;" there should be no attorneys bills in overseers accounts: it is cheaper to relieve, than to remove, a family by a suit at the sessions; which, if the overseers are peculiarly astute in watching over the interests of their parishes, or, in other words, are tenacious of their opinions, will go into the King's Bench, and the successful parish may find an honest family removed, ~~to their~~ utter ruin, at double the expense that would have maintained them and their posterity for ever.

If a man of property has half a score contiguous farms in his occupation, it would be extreme folly to station a certain portion of his farming-stock at each individual farm, and not allow that stock

stock to migrate to his other farms, as food, utility, or the general convenience, and attention to profit, might give occasion. To fix, irrevocably, three score sheep in this farm, six score in that, so many bullocks in one, so many in another, would be a remarkable instance of bad management. A good manager certainly would rather form a calculation of what stock the whole number of acres in his occupation might support, with the greatest probability of the greatest profit; and, with that view, would remove them from one part of his estate to the other, without having any respect to the division of his farms. — So stands the interest of the nation with respect to the poor; it is one large domain, and the stock, or people, ought to be farmed *quoad hoc* in the same manner; and similar means would produce corresponding effects: the proprietor of land would turn *his acres* to the greatest possible profit; *the nation* would produce the greatest possible quantity of industry; and the poor would be maintained at the least possible expense.

L E T T E R XXIX.

A TOTAL repeal of the law of settlements might, in the present state of things, promote vagrancy, which is a disorder, both in morals and industry, tending to the worst consequences that can arise from population: the abolition of settlements, therefore, cannot be recommended; a modification of them, on principles more consistent with the general advantage of society, is the whole that should be attempted.

The preamble to the act of parliament, confining the poor to their respective parishes, states, that the people endeavour to settle themselves where there is the best stock, the largest commons or wastes to build cottages, and the most woods for them to burn and destroy;

destroy; and, when they have consumed them, that they go to another parish, and at last become rogues and vagabonds.

The statute-law was, in the reign of Charles the Second, sufficiently severe to protect the woods from being burnt or destroyed, if severity of punishment operated to that effect; and the laws respecting vagrancy were, at that time, not less penal: if any additional severity might have been necessary, the vagrant-act, of recent memory, is not deficient in that respect. If severity of statute-law will not protect our woods from burning and destruction by the poor, will the law of settlements do it? Certainly it is not the probable effect arising from the confinement of the poor to parishes where they cannot obtain a fair market-price for their labour, that they should pay respect to those wastes, and woody tracks, which produce no call for agricultural industry. The reasons adduced in the preamble to the act of settlements must, therefore, fall to the ground, and the inducement to the enacting clauses will then remain: that the poor will put themselves into a situation to live at the least possible expense to their neighbours, by going where they can find employment, and where they are most likely to maintain themselves. And ought they not to be permitted so to do, unless other consequences than those stated in the preamble to the act restraining them, or, at the least, those consequences themselves, are to be apprehended?

The effect most to be apprehended is; that such liberty might tend to the encouragement of vagrancy, or such a wandering plan of life, as would not permit parish-officers, if fortunately they should be so inclined, to introduce any settled industrious mode of education among their children; as such an education is one of the most desirable objects to be obtained in the discipline of the poor; it may be proper to modify that restraint which is thought necessary to be retained over them, so as to be most conducive to this end; for, although the present execution of the poor-laws proves, in general, either that the overseers are ignorant of their power in this respect,

respect, or, which is more probable, dislike the trouble of attending to youthful industry; yet it requires no extraordinary prophetic foresight to assert, that this must become, and shortly, a serious part of their office; or we shall find what the French Committee of Mendicity have asserted to be too true; that the system of our poor-laws, as at present executed, "is the most destructive political gangrene in the English constitution."

If the poor were permitted to remove from place to place, as best suited the interests of industry, it would be reasonable, that the same authority which granted them the liberty should connect it with such regulations as are necessary to the safety and advantage of the state; which might probably be effected by preventing that liberty, which was intended for the encouragement of industry, degenerating into vagrancy; by making it of immediate use, in diminishing the expenses of their maintenance, and by offering a prospect of advantage to posterity, from the certain good tendency of an industrious education.

To effect the first end, box-clubs should be the means; which should be obligatory on all the poor while in health, and without a family of children; or, possibly, the *lex trium liberorum* might with propriety be the point of exemption; but those who migrate, as the only good reason for their migration must be larger wages, should contribute a larger proportion of their earnings; if one-thirty-sixth were the general proportion, one-twenty-fourth might be a proper proportion of the earnings of those who leave their parishes.

Government has an undoubted right, on every principle of natural justice, to direct, in some measure, the education of those children whose parents are chargeable to society; and this arises from the reciprocity on the part of government, to preserve all the governed from perishing by want.

Where there are seminaries instituted for educating children in habits of industry, the poor should be compelled to send their children to them in those parishes where they reside; the migrated families,

families, by the alternative of the attendance of their children at the school of industry, or an order of removal of themselves to their place of settlement.

These terms being complied with, the poor might, without fear of their becoming vagrants, or neglect of industrious habits in the rising generation, be permitted to seek their bread, by means of labour and industry, wherever good wages will enable them best to find it; and a foundation of a fund would be laid for their maintenance when in distress, which would be productive in proportion as the number of the migrants increased, or in other words, as the total sum earned by the industry of the nation increased.

Taking one of the heads of Sir William Young's bill as the ground-work of our proposed regulation, the general idea would stand thus.

No person shall be removed to his place of settlement until actually chargeable to the parish where he resides, provided that he has made oath, before two neighbouring magistrates, of the place of his legal settlement; and that, from the time of his first residence in the parish, he has contributed, according to the rules of the society, one-twenty-fourth part of his earnings to the box-club of that parish; and hath also, from the same time, sent his children, above the age of six years, and under the age of eleven, to the school of industry in the said parish; and having so resided ten years in any parish, without receiving any parochial relief whatever, he shall obtain a settlement where he hath so resided.

It would farther tend to prevent vagrancy, if the pauper should be obliged to obtain the approbation of two magistrates, residing near the parish whence he removes, testified by their signing their consent, and specifying the place to which they allow the pauper to go, prior to his actual migration; which consent should be immediately delivered to the overseers of the parish where he intends to reside. But no evidence that these conditions were not complied with should be allowed to be given in any contest at law as to his place

place of settlement; because it would tend to create litigation, and could be of no other service, the magistrates having the power to punish the omission by sending the pauper back to his place of settlement.

These regulations would certainly diminish the sources of legal contests, on the variety of cases respecting settlements and certificates; and would tend to bring those disputes, which are so very inimical to the pockets of the parishioners and the peace of the parish, into a very narrow compass; they would also open to the poor the means of carrying their industry to the best market; at the same time that the obligation to contribute to a box-club, in a greater proportion than if they had remained where they were settled, might tend to keep them from migrating, unless the prospect of advantage was considerable; the being obliged to send their children to a school of industry would also check that spirit of vagrancy, which idleness, during infancy and youth, is apt to promote. But these obligations proceed on the idea that box-clubs and schools of industry were established by authority of parliament throughout that part of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws; for, vain would be the regulations, if, for want of these institutions, they could not be complied with; and it is much to be feared, that, whatever may be the excellence of them, they will not institute themselves throughout the kingdom in general, without the assistance of the legislature, although the good arising from them is already experienced in many parishes.

There seems uniformly one false principle, that is inconsistent with that degree of freedom which is the best inheritance of all of us, constantly pervading this head of the laws respecting the poor, exclusive of the restraint which the law of certificates occasions. The principle alluded to, is the right claimed by the officers of a parish to remove those whom they may deem *likely* to become chargeable, the undefined idea, of what *may possibly happen in future*, should not be permitted to operate in the latitude it does; for, it is not necessary

to the interest of the parish, but in a most insignificant degree; and even that trifling interest would disappear instantly, on the principle being exploded, and a general practice diametrically opposite prevailing; all men are liable, as the law at present stands, to be taken by a warrant before a magistrate, if a parish-officer thinks proper to declare his belief that the individual is *likely* to become chargeable; and this assertion may sometimes be founded on pique, interest, or private resentment; consequently we are all liable to this impertinent intrusion, and, what is worse, to an examination into our circumstances and situation in life; the knowledge of which should be in the power of every man to preserve in his own breast, unless he be so suspicious a character that the safety of society or of individuals requires a public investigation of his situation and circumstances; but, in this case, the exposition of the private concerns of an individual is founded solely on this trifling plea of interest,—that a parish may not expend a trifle by *once* relieving him.

Therefore, the paltry consideration of a few pence, in the expenditure of an individual parish, exposes all his Majesty's subjects to the possibility of this disagreeable scrutiny into their private affairs; and this on the unfounded assertion of a parish-officer, that a *refiant* *may* become chargeable; a very disagreeable consequence, flowing from a very insignificant cause. Actual relief received from a parish ought to be the only case where such an intrusion should take place; and that rule, if universal, would produce no general or even partial inconvenience; and it would, at the same time, relieve all from the possibility of being placed in a humiliating, vexatious, and disagreeable, situation, without sufficient reason.

