

Their manufactures are linen and woollen: the first for their own use; the profits on the last are considerably diminished by the war.

The number of poor in the house is between 230 and 240.

Their out-allowances are large; by the last rules and orders, drawn up for regulating the proceedings of the directors and acting guardians, printed in 1792, although they seem to have limited the sums to be allowed with prudence: they do not seem to have taken care that the number of poor, who shall receive out-allowances, shall be sufficiently reduced, by obliging them to come into the house.

These out-allowances are the cause of the increase of expense, as far as they tend to the old system, to avoid which was the occasion of erecting these houses.

By a letter which I was favoured with from a gentleman of this district,* it appears that the original debt of these hundreds was

£ 2

9200*l*.

* Having received from this gentleman an answer to a letter I lately sent him, requesting him to state the average-rate of assessments, in the pound, in the hundreds of Loe and Wilford, and to inform me whether the population of the hundreds was increased or decreased; in which, after saying he is sorry it is not in his power to answer either of my questions, his letter proceeds thus:

"The account you have given, in your *History of the Poor*, as received from me, is notoriously contrary to fact, and equally impossible that I could have given any such information. I have no copy of my letter, and therefore cannot attempt to correct the error, but trust you will do me the justice to leave my name out entirely in your intended new edition."

I have, accordingly, done this gentleman the justice to leave his name out entirely in this edition; and now I must do *myself* the justice to print that part of his letter, dated Dec. 8, 1793, which refers to the information in question, that the public may judge whether or not the information contained therein justifies the abstract given in the first edition of this work, which abstract is here re-printed without any alteration.

(C O P Y.)

1. Our original debt was £9200.
2. Our present debt is £10050.

9200*l.* the present debt is 10,050*l.*; that the maximum of the poor's rates, in these hundreds, was not more, including the Marshalsea-money, &c. than 15*d.* in the pound annually, estimating at rack-rent when the hundreds were incorporated; and that they remain the same.

The average-number of deaths, the last three years, was about sixteen annually: the governor could give me no information in this respect farther back, he not having been in that office longer than that period.

A surgeon, school-master, and school-mistress, reside in the house.

There were between thirty and forty infirm and diseased poor in the sick-wards; but the greatest number of them complaining of the infirmities of age only, and sore legs, which appears to be a prevailing disease.

The poor children are taught different trades in the house besides manufactures, such as tailors, shoe-makers; and are employed in those trades for the use of the house.

Three poor men are employed in agriculture.

The quantity of land, about thirty acres. They raise about three acres of hemp, and manufacture it. There is about an acre and a half of garden; the rest pasture. Six cows are kept.

The late governor, as I was informed, had considerably injured the revenue of the house by the conduct of the manufactures.

3 and 4. I cannot answer with any degree of certainty. The several parishes within the two hundreds were ordered to deliver up their books to committees appointed for the purpose, who took the seven years next preceding the last seven years, and, adding the amount together, divided it by seven, and thus formed an average for each respective parish, without paying any attention to pound-rates: hence the average in the pound for the hundreds is unknown.

In this parish our poor-rates, including Marshalsea-money, which, of late, has been very high, do not exceed 15*d.* in the pound, rack-rent; and, were other parishes as fully rated, I am of opinion that 15*d.* would be the ultimum.

L E T T E R XLIV.

BEING now, as it were, in imagination, brought back to that part of the county which produced the objects of my inquiries, by the recapitulation of the information I received, no place can be more proper than the present to return my thanks to those gentlemen who seconded my views, by their influence in the several houses of industry, at the time and since, by communication, by letter, of their knowledge as to the particular points respecting which their information was requested; and also to testify, that the excellent order, neatness, and regularity, preserved in all the houses then visited, prove that their officers and servants, who produced every where, and at all hours, such instances of attention to their duty, merit great praise.

The hundred of Samford was incorporated in 1765: the house of industry was erected, in 1766, in the parish of Tattingstone, and opened for the reception of the poor, at Michaelmas, the same year.

The original sum borrowed was 8250*l.* of which 2450*l.* has been paid.

The number of parishes incorporated is 25; yearly assessments, 2262*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.*

The rates were settled, in 1766, at 2*s.* 8*d.* in the pound, by the year, and remain the same.