L E T T E R X X X .

THE natural right of the poor to the assistance of society, when, by misfortune, ill health, or age, their labour is not equal to their support; and also the propriety of allowing them the liberty of removal from one place to another, for the purpose of rendering their labour more equal to their support, having been discussed, this paper shall be dedicated to the purpose of examining the expediency of raising the price of labour; desiring that the reader will recollect agricultural labour is principally adverted to; and that the data, from which the conclusions will be drawn, may be found among the evidence which has been collected in some of the former papers on this subject.

It has already been asserted as a truth, in a manner self-evident, that the price of labour should be equal to maintain the labourer in that situation of life he occupies in society, whether as a husband, a father, or a son; consequently, that it should enable him, while in health, to support a wife, children, or aged parents; and the evidence produced has tended to prove that it was so in former times; before the establishment of a compulsive maintenance, and before those adscititious and enervating luxuries of life, spirits and tea, impaired the strength of the parent, debilitated his progeny, and wasted the produce of his labour.

The rating of wages, by authority of parliament, might also, in those days, have tended to preserve a just proportion between the price of labour and the necessaries of life; for, if the practice had not that good effect, it operated to the disadvantage of the labourer; because, by limiting the price, it restrained the spirit of competition; all the statutes, from the reign of Edward the Third to that of James the First, on that head, being restrictive against giving *more*, and not compulsive to give the price rated by the justices;

consequently, they tended rather to reduce than to raise the price of labour.

But let us examine how the proportion was preserved in times antecedent to the establishment of a poor's rate, and how it is preserved now, and let us make a comparison of the facts: the means are in our hands, and the result may establish a serviceable truth.

In the twenty-third of Edward the Third, the price of agricultural labour was regulated, in many instances, by parliament. — Two of these shall be taken; harvest-wages, reaping corn by the day, three-pence; threshing wheat, by the quarter, two-pence half-penny: in that year, 1338, the price of wheat, by the quarter, was three shillings and four-pence; therefore, a day's work in harvest would not produce quite one-thirteenth of a quarter of wheat, and the price of threshing a quarter was one-sixteenth of its value. In 1792, the price of a day's harvest-work, in the cheapest counties, was, at the least, half-a-crown, and the price of threshing wheat was also about half-a-crown a quarter: the average-price of wheat, throughout the year, might be about two guineas a quarter: the labour of threshing, therefore, was, to the price of the wheat, as one to sixteen or seventeen; and a day's harvest-wages bore the same proportion to the same quantity of wheat. In the years 1387, 1389, wheat was threshed at four-pence a quarter, and reaped at seven-pence an acre. In 1388, the price of wheat was four shillings a quarter: in this instance, the price of threshing shall be taken, because the price of reaping an acre of wheat must then, as now, depend on many circumstances, and rise or fall accordingly: threshing then produced one-twelfth of the value of the wheat. In 1446, a reaper received five-pence a day; the price of wheat was, in 1445, four shillings and six-pence a quarter; and, in 1447, eight shillings; therefore, a day's harvest-work, at that time, produced one-tenth of a quarter of wheat: in 1445, the year preceding the price of reaping, and the year succeeding it,

it, one-nineteenth yearly; the *Chronicon Pretiosum* giving no instance of the price of wheat in 1446: the average of these prices of labour is one-fourteenth of a quarter of wheat; and the price of the same articles of labour, in the year 1792, having been taken at one-sixteenth of the value of a quarter of wheat, it is manifest that the price of agricultural labour was then somewhat higher, in proportion to the price of wheat, than at present; that is to say, as a fourteenth is to a sixteenth; which would increase harvest-wages to about three shillings a day, and threshing wheat to three shillings a quarter, supposing the average-price of wheat to be two guineas a quarter.

So few instances occur when the price of wheat and the price of agricultural labour can be obtained in the same year, before any regular registers of the price of wheat were kept, that the exactness of the average cannot be depended on; nor is the calculation pretended to be correctly exact; but it is apprehended that both the average and the calculation are sufficiently so, to warrant the conclusion that is inferred from them: and it should also be recollected, that no compulsory maintenance for the poor was established during the period in which these averages have been taken.

In 1661, the justices of Essex, in their Easter-sessions, fixed the rates of agricultural labour for that year: the reaper, one shilling and ten-pence a day harvest-wages; the thresher, exactly the same price per quarter: the price of wheat was, by the Windsor-table, 3*l.* 2*s.* 2*d.*; by which it is manifest, that a day's harvest-wages, and the threshing a quarter of wheat, would not either of them purchase one-thirty-fifth part of the quarter. At this period the compulsory maintenance had been established near forty years.

In 1682, among the wages of servants and labourers in husbandry, rated by the justices at their quarter-sessions, holden at Bury, in Suffolk, and recorded in Sir John Cullum's *History of Hawstead*, we find that a man-reaper's wages, in harvest, was one shilling

ling and eight-pence; a common labourer, in summer, one shilling; in winter, ten pence: the average-price of wheat we find, by the Windsor table, to have been, that year, 1*l.* 19*s.* 1*d.*; a day's harvest-wages would, therefore, in 1682, purchase one-twenty-third part of a quarter of wheat; a day's common wages, in summer, about a thirty-ninth part; a day's common wages, in winter, about a forty-seventh part. It should be mentioned that these prices are all without meat and drink.

In 1668, Mr. Gregory King computed the ordinary income of labourers and out-servants at fifteen pounds a year, to a family which he supposed to consist of three and a half persons; and he computed the weekly expense of such families to be about twenty-pence a head. About the same time, Lord-Chief-Justice Hale computed the necessary expenses of a labourer's family, consisting of six persons, the father, mother, two children able to do something, and two not able, at ten shillings a week, or twenty-six pounds a year: the average-price of wheat was, by the Windsor-table, that year, 1*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.*; and the average-price for twenty-five years, taken annually, from 1655 to 1680, during which period of time the Chief-Justice must have made his calculation, was generally above 2*l.* 5*s.* never under 2*l.* 2*s.* a quarter. We have seen the rates of wages at the Essex quarter-sessions in Easter 1661, and at the Suffolk quarter-sessions in 1682; the inference, with respect to the ratio which agricultural labour bore, when wages were rated, to the necessities of life, can easily be drawn; and, when drawn, will prove that the practice was not favourable to the labourer.

The difficulty of obtaining instances of the prices of labour, in years so long passed away, prevent me from selecting a sufficient number of facts to form a very exact average; but it is presumed that sufficient has been done to lay a foundation for the following assertions:

First,

First. — That, before the rate operated to the relief of the poor, their wages were larger, in proportion to the price of wheat, than at present.

Secondly. — That since the operation of the 43d of Elizabeth, by raising a sum in every parish for their relief, their wages have been less, in proportion to the price of wheat, during the *last century*, than at *present*, as the same quantity of work will now purchase a sixteenth of a quarter of wheat, which, in 1661, would purchase only a thirty-ninth part, and, in 1682, a twenty-third part of a quarter of wheat only. To judge how such a price for labour, so disproportioned to the price of wheat, affected the poor's rate in those days, is not at this distance of time in our power, except in those parishes where accident may have preserved the account of the rate raised in those years; and, in such a case, some idea might be formed by comparing the then rate with the present, supposing the state of population and of the manufactures to be also known.

Thirdly. — It appears, not only that the rating of wages tended to depress the price of labour; but that, before the poor partook of a revenue raised from the pockets of their fellow-subjects; the unfeeling hand of legislation having precluded misery from its last resource, — the compassion of the wealthy, by restraining them from begging, and their opulent neighbours from giving them relief, through fear of imprisonment; the poor must have been in a most deplorable situation, and must have continued so until the beginning of the reign of Henry the Eighth, when justices of the peace were empowered to licence aged and impotent persons, to beg within certain districts. This also will, in some measure, account for the deficiency of our population in those times, it being, in the fourteenth century, not one-fourth of what it is at present.

Therefore, although the price of labour might be, through the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, centuries, higher, in proportion to the price of wheat, than at present; the rough temper of the times, instanced by the concurrent acts of legislation, left the
poor

poor without any resource in the hour of distress, except from the ecclesiastical estates; and, with respect to the time passed since the 43d of Elizabeth, it has been seen, that the price of labour was much lower, in proportion to the price of wheat, during the last century, than at present.

The conclusion which follows, from the few facts that apply to the question, is, that, in the three centuries preceding the poor's rate, they were in a worse situation than at present, although their wages were more proportionate to the necessities of life; because there was no resource left to them from private charity, and a compulsory maintenance was not established, to which they might apply in the hour of distress; and through the seventeenth century, after a compulsory maintenance had been established, they appear to have received wages less proportionate to the necessities of life than they do at present; consequently, their present situation, with their wages, is preferable to their former.