Average-number of poor, in the house, during four years, beginning in 1786, and ending in 1789, is 1055; and of deaths, for the same time, is 117.

The average-number of poor admitted, from 1766, annually, could not be exactly ascertained, but is about 260: the average of deaths, from the same year, is 37 $\frac{9}{13}$ ths annually: but the small-pox, followed by a putrid fever, has been in the house three times,

viz.

viz. in the years 1780, 1781, 1791, when the number of deaths was 76, 81, 56.

The poor are principally employed in spinning for Norwich; the profit of which was, for the four years ending with 1789, £ 1833 5 8
 The out-allowances for the same years amounted to . . . 1042 8 8
 The income for the same years amounted to 11154 3 3
 The expenditure for the same years amounted to . . . 11144 8 5

There are at present eleven packs of top-work, valued at above 300*l.* left unfold, by reason of the stagnation of the Norwich trade.

Only two men and three boys are at present employed in husbandry.

The officers of the house are a surgeon, chaplain, governor, matron.

Land belonging to the house, 36 acres.

No sick in the infirmary.

In the dormitories, which were large, there were two or three windows opposite to the general range, which have great effect in keeping the rooms airy and sweet.

Most of the particulars of this house of industry, and also of the following house at Barham, were communicated to me by the Rev. Mr. Grant, the clergyman of Tattingstone, who very laudably interested himself in putting the Tattingstone-house into a similar train of management as Barham, about the year 1790, when the management of the former appeared to be unprofitable.

The hundreds of Bosmere and Claydon were incorporated in 1765, the house of industry was erected in 1766, in the parish of Barham, and opened for the reception of the poor in October the same year.

The original sum borrowed was 9094*l.* of which 7294*l.* has been paid.

The

The number of parishes incorporated is thirty-five; the yearly assessments 256*l.* 4*s.* 10*d.*; the rates remain the same.

The number of poor in the house for six years, ending in 1792, was 1332; the number of deaths, during the same period, amounted to 253.

The number of deaths was increased considerably in the years 1790 and 1791 by the small-pox, one hundred and twenty-seven having died in those two years. The information received on this head was, that the poor were averse to inoculation; therefore, when the pest-house, one of which each house of industry has, was full, there were no means left to prevent the natural small-pox going through the house of industry itself: the consequence has been a considerable mortality, but probably not greater than when the same disease has attacked the village-poor, and its fatal effects have not been prevented by inoculation. Barham-house has now two pest-houses at a little distance from it.

The poor are principally employed in spinning for Norwich: their profit has been on an average about 200*l.* annually; but, for the half-year ending at Midsummer, 1793, only 72*l.* 1*s.* 8*d.*

Their income has amounted for seven years, ending 1792,			
to	£	20318	16 11
Their expenditure for the same time		17680	12 9
		<hr/>	
Profit to the house for that period		2637	4 2

Their average out-allowances for four years, ending 1789, have been annually 34*l.* 9*s.* 4*d.*

Seventeen aged and infirm people are in the sick-wards.

Land belonging to the house, 20 acres; of which two are garden. Six cows are kept.

There were in this house more women between 20 and 30 years of age than in any other of the houses of industry.

The

The *hundred of Cosford, and the parish of Polsted*, was incorporated, 1779, and the house of industry erected in 1780, in the parish of Semer.

The original debt was 8000*l.* is now reduced to 180*l.* and an annuity of 20*l.* a year granted to a person upward of sixty years of age.

The poor's rates have been reduced three-eighths, and a considerable fund remains in hand.

The poor in the house are employed in spinning wool, which is washed and combed in the house, and the yarn sold at Norwich by commission; the sale of which is considerably affected by the war, a considerable quantity now remaining in hand.

The poor, when able, are employed in agriculture, as opportunity offers.

The average-number of paupers in the house is generally about one hundred and eighty.

The average-number of burials, since the institution, has been annually about twenty-six; the much greater proportion died the first two years after the house was inhabited; which was attributed to the paupers, on their first coming in, having too much meat-diet, after having suffered extreme poverty. This cause has been since guarded against, and the burials have been much fewer.

The house has been free from any epidemic disease since it has been inhabited: when the small-pox has prevailed in the country, there has been two general inoculations with great success each time.

When I visited this house of industry, the governor was from home; as was the Rev. Mr. Cooke, the son of that worthy magistrate, who, from the first institution of the house, to the time of his death, regulated the management of it with so much care, attention, and economy, as to make it productive, in the shortest space of time, of more beneficial effects than any other in the county of Suffolk. It was from an answer to a letter I took the liberty

liberty of writing to his son, that the foregoing account has been extracted; the observations made, and information obtained on the spot, are as follow, from my own notes.

The chief manufactory is spinning yarn for Norwich; but some of the top-work is wove into serge for the women's jackets at Mel-ford; coarse thickset is bought at Norwich for clothes; linen cloth, for shirts and shifts, at Hadleigh.

Paupers in the house 25th of July, 1793; men 27, women 42; children, between the ages of twelve and twenty, 22; under the age of twelve, 74; in all, 165.

No men are out at day-labour, four boys, twelve or thirteen years of age, scaring birds at the wages they can earn by spinning, which is five-pence a day, none more.

The girls, at the age of thirteen, are put to service; boys, at the age of fourteen.

Twenty-two packs of yarn remain in store, value about 600*l.*; land belonging to the house, about twelve acres; of which two are garden, ten meadow and pasture.

Two cows are kept in summer time: they make all their butter in summer, and buy salt butter in the winter.

Only four sick in the infirmary: every thing appeared neat, the poor healthy and comfortable.

The hundred of Stow, incorporated in 1780.

The house of industry, in the parish of One-house, opened for the reception of paupers, Oct. 11, 1781.

The sum first borrowed was only 8000*l.* but the expence of building the house so much exceeded the sum intended to be laid out for that purpose, that an additional sum of 4150*l.* was afterwards borrowed; and the rates were increased one quarter by common consent for three years: they remain now the same as at first.

Fifteen hundred pounds have been paid off in the whole, at the proportion of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds per annum.

The poor in the house are employed in spinning top-work for Norwich; the wool is bought into the house; the clothing for the use of the house is made from the thrums, ends, and nibbings, and such spinning as is unfit for the Norwich market; their best rugs are also made from these materials; no part of their clothing is put out to be made, except stockings.

The sale of the top-work is considerably affected by the war: twelve packs are left in the house unfold; value about twenty-four pounds each pack.

None are employed in agriculture at present; only two men are in the house who can do harvest-work; some children are sometimes employed in weeding; all who are able are employed in hop-picking; but, it is conceived, that nothing is saved by such employment.

The average-number of paupers in the house is about two hundred.

The number of burials since Oct. 11, 1780, to August 1, 1793, as follows:

Oct. 11, 1780, to Jan. 1, 1781	-	8	
1781	-	25	
1782	-	51	a putrid fever.
1783	-	61	a putrid fever.
1784	-	51	a putrid fever.
1785	-	14	
1786	-	2	
1787	-	17	
1788	-	15	
1789	-	11	
1790	-	13	
1791	-	19	
1792	-	18	
To August 1st 1793	-	17	

These

These thirteen years form an average of 24 2-13ths yearly; or, omitting the three years, when the putrid fever prevailed, the average of the remaining ten years is only 15 1-10th.

Annual income from rates, 1987*l.*; from labour, manufactory, &c. not less than 350*l.* annually, for the last ten or eleven years; but has amounted to 104*l.* only the last half-year, owing to the stagnation of the Norwich manufactory.

Out-allowances from 250*l.* to 300*l.* annually; but these are increasing, and expected to continue so, from the stagnation of trade.

There has been no fever or epidemic disorder in the house since 1784, although there has been much sickness in the hundred, nor were there in the house, at the time these notices were taken, any of the paupers so sick as to be confined to their beds.

Number of acres 24; of these 3½ are arable, one acre garden, the rest pasture. Four cows are kept, and two horses.

In this house, the spinning-rooms and working-rooms are divided by partitions, in such a manner, as that but few spin or work together; as are also the dormitories. There are not more than seventeen beds in any: this is an improvement not observable in any other of the houses of industry, and tends much to the preservation of health and order.