L E T T E R XXXI.

BUT it may be objected, that the instances produced, having mentioned the concurrent price of only one material article of life, wheat; the others, as clothing, fire, house-rent, butcher's meat, and a long train of *et cæteras*, have not been glanced at.

This difficulty may be solved by a shorter, and probably a more satisfactory, proof, than a detail of the concurrent prices of a long category of articles, at the several periods when the foregoing notices were taken, were such an accurate detail in our power; the proof alluded to is the opinion of Adam Smith on this subject, who says, " The money-price of corn regulates that of all other home-made commodities; the real value of every other commodity being

being measured and determined by the proportion which its average money-price bears to the money-price of corn."

The detail of the facts and arguments, from which this principle is established by Dr. Smith, would probably be thought tedious and unnecessary, having his name as authority for the opinion; a shorter proof may be thought a better proof; and a plain and intelligible *forites* may effect as much in a few words as a long argument in many pages. — For instance :

The labour of man should be equal to his sustenance, the principal article of which is corn. — By the labour of our poor are home-made commodities produced and manufactured; what produces or manufactures commodities is the measure of their value; what sustains the poor is the efficient means of their labour. Corn principally is the sustenance of the poor; therefore, corn is the measure of the value of home-made commodities; or, in other words, the money-price of corn regulates the money-price of those articles, which are necessary to the sustenance of the poor.

Another point to be settled before we proceed, is to ascertain the articles which common consent will agree to call the *necessaries of life*; because no wages of labour will provide for a consumption, *ad libitum*, of every article of food and clothing; which a poor family may *choose* to make use of; and, at the same time, a deduction of every article, not absolutely necessary to the sustentation of human life, would leave so little to be purchased by the labour of man, as to admit of no doubt on the question.

No writer has delivered his sentiments on this topic with that precision of idea, that appropriate happiness of expression, and, what is best, with that full knowledge of the subject, as the same writer we have before referred to: his opinion therefore will, with no small degree of propriety, stand in the place of any fluctuating desultory notions, which humanity, misled by luxury, might throw out; this one idea being granted, that the comforts of life and the necessaries are different things; the first are properly within the

reach of those whose property, ingenuity, or industry, puts them beyond the probability of seeking relief from the rate levied for the poor ; the last comprehend only those articles which are necessary to the preservation of human life in health, and the person in such clothing as not to offend the eye of decency and propriety.

By necessities, Adam Smith says, he understands not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people to be without ; and explains himself, by admitting, that a linen shirt and leather shoes are among those things which the poorest creditable person of either sex in this country would be ashamed to appear in public without, salt, candles, leather, soap, and fuel, he admits as necessities, to a certain degree of consumption.

Grain, and other vegetables, with the help of milk, cheese, and butter, or oil where no butter is to be had, he affirms, are known from experience, without any assistance from butcher's meat, to afford the most nourishing and invigorating diet ;* and therefore he doubts whether butcher's meat be a necessary of life any where ; but, not determining that point, he calls all other things luxuries, speaking of articles of diet, without meaning, by this appellation, to throw the smallest degree of reproach on a temperate use of them ; he says, " Beer and ale in Great Britain, and wine even in wine-countries, I call luxuries : a man of any rank may, without any reproach, abstain totally from such liquors ; nature does not render them necessary for the support of life, and custom no where renders it indecent to live without them."

Many names, and some of eminence in the political as well as in the literary world, have given sanction to strictures on our police respecting the poor, from the time of Lord Verulam to the

* See page 287, of the 19th volume of the *Annals of Agriculture*, where an extract from the *Editor's Tour in Ireland* is quoted, much in point with Adam Smith's opinion.

present day ; but this particular topic, the wages of labour, has not been glanced at until lately ; hence we may collect, that it was not thought a striking object ; and may also venture to assert, that no material, no glaring, disproportion subsisted between wages and the necessaries of life, during those times, when Bacon, Lord Hale, King, Davenant, Firmin, Defoe, Locke, Sir Josiah Child, Cary, Hay, Alcock, Lord Hillsborough, Sir Richard Lloyd, Fielding, and Burn, turned their attention to this subject ; for, had any material disproportion prevailed in the opinions of these writers, or any of them, that disproportion would have been suggested as a cause of the mischief complained of, have been adverted to, and a remedy proposed ; but we can collect no arguments from their writings, either for or against a rise of wages ; and, as great a disproportion subsisted in their times between the price of corn and the price of labour as at present, their silence may therefore be construed into an acquiescence, that no foundation of complaint existed.

Indeed, no hints of any weight, no assertions of serious authority, can be found in the writings of our forefathers, on which we may reason, as on a solid foundation ; building our argument on the respect due to a great name ; which, when fact, experience, strict demonstration, and analogical inference, fail us, may serve as a reasonable cause of belief, though by no means of implicit conviction.

But the same excellent, moral, and political, casuist, whose treatise on the Wealth of Nations we have just had recourse to, gives his decided opinion on this topic, which fell directly under his attention.

He informs us, that, “ in Great Britain, the wages of labour seem to be evidently more than what is precisely necessary to bring up a family.

“ The real recompense of labour, the real quantity of the necessaries and conveniences of life, which it can procure to the labourer,

bourer, has, during the course of the present century, increased perhaps in a still greater proportion than its money-price.

“ The wages of labour have been continually increasing since the time of Henry the Eighth, and in the greater part of the branches of trade, the profit of stock has been diminishing.

“ 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.”

These extracts plainly declare the opinion that this author held on this subject: those, who wish to see the ground-work of his reasoning, will find full cause to be satisfied with the solidity of his observations and the precision of his arguments, by perusing books the first, the second, the fourth, and fifth, of this valuable work.

Mr. Townshend concurs in the same opinion; he says, in his Dissertation on the Poor-Laws, “ if we take the average of sixty years, which terminated at the commencement of the present century, we shall find the price of wheat to have been six shillings and four-pence halfpenny per bushel, whereas for the subsequent sixty years it was only five shillings; and for the last twenty years, ending with the year 1782, not more than six shillings and sixpence; yet, during that long period, in which provisions were the cheapest, the poor's rates were continually advancing; that this distress does not arise from the high price of soap, leather, candles, salt, and other small articles, needful in a family, will appear not only from the superior advance in the price of labour, in the proportion of six to four within a century, but from hence, that where the price of labour is the highest, and provisions cheapest, there the poor-rates have been most exorbitant.”

Mr. Howlett is the only writer of reputation who has advanced an opinion different from that which has been generally received, or silently acquiesced in, by all who have, in past times, left us their thoughts on the state of the poor, and diametrically opposite to the sentiments

sentiments of Adam Smith and Mr. Townshend, who have very lately had the subject under their consideration.

Mr. Howlett says, in his pamphlet, which has been already noticed, part the second, section the first, "the great and real cause of the increased proportion of the poor, as well as of the increased expense of maintaining them, is, that the price of labour has *not* advanced so much as the price of provisions." And he concludes with this observation, "either raise the wages of the poor, or give them provisions as they had them forty years ago."

Laying aside, for a time, all the respect that is due to the authority of great names; leaving at present out of the question the uniform assertions of many eminent writers on this subject, from the age of Queen Elizabeth to the present, who have one and all complained of the profligacy of the poor; a profligacy which seems to have gathered strength, in proportion as relief at a vestry, or by the order of a magistrate, supplied the place of the wages of industry; and who have attributed the increase of this poverty and expense in their maintenance to that cause principally; let us meet this assertion, and examine it by test of fact, adduced by Mr. Howlett himself.

The average-expense of the poor, the three years preceding 1776, is produced; and the average of the expense, in the years 1783, 1784, 1785, is also produced; the first amounts to 1,529,780*l.* *os.* *1d.* per annum; the last to 2,004,238*l.* *5s.* *11d.*; the difference between them is 474,458*l.* *5s.* *10d.* If the price of the necessaries of life increased in the last period in an equal proportion with the expenses of the poor, that is to say, between a third and a fourth more than their price at the first period, the assertion might be warranted by the consequence in its fullest extent; for, the price of labour certainly has not risen a third, or even a fourth: but let us examine the fact.

During the years of the first period, the average-price of wheat was, in 1773, 2*l.* 1*9s.* 1*d.*; in 1774, 2*l.* 15*s.* 1*d.*; in 1775, 2*l.* 11*s.* 3*d.*; the average of the three years is 2*l.* 15*s.* 1*½d.*

During

During the years of the second period, the average-price of wheat was, in 1783, 2*l.* 7*s.* 1*d.*; in 1784, 2*l.* 7*s.* 2*d.*; in 1785, 1*l.* 16*s.* 11*d.*; the average of the three years is 2*l.* 3*s.* 8½*d.*

Therefore the price of the necessaries of life, or, in other words, the money-price of corn, which regulates the price of the necessaries of life, *i. e.* home-made commodities, was in the last period cheaper than in the first, in the proportion of between a fourth and a fifth; and the expenses of the poor in the last period were greater than their expenses in the first, between a third and a fourth.