A tailor and shoemaker are kept in the house.

A schoolmaster to teach the children to read, and a mistress to teach the little children. Relief is given to large families by taking those children into the house which are a burthen to their parents. The same method is in fact practised by all; consequently, the children are taken in very young.

L E T T E R XLV.

A Necessary attention to the duties of a magistrate, together with compassion for the distresses of my poor neighbours, particularly for those who were employed in daily labour on my estate, had occasioned me to visit, at times, the sick cottager, and the miserable pauper in a parish work-house. The situation of the first, whose narrow tenement forbade the possibility of separating the sick from the well, the parent from the children, or the children themselves from each other; that miserable economy in fitting up the cottage, which too generally has denied the only bed-room either a fire-place or a casement-window to ventilate the air; the noise of querulous children, the stench of confined air, rendered epidemic by morbid effluvia; the vermin, too, frequently swarming on the bodies and rags of the wretched inhabitants; all these causes, acting together, procrastinate affliction, prevent a return of health, and indicate a depth of misery, which hard labour and industry ought not in sickness to be liable to endure. Neither did the parish-work-house, the last sad refuge of miserable indigence, offer a less disagreeable spectacle; the want of room, and the bad management of that which they possess, occasion similar inconveniences: the clothes, or rather the covering, of the inhabitants; the too frequent instances of infamous debauchery, arising from the two sexes of all ages and dispositions kept together; the ignorance and filth the children are brought up in; and the general spirit of rigid economy which the contracting master of the work-house practises, as well in diet as in clothing, lodging, and cleanliness, to scrape from misery, as soon as possible, a property which may enable him to retire from his disagreeable avocation; give propriety to the opinion and expression; that a parish-work-house is too often a parish-bawdry-house, always a bug-bear to frighten modest distress from applying for relief.

In

In the incorporated hundreds, the houses of industry strike one in a different light; they are all of them built in as dry, healthy, and pleasant, situations, as the vicinity affords; the offices, such as the kitchen, brew-house, bake-house, buttery, laundry, larder, cellars, are all large, convenient, and kept exceeding neat: the work-rooms are large, well-aired, and the sexes are kept apart, both in hours of work and recreation.

The dormitories are also large, airy, and conveniently disposed; separate rooms for children of each sex, adults, and aged; the married have each a separate apartment to themselves; mothers with nurse-children are also by themselves.

The infirmaries are large, convenient, airy, and comfortable; none without fire-places.

All the houses have a proper room for the necessary dispensary; and most of them a surgeon's room besides.

The halls, in all, are large, convenient, well ventilated, with two or more fire-places in them, and calculated, with respect to room, for the refection of full as many as the other conveniences of the house can contain.

The chapels are all sufficiently large, neat, and plain; several of them rather tending to grandeur and elegance. There were two houses, which had no chapel: one of them made use of a room ample enough for the congregation, properly fitted up, and kept very neat: the other house attended the parish-church.

The apartments for the governor were in all the houses large, and conveniently disposed: in one or two of the houses of industry, these apartments were rather more spacious and elegant than necessary: there are also convenient storehouses and warehouses, for keeping the manufacture of the house, the raw materials, and the clothing, &c. for the use of the inhabitants.

The land about the houses belonging to them, particularly the gardens, are all calculated for producing a sufficient quantity of vegetable

vegetable diet, so necessary to the health as well as agreeable to the palate of the inhabitants.

In general, the appearance of all the houses of industry, in the approach to them, somewhat resembles what we may suppose of the hospitable large mansions of our ancestors, in those times when the gentry of the country spent their rents among their neighbours.

The interior of these houses must occasion a most agreeable surprise to all those who have not before seen poverty, but in its miserable cottage or more miserable work-house.

In looking over my notes, I find that the affirmative neatness which prevailed from the cellar to the garret, in all the houses, with very few exceptions in particular departments, occasioned not only a memorandum of the fact, but gave rise to a conception which possibly lies more in imagination than reality, that, where a deficiency in this respect is observable in any domicile, a concomitant deficiency is also observable in the healthy looks of the inhabitants.

This neatness, which had so pleasing an effect on the eye, was the cause also that the other senses were not disgusted by that constant attendant on collected filth and foul air, a noisome stench, as deleterious to human life as it is in general nauseating to those who accidentally breathe such an atmosphere.

The practice of frequently white-washing does much in preserving the air of these houses wholesome and sweet, but the constant attention of those who perform the offices of the house is absolutely necessary, and even that is insufficient, unless the halls, working-rooms, and dormitories, have the external air admitted through the windows, whenever it can be done with safety to the inhabitants, with respect to catching cold: this practice of keeping the windows open cannot be trusted to the paupers themselves; for, strange to tell, the general complaint against them was, that they
would

would not only not attend to keeping them open, but, if the adults and aged had their choice, such depravity arises from habit, they would live in that atmosphere of putrid air, which would undoubtedly produce contagion.

The neatness and *propreté* which prevailed in their halls at the hour of refection were also laudably observable, most of these houses of industry being visited at the hours of breakfast, dinner, or supper. At times I have felt disgust when requested to take some refreshment which has been offered me in a cottage; a disgust arising from the absence of that neatness which attends the tables of those among whom it has been my lot to live: but no want of neatness in these houses created disgust; a breakfast, dinner, or supper, might have been eaten at their tables with a keen appetite.

Their bread was, in all the houses, particularly pleasant; it was good brown bread, made from the flour deprived of the coarsest of its bran: white bread was also baked for the infirm, the convalescent, and young children.

Their cheese was in general good, although frequently the cheese of the country: in one house they bought Dutch cheese, which was stronger in its taste, and consequently to some palates not so pleasant.

The small-beer was also pleasant: — no wonder; they bought the best malt and hops, brewed a large quantity at a time, and kept it in excellent cellars: ale was also brewed, in inferior quantities, and given to the convalescent, and to those whom the governor thought proper, either as a necessary refreshment, or as a reward; and it was also distributed, at stated times, to the whole house.

It did not occur to me to take minutes of the bill of diet in any of the houses, because no doubt has been suggested that it is not wholesome and sufficient: that, in some instances, it has been too abundant, may be suspected, as well from the relics which were
seen

seen after their meals, as from the idea thrown out by one of the directors in a letter which has been alluded to.*

The application of these facts, which have been stated, as well upon the credit of personal inspection, and information from those whose duty it certainly was, and whose inclination it appeared to be, to give true and full information upon the subject, as from those gentlemen, also, who obligingly communicated any information by letter, now remains to be made to three important queries.

1. Have these institutions amended the morals of the poor?
2. Have they tended to diminish the burthen of expense to society attending their relief and maintenance?
3. Have they increased, or do they tend to decrease, the chance of human life?

With respect to the first question, it may be answered in the affirmative without a possibility of contradiction.

They have amended the morals of the lower orders of people, if the proportional few instances of indictments, at the quarter-sessions, for actions of inferior criminality, which lead to greater crimes, will prove the fact; and it does, in this instance, in a remarkable manner: four inquisitions of murder have been, within this twelve-month, found by the coroner for the county of Suffolk, not one of them in either of the incorporated hundreds. There are twenty-three hundreds in the county; twelve of them are incorporated, and maintain their poor in houses of industry.

If the general good order and regulation the labouring-poor are kept in throughout the incorporated districts, which good order is evidenced by their general conduct and conversation, and by their observation of those laws, the breach of which may tend to endanger the lives, and diminish the safety and comfort, of his ma-

* See the extract from Mr. Cook's letter respecting the Semer house of industry.

jeſty's ſubjects in general; ſuch as drivers riding on their waggons; tippling in ale-houſes, and the ſmaller immoralities and improprieties of conduct; if ſuch attention to the orders of ſociety prove the fact:

If the reſpectful and civil behaviour of the poor to their ſuperiors, the very rare inſtances of children being ſeduced to ſteal wood, turnips, &c. and to the commiſſion of other ſmall thefts; if theſe and ſimilar proofs of good morals, unfortunately not prevalent in thoſe diſtricts within the county where theſe houſes are not inſtituted; if ſuch inſtances prove the fact, experience tells us theſe inſtitutions have tended to reform the morals of the poor.