L E T T E R XXXII.

MR. Howlett supposes that each individual consumes at least a quarter of wheat a year; a family of six therefore consumes six quarters annually; corn, therefore, costs such a family annually, on the average above-mentioned, the three years preceding 1776 inclusively, 16*l.* 10*s.* 9*d.*; and 13*l.* 2*s.* 3*d.* the three years preceding 1785 inclusively; consequently, the difference between those sums, 3*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.* remains in the pocket of the family, to expend in other necessaries, in the last period more than in the first; and, taking the number of labouring poor individuals in England and Wales to be at six millions and a quarter, as Mr. Howlett states them, during both the periods, the whole of their expenditure for wheat would, in the last period, be less than in the former 3,567,708*l.*; and we have seen that their expenses in the last period have exceeded their expenses in the first near half a million.

Having substantiated this fact, we will now examine the articles which the *taxes*, during the American war, had increased in price in 1785 beyond that in 1776. It has been proved, that the price of corn regulated the price of the other articles of necessary consumption;

tion; therefore, as corn was cheaper, they could not be materially dearer, but by the operation of some tax.

Had the American war, in 1785, occasioned any additional duty on any article which may be called a necessary of life? Was any duty laid on milk, cheese, butter, soap, leather, candles, butcher's meat, linen, cloth, firing, to which they were not equally subject in 1776, if subject to any tax at all? The answer is a negative: therefore how the price of all, or any of them, could be increased one-fifth, by the means of taxation, I cannot discover; neither can it be granted as a fact, that leather, soap, candles, butter, cheese, cost one-fifth more in 1785 than in the years immediately preceding the American war: that these articles might some of them be somewhat dearer, may be fact; but, although the exact proportion cannot easily be ascertained, the assertion may be safely ventured, that they had not increased a fifth in price. Beer, spirits, tea, sugar, snuff, tobacco, were increased in price during this war; but as these cannot be numbered among the necessities of life; and the first, the only article, the use of which can be approved of, is generally found the labourer in agriculture by his master; it cannot form a general article of unavoidable expense.

We have seen that the average-price of wheat, during the first period, was so much more than during the last, as to make a difference of 3*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.* annually, in the expenditure of a family of six people; and the sum it costs such a family for corn, in the last period, is more than half the probable earnings of a labourer's family; therefore the expenses of that family, in all other articles of consumption, could not be increased more than it had saved in the proportional price of wheat, had the price of those articles increased one-fifth, as Mr. Howlett has asserted.

Where then rests the proof, that the number of poor, and the increased expense of maintaining them, arises from the price of labour not having risen in proportion to the price of the necessities of life? And where do we perceive the cause for an increase of agricultural

agricultural wages, which are known to have risen two-pence in the shilling in daily labour since the last century, and in task-work much more? The price of corn has not risen in any such a proportion, and the price of corn regulates the price of home-made commodities. If greater wages are given, they will be given for expenses in articles widely different from the necessities of life; they will be given for the encouragement of idleness, by the increase of the excise-revenue. Idleness is the root of all evil;—articles of excise are the moisture which nourishes that root.

But, while our reason can find no cause for a rise of wages, both that and our humanity plead strongly for some encouragement to industry; because it is apprehended, that a prospect of reward is a more active and honourable inducement than a fear of punishment. So thought and so wrote William Shakespeare, in 1581. The human mind is sooner roused to action by a hope of rising, than by a fear of falling: that apprehension cannot pervade the mass of labouring-people;

So safely low the poor, they cannot fall.

But no situation in this country should be beneath a probability of advancement. Hope should be permitted to travel through life with all of us. When that pleasing companion, that chearful ray of untried felicity, is excluded from our sight, our journey is gloomy indeed: despondence and apathy then are associated with us; and misery, as Trincalo says, acquaints a man with strange bed-fellows.

The consolidation of small farms, where the practice prevails to that extent as to leave no small occupation for the labourer who might have saved money sufficient, or, by a course of honest and industrious conduct, have obtained credit sufficient, to stock and farm a few acres of land, most certainly operates to a great discouragement of industry.

In

In parishes where this practice so generally prevails, there is no other chance for him, whose manual labour *tills* the land, to *reap* the produce of it, than by occupying the glebe of the parish, or those lands which have been left in trust for the uses of particular charities. The proper tenants of such lands, and also of the glebe, if the incumbent does not occupy it himself, are the industrious poor; and, in such cases, the parish-rates should become the security for the rent.

If box-clubs were generally established, such of the subscribers as have continued their payments a given number of years, who might be thought by the parish-officers worthy to be trusted with a small occupation of land, should be permitted to draw out of the stock the amount of their subscriptions, deducting such sums as they may have received from the club, whenever such an opportunity of occupying land might offer. In that case, those who have migrated from their parishes to obtain greater wages, and have paid a larger proportion of their earnings to the stock, as was proposed, would have a proportional greater chance of rising in their situations.

To appropriate any part of the compulsory maintenance to the encouragement of youthful industry, might possibly be thought an unwarrantable perversion; but it certainly would not be an illegal application of part of the poor's rate; for, it should be in our recollection, that to set the poor at work was one great cause which induced the legislature to institute a poor's rate: and it must be acknowledged, that this rate can be diminished by no means so proper, and beneficial to the public, as by the promotion of general industry: and we should also bear in our minds, that industrious habits grow by encouragement more thriftily than by compulsion.

Every encouragement given by agricultural societies tends to this end: rewards for good and skilful operations in husbandry, — for long and honest services, — for bringing up, without parish-assistance,

tance, a family of children, — schools of industry, with prizes to the most deserving, — all tend to excite and preserve a spirit of industrious emulation, productive of the best effects; a spirit well exchanged for that idle thievish disposition, too prevalent, at present, among the rising generation of the poor.

The overseers of the poor, in their respective parishes, possess numberless opportunities of encouraging industry. The application that a poor person is obliged, by the statute, to make to them for relief, before he is authorized to be relieved by the next magistrate, gives them ample opportunities to obtain information of the industry, the economy, the earnings, the expenditure, of the person applying. When the overseers perceive one family in want of parish-relief, and the adjoining family, in a similar situation with respect to number, age, and capability of maintaining themselves, not only not in want, but possessing a visible property, they must feel that the duty of their office requires some investigation of this apparent paradox; and if, on inquiry, they find, that honest industry and rigid economy place the one family above want, and that idleness and waste reduce the other to distress; if they dole to the one necessary relief, which is more than they deserve, they should, by every encouragement, hold the other out as an example to be imitated. The natural claims of the one on society are equivocal; the merits of the other are certain.

L E T T E R XXXIII.

IT appears illiberal to refuse assent to the only reasonable excuse that can be alleged, in behalf of the poor, for the miserable degree of poverty in which they are plunged, and for the increasing burthen

burthen of expence to the public in their maintenance: an excuse which, if it existed, would throw the blame from *their* shoulders to *those* of their employers.

It would also ill become any man occupying a considerable portion of landed property, and residing in a country where the general appearance of his labouring neighbours indicates such distress as, when it meets the eye, must affect the heart, and which distress arises either from their wages not being sufficient to purchase the necessaries of life, or from a deficiency of economy and industry in the poor themselves, to deny the first cause, and assert the last to be a fact. Such conduct would be inexcusable in any man, unless, from candid investigation, he was firmly persuaded of the fact, and was conscious that such a representation was the language of truth; and, in that case, it becomes, in an inquiry of this nature, his duty to make his opinion public, and to assert, that the necessaries of life are not risen in price more than agricultural wages.

Such is the opinion that the last pages of this inquiry have attempted to establish as truth; and, if they have succeeded, the following consequence, which results from it, is apparent, and cannot be contradicted:—That economy and prudence are necessary to make what the poor earn go as far towards the support of life as possible; and industry also is necessary to make their time as productive as possible: for, if it be true that agricultural labour is as well paid, all things being considered, as it ought to be, there is no way to increase the earnings of the poor but by increasing the general quantity of industry. This is therefore the point to which our attention should be directed.

Mr. Locke's opinion has been mentioned, with respect to the relaxation of discipline among the poor. To this he attributed, in 1697, their misery and our expences. This opinion was extracted from a collection of pamphlets concerning the poor, published at

Edinburgh in 1787, which referred to Mr. Chalmers's Estimate of the comparative State of Great Britain.