And the prophetic ſpirit of theory had, beforehand, informed thoſe, who wiſhed to form a judgement on the ſubject, that the effect could not be otherwiſe.

A large building, calculated for the reception of the poor of the diſtrict, ſituated in the moſt healthy ſituation, with convenient offices of all kinds, the inhabitants of which are under the regulation of well-choſen officers, ſubject to excellent rules, all of them calculated to promote regularity, induſtry, morality, and a religious ſentiment.

The hours of work, reſhement, and ſleep, uniform and regular.

The children, from the earlieſt age, on leaving their mother's arms, are under the care of proper dames, who teach them obedience, and give them the habit of attention.

When more advanced in years, ſchool-maſters teach them to read; and the ſuperintendants of the working-rooms, ſome-induſtrious employment, and take care that their hours of work ſhall not be paſſed in idleneſs: here they are generally ſtinted, ſo that greater induſtry is rewarded with greater leiſure.

The duties of religion are expected to be regularly attended by all the poor of all ages, no excuſe being admitted but illneſs.

It required no prophetic spirit to foretel, that, these duties and this system of regularity being persevered in, the best effects must, of consequence, ensue to the morals of the poor of all ages, and to those of the rising generation in particular.

In these houses of industry, therefore, may be found that plan of education of poor children carried into effect, which has been, in former pages of this tract, so warmly recommended to be pursued, by the means of schools of industry, united with Sunday-schools.

But it should be remembered, that these schools, in the houses of industry, are not general for the children of *all* the poor within the incorporated parishes; only those whose poverty induces their parents to ask parish-relief are sent here, and, of those, only such children as are the greatest burthen to their parents: the children of those poor who are not petitioners for relief, and those children of the poor who are, and whom their parents do not choose should be sent to the house of industry, are kept at home, and have not the benefit of this plan of education; and it is a circumstance worthy of remark, that parents, in general, from whom to take, for a time, the idle, mischievous, least useful, and most burthensome, part of their family, to bring them up, without any care or expense to themselves, in habits of industry and decency, is a very great relief, are very much averse to sending their children to the houses of industry; from what cause it is difficult to tell; but it is plain that no good cause can give rise to this aversion: suppose it to be parental affection and fondness, which makes them, with regret, part with their children, the answer is obvious; they are sent but a little way from them, are in the neighbourhood, where they may be seen at all proper times, and, when seen, will be seen in a state of cleanliness instead of filth, of employment instead of idleness, with neat clothing and wholesome diet instead of filthy rags and an empty belly: whereas parents, in higher situations of life, who feel that fondness of affection in, at least, an equal degree,

gree, voluntarily, and at a considerable expense, send their children to seminaries of learning and schools, for education, at a much greater distance, and do not see them for many months together: much credit cannot, therefore, be given to the sentiment of affection: the only one which can be mentioned as an apology for this aversion, and every other reason, must be founded on a bad principle, and consequently ought not to have any weight.

Were these institutions erected upon a plan which would admit of taking *all* the children of the poor, from the time they are capable of being taught some employment, and keeping them in the house, as in a school, until such employment is learned, and regular habits of industry acquired, together with an abhorrence of that life of idleness and theft to which the children of the poor are prone, either naturally, or by the encouragement of their parents, every good which can be expected to arise, from such an institution as has been recommended, might thus be attained to, in a house of industry, at a very trifling increase of expense, if at any, and which expense would be amply repaid by the general good effect: but such a plan, could the houses of industry receive them, must be seconded by the court of quarter-sessions issuing an order, prohibiting relief to be given to such parents who shall refuse to let their children go to these schools, when appointed to them by the overseers of the respective parishes.

L E T T E R XLVI.

TO determine the second question, with certainty, recourse must be had to the notices taken, respecting the fact, in the different incorporations; and it will be found, that, in some, the

poor's rates have been diminished; in others, they remain the same as at the time of the institution; and, in a few, the rates have been increased: the different instances shall be pointed out, and some observations made on the facts, as they have been stated.

Blything-hundred; Bulcamp house of industry; the whole debt, 12000*l.* has been paid off; the rates were diminished one-eighth in 1780; and, as they were not on an average above one shilling in the pound annually when first incorporated, they are now inconsiderable.

The hundred of Cosford, and the parish of Polsted; the house of industry at Semer; the whole debt, 8000*l.* has been paid off, except an annuity of 20*l.* a year, and 180*l.*; but they have stock more than sufficient to discharge these remaining demands; the poor's rates have been diminished three-eighths; and the rates were very moderate when the hundred was incorporated.

Wangford-hundred house of industry, at Shipmeadow; original debt 8500*l.* of which 4000*l.* is paid; rates remain the same.

The hundred of Samford; the house of industry at Tattingstone; the original sum borrowed 8250*l.* of which 2450*l.* have been paid; the rates were settled at 2*s.* 8*d.* in the pound annually, and remain the same.

Hundreds of Bosmere and Claydon; the house of industry at Barham; the original sum borrowed 9994*l.* of which 7294*l.* have been paid; the rates remain the same.

Stow-hundred; the house of industry at Onehouse, near Stowmarket; the original sum borrowed 12150*l.* of which 1500*l.* have been paid; the rates remain the same.

Hundreds of Colneis and Carlford; the house of industry at Naeton; the original debt was 14800*l.* is now 3900*l.* the rates were increased at Midsummer, 1790, from 1487*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* annually, to 2367*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.*; but from information it appears, that the rates were not more than sixteen or eighteen pence annually, when the average was fixed; and the revenue of the house has exceeded its expenditure

expenditure on an average of the last seven years 513 *l.* 11 *s.* 10 *d.* annually.

Hundreds of Mutford and Lothingland ; the house of industry at Oulton ; the original debt 6500 *l.* of which 2000 *l.* has been paid off ; the poor's rates are advanced ten per cent. but 300 *l.* of the debt is annually paid off.

Hundreds of Loes and Wilford ; the house of industry at Melton ; their original debt was 9200 *l.* their present debt is 10050 *l.* their poor-rates, together with their county-rates, do not now exceed 15 *d.* in the pound at rack-rent.

By this recapitulation it appears, that, at two of the houses of industry, the rates have been considerably diminished, and the original debt annihilated.

At four, the rates remain ; but a considerable part of the original debt has been paid.

At two, the rates have been increased, and the debt diminished : at the last house of industry the debt has been increased, and the rates remain the same.

The question, whether houses of industry tend to diminish the expense of the relief and maintenance of the poor, is therefore answered in the affirmative, since in two the rates are diminished, the debt is paid ; in four, the debt has been considerably diminished, consequently the annual balance in their favour might have been applied to the purpose of diminishing the rates, *pari passu*, with the debt ; in two of the others the balances have been applied hitherto to diminish the debt only, and the rates have increased ; in one, the debt is somewhat increased, and the rates remain the same, at the low average of 15 *d.* in the pound annually.

When the average, at which these parishes settled their rates, at the time they were incorporated, and the number of years which have elapsed since that average was settled, are considered ; in some, being between thirty and forty years ; and in none less than twelve or fourteen ; and compared with the proportion the rates then bore

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to a pound, and the proportion they would now bear, had there been no house of industry; taking the advance of the poor's rate in the other parishes throughout the kingdom in general, and in Suffolk in particular, as they are proved to be, by the returns of the overseers to the inquiries made by parliament, in the year 1776, and 1783, 4, and 5, as the rule of computation, and no better can be obtained; in which returns it appears, that, in the two contiguous hundreds in Suffolk, not incorporate, Risbridge and Babergh, the *net expenses* of the poor alone had advanced from 11,023*l.* 7*s.* 11*d.* to 13,840*l.* 3*s.* 9*d.* being a difference of 2817*l.* or thereabouts, in the course of eight years, or above 25*l.* 9*s.* per cent. an advance that brings forward the most unthrifty management of any of the houses of industry into a state of positive prosperity and reduction of expense; it will therefore be found, that not only where the rates have been stationary, but where they have advanced, and in the instance where the debt has increased, the poor's rates have been very much decreased, from what they would have been, had the poor been managed according to the old and the common system; we may therefore with certainty apply the old adage, *non progredi est regredi*, with respect to the expenses of the poor in all the incorporated houses of industry.