The whole of Mr. Locke's memorial, as one of the Commissioners of the Board of Trade, was not then in print; nor was any other stress laid on it than such as the opinion of a man of his abilities and solid judgement demanded: but the last edition of the pamphlet, published for the benefit, and giving an account of the institution and management, of the schools of industry in the county of Lincoln, has thrown a much stronger light on this memorial; has placed the whole of it before our view; and, by so doing, has connected the practice and experience of a most excellent regulation for the encouragement of youthful industry, with the sentiments of a vigorous and highly-cultivated mind.

This Report from the Board of Trade, drawn up by Mr. Locke, contains not *his* opinion only, but that also of *other commissioners*, founded on a full and mature examination both of facts and arguments, produced from a multiplicity of proofs which they had full power to call for. It originated at the instigation of William the Third, who had the regular employment of the poor much at heart, and mentioned the subject to his parliament, on opening the session in 1699, as a measure he very much interested himself in; and there was, accordingly, an act of parliament drawn up, that still exists, although, owing to the altercations between him and his parliament, which took place about this time, it was never passed into a law.

One capital feature in this excellent memorial is, the recommendation of schools of industry; and surely such an institution, if *ever* advisable, is *now* advisable; if it was *ever* necessary, by a regular education, to increase the honest means of maintenance among the labouring poor, it is *now* necessary; if *ever* there was reason to fear that the poor's rate may anticipate the sources of our national expenditure, we have *now* reason to fear it; and surely if

we

we ever had cause to dread the consequences of such an anticipation to the interests of the kingdom at large, to the internal peace of its inhabitants, and to the safety of our much-admired constitution, we have now every reason to dread the consequences of a poor's rate, which has risen upon us in times of peace and prosperity, and which will continue to rise in a greater proportion, and with increased celerity, as war, with its concomitant evils and expenses, reduces our trade, impoverishes our manufactures, and increases the demands upon us for money, the finews of war, in an inverse proportion with our ability to contribute it.

Fas est ab hoste doceri.—Shall we then be inattentive to the opinions of those with whom we are now at war? An opinion delivered in times of peace, and then conceived, by those who formed the first constitution after the destruction of despotism in France, as particularly applicable to the intention of instituting a poor's rate throughout that kingdom similar to that of England. Shall we pay no attention to that remarkable expression made use of by the French Committee of Mendicity which points out our poor's rate as the most destructive gangrene of our constitution? * And if that man, whose effigy, in many places within the kingdom, has been burnt, a ceremony that has thrown out a blaze to the reputation of his abilities, which his intentions by no means deserve from those who are friends to the constitution of this country; if that man has ever, either in his writings or his conversation, declared his opinion, "that the present administration of our code of poor-laws will, if continued, in time effect, with certainty, that destruction of our constitution," which himself, and other enemies to this country, have attempted to bring about in a quicker manner; if such is the opinion of Thomas Paine, shall we not be taught to strengthen ourselves in that weak part which an enemy inadvertently has pointed out; to repair that breach in our citadel; to probe and cleanse that wound which an enemy knows has been too much neglected, and now, through that neglect,

gleet, threatens us with destruction? * Surely the object is of importance sufficient to demand all our attention; and the attempt of an individual to excite that attention cannot be called presumptuous, although it may be vain; cannot deserve reproof, although it may not meet with success.

Mr. Locke has reported, that, if the cause of this evil be looked into, the commissioners humbly conceive it will be found to have proceeded neither from scarcity of provisions, nor from want of employment for the poor, "since the goodness of God," he says, "has blessed these times with plenty no less than the former."

Has not the goodness of God also blessed this kingdom with plenty since the determination of the American war? If, in 1697, this was the language of truth, and the voice of gratitude, is it not so, at least in an equal degree, at present? Has not the horn of plenty been poured of late years over this country, replete with all the fruits of the earth, in every production of art and industry? Have not our ships conveyed the overflowings of Great Britain, whose consumption borders upon waste, to all parts of the globe? And have they not returned home laden with the produce

* Early in the spring of 179*, soon after the Rights of Man was published, I was invited by a gentleman, to whom I had shewn some civilities in the county, to dine with him in town. Thomas Paine was one of the company: it was my lot to be placed next to him. The company being large, the conversation soon became more divided than general, each person talking to his neighbour. Mr. Paine told me he was informed I had paid great attention to the situation of the poor in this county, and the laws respecting them, and asked me what I thought of the poor's rate. I told him I thought it an increasing evil. He then made me this reply: — "I am just returned from Thetford, where my grandfather was overseer about half a century ago. I have just seen the rates for his half-year; they were under £40. — I think he said £34. — What do you think they are now this present half-year? Sir, they are between £300 and £400. In a short time, if this evil is not stopped, the friends of liberty will, with the greatest ease, walk over the ruins of the boasted Constitution: its fall wants no acceleration from the friends of Gallic freedom." — To this a gentleman present instantly replied, "Thomas, thy wish is father to that thought,"

of all climes? Whatever fruits the earth has produced from the north to the south, from the east to the west; whatever commodities the art and industry of all nations manufactured; have they not been imported in barter for our productions? and has not a vast balance of trade been still in our favour? Surely, then, our prosperity, in 1792, was full as remarkable as in 1697.

But let us attend to the shades of the two pictures, and consider the obscure as well as the clear. What does Mr. Locke complain of in 1697? The number of the poor, and the increase of the rate for their maintenance. — In 1697, the Board of Trade represented to the king, that the number of insolvent inhabitant houses was seven hundred and fifty thousand; which, at five inhabitants to a house, a calculation superior to what the political arithmeticians of 1690 allow, make a total of three millions seven hundred and fifty thousand poor; and that the support of all the poor must be four hundred thousand pounds yearly.*

In 1787, Mr. Howlett calculates the poor at six millions, and the return of the poor's rates amounted, on the average of three years, ending in 1785, to above two millions, and there is reason to believe that these rates are still increasing. If the management of the poor in 1697 wanted regulation, does it not in 1793?

In 1697, Mr. Locke suggested that schools of industry were the means to increase the quantity of labour throughout the kingdom, and to decrease the expense in maintaining the poor. Sir Richard Lloyd, between fifty and sixty years afterwards, started the same idea; but it remained for a part of the county of Lincoln to reduce theory to practice, in the year 1783, and to prove that those advantages, of which others had only conceived the probability, were capable, by experiment, of being proved certain. It appears that those gentlemen, who formed the plan of instituting schools of industry,

* Collection of pamphlets, concerning the poor, London and Edinburgh, 1787, p. 104. Chalmers's Estimate, p. 47.

within the district of Lindsey, in the county of Lincoln, had not, at that time, nor indeed until very lately, seen the heads of Mr. Locke's plan: other counties in the kingdom may therefore now profit by uniting Mr. Locke's theoretic regulations with the practical experience of the institution in Lincolnshire.

Nor can that experience be slightly estimated, or its good effects lightly valued, which, upon a general average of the earnings of the children, in those schools, prove clearly, that one hundred and thirty-five, between the age of eleven and twelve years, have, in ten months, taking in the depth of the five winters, ending in 1789, earned the sum of 680*l.* 3*s.* 3*d.* or half-a-crown a week each, "exclusive of all their work, during the other ten months of each of those years; exclusive of the work of such spinners as do not feel themselves, or are not thought by their friends, forward enough to become candidates; and exclusive of those who, having their settlement in non-subscribing parishes, and being thereby deprived of any chance for these encouragements, have yet availed themselves so far of the introduction of the Jersey spinning, as to earn some part of their subsistence by their own unassisted efforts, in spite of the difficulties arising from the smallness of their cottages, &c.

"Of the two last descriptions, the number is very great, but far greater still is the multitude of those, who, by the obstinacy of parents, the neglect of overseers, or the general prejudices arising from old habits, are still trained up in sloth, vice, and misery."

The worthy and able patron of these schools, and editor of this publication, continues his exhortations to the public, in the following words:

"Would to God that the eyes of the nation could be opened upon this greatest of all evils, ~~this fatal source~~ of national profligacy and misfortune! — If the reader joins in this sincere and anxious wish, let him, after he has perused the following work of the great Mr. Locke, compare it with the many crude attempts that have been made, since the date of that report, to patch, to alter, or to abrogate,

abrogate, the wise and beneficial statute of Queen Elizabeth ; and, if he shall then be of opinion, that parish-working-schools deserve a fair and full trial, let him exert his abilities and his interest, whatever they are, in procuring that trial to be sustained, by the only authority that can prevail over such obstacles, as will ever resist all private endeavours.

L E T T E R XXXIV.

OF the same opinion with this worthy magistrate is the writer of these strictures ; an opinion formed from an attention to the habits of the rising generation ; from a knowledge of the real good these schools of industry have effected, where they have been instituted ; and, from an impression, indelibly received by precept and education in early life, that *idleness is the root of all evil*, and now confirmed by observation and experience : and ~~thus~~ earnestly does he join in this exhortation to those who have the power, that they may also have the will, to procure a trial of schools of industry, by the authority of the statute of Elizabeth, assisted by the contributions of individuals.

It is in this report of Mr. Locke's, here alluded to, that he suggests the idea of these schools of industry, and produces the following heads of regulations respecting them.

" The children of labouring-people are an ordinary burthen to the parish, and are usually maintained in idleness ; so that their labour also is generally lost to the public, till they are twelve or fourteen years old.

" The most effectual remedy for this, that we are able to conceive, and which we therefore humbly propose, is, that working-schools be set up in each parish, to which the children of all such

as demand relief of the parish, above three and under fourteen years of age, whilst they live at home with their parents, and are not otherwise employed for their livelihood, by the allowance of the overseers of the poor, shall be obliged to come.

“ By this means the mother will be eased of a great part of her trouble in looking after and providing for them at home, and so be at more liberty to work; the children will be kept in much better order; be better provided for; and, from their infancy, be inured to work, which is of no small consequence to the making of them sober and industrious all their lives after; and the parish will be either eased of this burthen, or at least of the misuse in the present management of it: for a great number of children giving a poor man a title to an allowance from the parish, this allowance is given once a week, or once a month, to the father, in money, which he, not seldom, spends on himself at the ale-house, whilst his children (for whose sake he had it) are left to suffer, or perish under the want of necessaries, unless the charity of neighbours relieve them.

“ We hardly conceive, that a man and his wife, in health, may be able, by their ordinary labour, to maintain themselves and two children: more than two children at one time, under the age of three years, will seldom happen in one family; if, therefore, all the children, above three years old, be taken off their hands, those who have never so many, whilst they remain themselves in health, will not need any allowance for them.

“ We do not suppose that children at three years old will be able, at that age, to get their livelihoods at the working-school; but we are sure, that what is necessary for their relief will more effectually have that use, if it be distributed to them in bread at that school, than if it be given to their fathers in money. What they have at home from their parents is seldom more than bread and water, and that, many of them, very scantily too; if, therefore, care be taken that they have each of them their bellies full of bread daily at school, they

they will be in no danger of famishing; but, on the contrary, they will be healthier and stronger than those who are bred otherwise. Nor will this practice cost the overseer any trouble; for a baker may be agreed with to furnish and bring into the school-house, every day, the allowance of bread necessary for all the scholars that are there. And to this may be added also, without any trouble, in cold weather, if it be thought needful, a little warm water-gruel; for the same fire that warms the room may be made use of to boil a pot of it.

“ From this method the children will not only reap the fore-mentioned advantages, with far less charge to the parish than what is now done for them, but they will be also thereby the more obliged to come to school and apply themselves to work, because otherwise they will have no victuals: and also the benefit thereby, both to themselves and the parish, will daily increase; for the earnings of their labour at school every day increasing, it may reasonably be concluded that, computing all the earnings of a child, from three to fourteen years of age, the nourishment and teaching of such a child, during that whole time, will cost the parish nothing: whereas there is no child now, which, from its birth, is maintained by the parish, but, before the age of fourteen, costs the parish fifty or sixty pounds.

Another advantage also of bringing poor children thus to a working-school is, that by this means they may be obliged to come constantly to church every Sunday along with their school-masters or dames, whereby they may be brought into some sense of religion; whereas ordinarily now, in their loose and idle way of breeding up, they are as utter strangers both to religion and morality, as they are to industry.

“ In order, therefore, to the more effectually carrying on of this work to the advantage of this kingdom, we further humbly propose, that these schools be generally for spinning or knitting, or some other part of the ~~women-manufacture~~, ~~which is~~ countries where

where the place shall furnish some other materials fitter for the employment of such poor children; in which places the choice of those materials, for their employment, may be left to the prudence and direction of the guardians of the poor of that hundred; and that the teachers, in these schools, be paid out of the poor-rates, as can be agreed.

“ This, though at first setting up it may cost the parish a little, yet we humbly conceive, that (the earnings of the children abating the charge of their maintenance, and as much work being required of each of them as they are reasonably to perform) it will quickly pay its own charges with an overplus.

“ That, where the number of the poor children of any parish is greater than for them all to be employed in one school, they be there divided into two; and the boys and girls, if thought convenient, taught and kept to work separately.

“ That the handicraftsmen, in each hundred, be bound to take every other of their respective apprentices from amongst the boys in some one of the schools in the said hundred, without any money: which boys they may so take, at what age they please, to be bound to them till the age of twenty-three years, that so the length of time may more than make amends for the usual sums that are given to handicraftsmen with such apprentices.

“ That those also in the hundred who keep in their hands land of their own to the value of 25*l.* per annum, or upwards, or who rent 50*l.* per annum, or upwards, may choose, out of the schools of the said hundred, what boy each of them pleases, to be his apprentice in husbandry, upon the same condition.

“ That whatever boys are not, by this means, bound out apprentices before they are full fourteen, shall, at the Easter-meeting of the guardians of each hundred every year, be bound to such gentlemen, yeomen, or farmers, within the said hundred, as have the greatest number of acres of land in their hands, who shall be obliged to take them for their apprentices till the age of twenty-three,

three, or bind them out, at their own cost, to some handicraftsmen; provided always, that no such gentleman, yeoman, or farmer, shall be bound to have two such apprentices at a time.

“ That grown people, also, (to take away their pretence of want of work,) may come to the said working-schools to learn, where work shall accordingly be provided for them.

“ That the materials to be employed in these schools, and among other the poor people of the parish, be provided by a common stock in each hundred, to be raised out of a certain portion of the poor's rate of each parish as requisite; which stock, we humbly conceive, need be raised but once; for, if rightly managed, it will increase.”

The expression, *guardians of the hundred*, refers to a part of Mr. Locke's general plan, which is not necessarily connected with schools of industry: but it would not be difficult to put in practice this regulation, with respect to binding the children apprentice at a proper age, without an appointment of guardians of hundreds. The last clause proceeds on the idea, that the application of the poor's rate to this purpose, or as much of it as is necessary, is a legal application of the parish-money; and that it is so is certain, as appears by the following extract from the 43d of Elizabeth:

“ The overseers, or the greatest part of them, shall take order, from time to time, by and with the consent of two or more such justices of the peace, as is aforesaid, for setting to work the children of such whose parents shall not, by the said church-wardens and overseers, or the greater part of them, be thought able to keep and maintain their children.” Sect. 1.

“ And also to raise weekly, or otherwise, &c. a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and other necessary stuff, to set the poor at work.” Sect. 1.

The first step towards the establishment of schools of industry should therefore originate from the authority of the magistrates; and

and the quarter-sessions might, with great propriety, promote the undertaking, by orders to the following purport :

1. The overseers of every parish are, by order of sessions, required, by virtue of the act of parliament passed in the 43d year of Queen Elizabeth, chapter the second, and in obedience thereto, to purchase stock and materials, and to provide proper places and proper instructions to teach the children to knit and spin of all such whose parents shall not be thought able to keep and maintain their children.

2. They are also required not to grant any relief in money to such parents who shall refuse to send their children, between the age of three years and nine, to the places appointed them for their instruction, and suffer them to continue there as many hours each day, as, by the said overseers, shall be thought fit and proper, and not to cease their attendance until discharged from the said schools with consent of the overseers.

3. That these orders be printed, and copies of them dispersed in all parishes throughout the district.

Orders of sessions similar to these were issued by the quarter-sessions at Louth, in Lincolnshire, in 1783, which were followed by proposals for the encouragement of the working-poor within those districts, throughout which schools of industry have been instituted.

The following are the proposals for an annual subscription for the working-poor, within certain districts in the county of Lincoln, which laid the foundations of the schools of industry in that county :

1. That every parish, within the district above-mentioned, be requested to subscribe a sum amounting to the proportion of 1 per cent. upon the poor's rates of the last year.

2. That individuals, within the said district, be solicited to subscribe the sum of five shillings each annually.

That

3. That a meeting of the subscribers be called as soon as conveniently may be, to choose a committee for the management of the business of the subscription.

4. That premiums be given from the said subscription to such children, of certain ages and descriptions, within the said district, as in a given time shall have produced the greatest quantity of work, of different kinds, and of the best quality.

5. That these premiums shall consist in different articles of clothing, and the highest premium in complete clothing. The said clothing to be made handsome and uniform.

6. That, whenever any young person shall go out to apprenticeship or service, or be married, with the approbation of the committee, such young person shall receive from the committee a reward not less than five pounds, nor exceeding ten pounds, if he or she shall, in the course of his or her education, have received three or more of the annual premiums given by the committee. A reward not less than two pounds, and not exceeding three pounds, if he or she shall have received two of the said premiums. And a reward not less than one pound ten shillings, nor exceeding two pounds, if he or she shall have received one of the said annual premiums. If the subscriptions shall not be found sufficient for the above rewards, then the value of each to be lessened in proportion to the state of the subscription.

7. That premiums be also given, at the discretion of the committee, to such overseers of the poor as shall distinguish themselves in the due execution of the orders of last quarter-sessions, relative to the employment of the poor.

8. That the fixing the number of annual premiums, and the value of each, shall be left to the discretion of the committee.

It should be observed, that, in those parts of Lincolnshire where these schools have been established, the working-poor had not been accustomed to any manufactures, and, except the labour that agriculture demanded, which (in a country where the tract of land, cultivated

cultivated by the plough, being small in proportion to that used for grazing) could not be sufficient, at all times of the year, to find employment for their husbandmen; the poor, consequently, were not trained to regular habits of industry; the women and children especially had no means of increasing the income of their family, had they, in fact, been possessed of the will, which, unfortunately, they were not; but, on the contrary, the parents of children who were at these schools made use of every means in their power to stifle, in the cradle, an institution which had youthful industry for its object; although the fruits of that industry were an increase of income to themselves, clothing to their children, regular manners, moral habits, honorary rewards, good characters, and a prospect of more material advantages in future. To such a degree of inveteracy was the opposition of the poor to this excellent institution arrived, that many parents have been known to beat and otherwise ill-treat their children, for having deserved and received rewards from those appointed to distribute the prizes.

The habits of the working-poor, in Suffolk and Essex, are materially different, as it is to be hoped they also are in most counties in England; the manufactures which have been established among us, in this part of the kingdom, for several centuries, have been carried on with such reputation and success, as to give names, from the towns in which they are made, to several kinds of highly valuable cloths, by which names they are known in the most distant countries on the globe: at the same time they have raised many worthy families to opulence and respect; and, although it must be allowed, that the poor's rates have not always diminished in proportion as the manufactures have been successful, and have generally increased as the demand for goods decreased; yet, as the poor have been exercised in habits of industry, there is no fear that prejudices, similar to those in Lincolnshire, should prevail here: the temptation held forth to the children to be industrious, by rewards, public exhibitions, and showy processions, which so con-

siderably

considerably increased the expenses of the institutions in Lincolnshire, will not be so necessary with us, nor in general throughout the kingdom; consequently a smaller subscription, and less encouragement from the pockets of individuals, will insure success in other counties, than was found necessary in Lincolnshire; and probably an application of a proportion of the poor's rate may no longer be necessary, than what is warranted by the letter and spirit of the clause in the forty-third of Elizabeth, authorizing the overseers to take order for setting the children of the poor to work, and to raise weekly, or otherwise by taxation, &c. a convenient stock of hemp, wool, flax, &c. for that purpose.

But some subscription, similar to that proposed and carried into execution in Lincolnshire, is certainly necessary, to provide a salary for instructors, and also prizes for the most deserving. The working-rooms, the materials to manufacture, and the utensils for the purpose, may undoubtedly be purchased by the poor's rate; but no act of parliament authorizes the overseers to raise a sum to reward and encourage the poor, to incite them to industry, and to stir up a spirit of emulation among that most numerous class of our fellow-subjects, in the most laudable exertions which can occupy the hours of human life.

There is no doubt but that the inhabitants in every county in the kingdom, by a laudable patriotic spirit, which is constantly manifesting itself in so many splendid instances, to the honour of the country and of the age, would be induced to stand forward with a subscription to this purpose, were they impressed with a conviction of the expediency, the utility, and practicability, of the measure: to attempt such an impression shall be the aim of the next Letter on this subject.

L E T T E R XXXV.

NO reliance shall be placed on a train of inferences, which might, in this case, follow each other with all the authority of self-evident propositions; we will not at present rely on those deductions, which plain reason and common sense must make from so universally acknowledged a principle, as that the riches of a nation are in proportion to its industry, and its industry depends on the habits imbibed by its young people; but we will, for a time, suppose, that it is become the business of the writer to weaken and diminish, in the mind of his readers, their respect for and reliance on those arguments in favour of schools of industry, which he is not able to confute.

The propriety of the plan shall first be supposed to be attacked on this ground; that, allowing it to be no *illegal* appropriation of part of the poor's rates, to apply a small sum towards raising a stock for poor children to work out, and to teach them to earn a livelihood; yet it would be improper, because common experience, as instanced by the returns of the overseers in the three years ending in 1785, has proved, that it has been their general practice to apply a very small portion of the poor's rate in the purchase of stock for the poor to work up; not above a hundred and thirty-third part of the total raised, or about fifteen thousand pounds of the whole sum; and that this has been principally for the use of *grown people*, who are less likely to waste and spoil the stock than *children*.

That, where the wants of the poor are so pressing, as to occasion the sum raised for their relief to be inadequate to the purpose, the appropriating a larger portion to a precarious advantage would be improper.

That the attempt, to raise a sum by a general voluntary subscription, would, if it succeeded, have the effect of an additional rate :

if

if it did not succeed, the money applied from the poor's rate would be thrown away by the failure of the plan; therefore, in both cases, the attempt is improper.

That the same objections, which apply to the propriety of the plan, would equally apply to its expediency; and there are several other observations which may be brought to prove it not expedient.

The only means of employing the children, and the only kind of handicraft they are intended to learn, is knitting and spinning; these employments, however proper for girls, cannot be thought so for boys; a more active habit being necessary to bring up men to a life of agricultural labour, than the almost sedentary employment of the wheel; and it has been experienced, that habits of life, obtained by confinement, unnerve the man, and render him less fit for those occupations for which the poor should be educated: for instance, a tailor or shoemaker seldom becomes active and laborious, even though he may be industrious; the soldiers and sailors, that come from the spinning-wheel or the loom, are not so likely to be equal to a discharge of their military duties, and to the hardships of their profession, as those from the plough or the saw; nor is a spinning-school so likely to teach boys to go aloft as the mason's scaffold.

Besides, what will be done with the produce of the schools of industry? where will you find a sale for the yarn and the stockings? and, unless a market can be found, we shall lose both stock and block; and shall consequently expend no inconsiderable portion of the poor's rate, in teaching our poor children an art, which neither ourselves can, at present, or they, in future, turn to a profitable account.

The schools which are alluded to, as having been established in Lincolnshire, have an advantage over similar schools of spinning and knitting, in most other counties: they were established for the express purpose of encouraging a manufacture, for which the long wool of Lincolnshire is particularly proper; the sale of the staple-

commodity of their county was the principal object that the promoters of these schools had in view :—in other counties, if Jersey or worsted spinning is to be the employment, the manufacture of the staple-commodity of two or three counties alone will be the object ; and, in proportion as the distance increases, where these schools are encouraged, from the counties where the long wool is produced, in the same proportion will the expense of the carriage of the raw commodity be increased ; and, as the distance increases from the northern counties, so will the price upon the spot, of the yarn manufactured, decrease.

How, and where, can teachers be procured in every village ? The expense will be too great, where the number of the scholars is small ; and, where large, not only teachers will be wanting, but school-rooms, which will add very considerably to the expense.

These, very probably, are the principal reasons that may be alleged against this institution ; as these appear at first sight sufficient to raise a doubt in the minds of those, whose encouragement would be necessary, not only in word but deed ; whose good report of the measure is not the only act required in its favour, but whose activity and supervision are wanted, after their liberality has been experienced by a public subscription : it is therefore proper not to rely on the effect of panegyric only ; but to obviate these objections, which may appear to some of considerable importance.

With respect to the first objection, it shall be answered ; that a vicious or bad practice should be abolished, and that the universality of it ought by no means to be produced as an argument in its favour, but as a proof to the contrary ; if an individual parish loses ten pounds a year, because the overseers do not provide a stock for the poor to work up, as, by the statute of Elizabeth, it is their duty to do, such conduct of the officers is blameable and detrimental to that parish, and it will not become less so if a similar conduct prevails in ten thousand parishes ; but, on the contrary, the loss will be co-extensive with the universality of the neglect, and the bad

bad effect of such conduct will prove itself by the sum-total of the loss.

Now, let us reverse the object, and suppose an opposite cause producing an effect diametrically opposite: if ten pounds per annum would be the gains of a single parish, from the employment of children, two hundred thousand pounds would be the profit, if the practice were universal.

But let us see the good consequence in the light of habit only; and let us consider youthful industry as being calculated, by raising an industrious generation, to increase the wealth of the kingdom, which must bear a proportion with the work done within it. We will take it for granted that this fifteen thousand pounds, which has been returned to the committee of the House of Commons as the sum expended in providing materials and utensils for setting the poor to work throughout England and Wales, could have been only sufficient to provide work for the impotent and aged poor, and a few children in the work-houses, what would, by this time, have been the happy effect throughout the kingdom, if twenty times that sum had been employed in teaching, and setting to work, all the children of the poor through the three years when this average was taken, even if no profit had arisen from the work itself?

Those happy effects are beyond our calculation: we can only have a faint notion of them, by forming an idea of the reverse of their present miserable situation; by placing before our eyes the happy prospect an industrious generation forms, when placed in contrast with an idle race of people: we should see cleanliness instead of filth, clothing instead of nakedness, comfort and content instead of misery and dissatisfaction.

This advantage is not precarious, but certain, independent of immediate profit from the materials worked up. Supposing no market for their yarn, no sale for their stockings; even supposing the loss of materials and of time certain, the habits of industry

ty obtained, alone, would be worth ten times the amount of the whole expense.

But there is no reason to suppose the produce of youthful ingenuity unsaleable or unprofitable : has it been so in Lincolnshire? If not, why must it be so in Suffolk, in Essex, or in any other county? That yarn which is fit for market may have a longer carriage upon it, if no sale can be found at home, it is true : it certainly is farther from Suffolk and Essex to Yorkshire, than from Lincolnshire : but why must the schools of industry in these counties be employed only in spinning of Jersey? Why could not they be employed about such yarn as would find a market with the neighbouring manufacturers? If it be answered, that the neighbouring manufacturers do not keep the *parents* in constant work, and consequently the *children's* yarn would not find a sale, the difficulty is easily removed : let it be proposed to increase the consumption of coarse woollen cloths, by clothing our numerous poor in warm and comfortable apparel, manufactured by their own children. We are constrained, by act of parliament, for the encouragement of the woollen-manufacture, to bury people of all ranks and conditions in a shroud made of sheep's wool only. Why should not our poor (all those who are in such a situation of life as to be relieved by the poor's rate) be clothed by the manufactory arising from the ingenuity and industry of their children? This would be a real encouragement of youthful industry. The obligation, when once become the law of the land, would, it is believed, by general consent, become the practice : and this, at least, is certain, that the poor would experience the comforts of such clothing, they would experience, also, other great benefits, arising from the habit of industry, imbibed by their young family.

L E T T E R . XXXVI.

WITH respect to the impropriety of employing any part of the poor's rates, in a plan, the success of which may be doubtful, and of collecting, from the pockets of the benevolent and charitable, a kind of additional poor's rate, the answer is obvious: — the benevolent and charitable may be disappointed, if the plan should not be successful, but will receive an equivalent for their money subscribed in their intention to do good: and, if the plan succeeds, the good effect itself will insure a cheerful continuance of their subscription: in the mean time, a portion of the poor's rate will be applied according to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the law: and, should it fail of the success expected, one truth will be established; a melancholy one indeed, but such as we ought not to be ignorant of, if it be a truth: — that youthful industry cannot be made productive of advantage to society, except in the *habit itself*, which will not leave them in maturer life, when it *will be of service*; and, in that case, we have gained the habit of industry in return for the expense.

But the employment, being confined to spinning and knitting, has been stated as an objection. Let us suppose these to be the sole employments; although, if the plan succeeds, and their work is profitable, other handicrafts might be introduced: the objection may be answered in the words of that gentleman* to whom the county of Lincoln has been so much obliged for these institutions.

* See an Account of the Society for the Promotion of Industry in Lincolnshire, by the Rev. R. G. Bewer, one of his Majesty's justices of the peace for the county of Lincoln.

“ Now I would ask, which parishes will hereafter stock the country with the most laborious, honest, and intelligent, servants or labourers? Will they be those where children, until they become thirteen or fourteen years old, *at least*, continue to be nurtured in idleness (whether at the public expense or that of their parents); where they see nothing but patterns of dissoluteness and immorality; hear nothing but oaths, blasphemies, and slander; learn nothing but to plunder hen-roosts, orchards, and hedges; and, for these and similar purposes, keep the most irregular hours, and are accustomed to prowl about at night like so many beasts of prey? It is said, *the children, under the care recommended above, will, at thirteen or fourteen years of age, know nothing but spinning.* Yes, they will know much more; unless regularity of hours, decency of behaviour, a habit of persevering industry, and a sense of duty to God and man, with the means of perpetuating it, are nothing. But will such objectors lay their hands on their hearts, and say, that *one in twenty* of the pauper's children, at present, when thirteen or fourteen years old, knows *any thing at all*, unless it be some of the wicked accomplishments above alluded to? If they *do not*, it is mere cavilling, and not worth a serious answer, to say, that we must not teach them what we propose, only because it is not, perhaps, in our power to teach them more; at least, not without such funds as we can have no reason to expect. Would not, then, any considerate man, about to hire a lad or a girl of the age above-mentioned, give a decided preference to those who shall have been educated in a parish, where, in conformity to the plans of our society, children from five or six years of age are assembled, under the same roof, at an early and regular hour of the morning; kept steadily to the pursuit of business; taught that, even so early in life, they are *able to maintain themselves*; made to take a pride in nothing but what they obtain by merit; and to dispute about no other object, than who, by being forwardest in the performance of duty,

duty, shall be entitled to the highest of those rewards which the liberality of the society of industry shall, from time to time, hold up to their view?

“ Can it be supposed that such an education will make no difference either in the morality of the country or the incumbrance of parishes? Will all this care and trouble be thrown away upon them? Will they remember none of the good lessons they have heard and will hear? Will they at once cast off all the regularity they shall have been inured to, during those six or seven years of human life, wherein habits, either good or bad, are easiest planted, and take the deepest root? Will they be as much inclined to picking and stealing as if they had never tasted the sweet produce of honest labour? Will they, exclusive of principle, be as *dexterous* in the trade of iniquity as if they had never been exercised at any other? Will they, when decorated with the honourable marks of our society's approbation, care as little about *their character, thus established*, as those who never knew how great a treasure a good name is? Lastly, will they easily be induced to raise a clamorous tongue, or extend an idle hand, for parish-relief, at thirty or forty years of age, when they were taught to scorn it at nine or ten?”

As to the want of activity in the employment, if the knitting-pin is to be handled, or the spinning-wheel is to be turned, the observation is futile. The chief time of girls and boys, in all schools, is passed in a sedentary posture, but they have their hours of relaxation, during which they unbind their minds, and train, by youthful sports, the body to exercise and health. Have not all our large schools produced excellent soldiers and sailors? Where can we, with reason, expect our commanders by sea and land to be educated, if not in those seminaries, where the improvement of the mind confines them many hours in the day to a sedentary posture, pleasantly exchanged, in the hours of relaxation, for the native vigorous sports of youth?

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
 Full many a sprightly race,
 Disporting on thy margent green,
 The paths of pleasure trace.

But, allowing it to be expedient that the rising generation of the poor ought to be brought up in more active employments than the knitting-needle or the wheel only, might they not intermix the labours of the field with the employments of manufacture? If stones are to be picked for the surveyor, wheat to be drilled, pulse to be hoed, corn to be weeded, grass to be made into hay, wheat to be reaped, and all other various employments of husbandry to be learned, could not the superintendant of the schools go with his pupils into the fields, and see that they do their work properly? Very little instruction would be necessary; the only object would be to keep up the habit of industry, which might be effected with as much ease in a field as in a room.

With respect to the difficulty of finding teachers for every village, and a salary to pay them, it is apprehended that any village, producing twenty male and female scholars, will find it the best economy to pay a person such a salary as will be worth the acceptance to keep these young people in habits of industry, and to instruct them in the use of those very common instruments, the knitting-pin and the wheel: the farmer who employs them will find it worth his while that they should not remain ignorant of the mode of performing operations in agriculture, when they can be of service in that line.

Where the number of scholars is small, one school-room would be sufficient, which might be easily found in any village; and, where the number is large, it is better to have different rooms than to crowd many in one, both in regard to health and to convenience: the same teacher could superintend two rooms, half-a-mile from each

each other, with equal, if not greater, convenience, than if the whole number of scholars were in one.

It would be premature to offer, at this time, any specific plan for the establishment of these schools, either throughout the kingdom at large, or in that small proportion of it to which these letters are more particularly addressed; it may, nevertheless, be proper to observe, that Mr. Locke's theory, united with the experiments already made in the county of Lincoln, would together form a good outline, which might be filled up according to the disposition and situation of the inhabitants in any village, or town, which might choose to make the experiment, and in which the local convenience of the particular places might be consulted and attended to.

In an excursion which I made into Lincolnshire, in the summer of 1787, to view the state of agriculture in that county, and also to inspect the regulation, and to be able to form some idea of the use, of these institutions, some notes of which journey are in the eighth volume of the *Annals of Agriculture*, I became acquainted with a gentleman who took an active part, as a trustee, in the direction of them; and, wishing to introduce a similar institution in Suffolk, I wrote to him requesting some information as to some particular points which were stated to him. I cannot conceive this gentleman will be offended with me for making public so much of his answer as respected this subject of our correspondence, it reflecting much credit on himself for the obliging and instructive manner in which he gives his information. A copy of that part of his letter shall, therefore, be subjoined, as it will point out the means the gentlemen in the southern district of the parts of *Lindsey*, where these schools were first established, took to insure success in their attempt.