On the whole, although in an instance or two, originating from an improvident mode of building the houses of industry at first, more subsequent expenses have been incurred than were at that time foreseen, and consequently a larger revenue became necessary to pay the interest of the additional sum they were obliged to borrow, and to support the expenses of the house than was at first thought sufficient; and, in another instance, the dishonesty or profusion of the then governor has so ~~disarranged~~ the affairs of the house, as to render a new loan, and consequently an increased rate, convenient; yet, on the whole, it is conceived, that not the least shadow of doubt can be raised, but that even, in these instances, the revenues of the houses are increasing beyond the disbursements, the debt is
diminishing,

diminishing, and the rates will fall even beneath that low medium they have hitherto preserved; and which rates, had there been no house of industry, would probably have risen twenty-five, or even fifty, per cent. above their present amount.

L E T T E R XLVII.

THE other question, whether the houses of industry have increased the chance of human life, involves in it such complicated considerations, is a question of such uncertainty of proof, a comparison with the state of population in country-villages, and with the chance of human life of people of particular ages and particular situations only, and not with human life in general, being to be taken into consideration, and there being no data with which the comparison of the facts can be made, the tables of the chance of human life being of too general a nature, and the facts themselves as to deaths, in houses of industry, not being sufficiently particularised as to age and state of patients health when admitted to give an exact result, that some general observations on the deaths which have happened in these houses, compared with the numbers admitted, is all that shall be attempted, leaving the reader to make up his own mind, as well as he is able, from the imperfect sketch of the question it is in my power to offer, to which I shall very humbly add my opinion, without presuming to dictate any positive conclusion to his judgement.

And, first, it will be proper to pay some attention to the situation of the poor, and their families, before they take refuge from the misery of extreme poverty in a house of industry. What are, at that time, their expectations of health and life?

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They are so reduced by poverty as not to be able to maintain themselves and their families, and therefore they become inmates of a house of industry; consequently, the constitution, both of parents and children, must have been debilitated by want of necessary food, raiment, and shelter, that none can be said to be admitted in sound health: no estimate can, therefore, be made of their chance of life, in comparison with the inhabitants of villages, towns, or cities, in general.

They are afflicted with disease, either parents or children, and therefore they are sent, by the parish-officers, to a house of industry: the chance of life with such is still decreasing.

Children are born, and, at the earliest age at which they can leave their mothers, are received in these houses, and are kept in them through that period when the chance of human life is least; and much the greatest number in all the houses is composed of children.

The other considerable class is composed of the aged, and the infirm, either from age or accident. The chance of life, in this class, is small indeed.

Such are the different situations of the inmates in a house of industry: very few poor, between the age of fifteen and fifty, are seen there, except diseases, accidents, infirmities, or particular irregularities of life, have occasioned them to be sent there.

The chance of life, to people in these situations, and of these ages, under the pressure of penury, although not absolutely chilled by the cold hand of extreme poverty, would, in their miserable cottages, be small indeed. — Is that chance diminished or increased by going into a house of industry?

Is the chance of human life increased or diminished by being brought from an unwholesome starving diet to wholesome moderate plenty; from nakedness to clothing; from filth to cleanliness; from cold to warmth; from the noxious contagion of a filthy cottage,

tage, or parish-work-house, to a healthy air, free from noxious effluvia? Surely, the answer to these questions would, at once, determine the point, did it depend on theory alone.

But it may be said, the question has been tried by the touchstone of experience; one single page of which, honestly recorded, goes farther towards proof positive, than volumes of theoretic reasoning; we must therefore have recourse to this best of demonstrations.

The validity of this observation must be allowed, were the facts produced, of mortality in houses of industry, capable of being compared with the deaths of people under similar circumstances, and of similar ages, at large.

In Nacton house of industry the number of poor admitted the last fourteen years are 2017; the number of deaths, 384; the annual average of inhabitants is therefore 144; of deaths, 27.

In Bulchamp house of industry, the number admitted since the institution, in 1766 to 1793, twenty-seven years, 5207; the number of deaths, in that time, 1381: but, in the years 1781 and 1782, a putrid fever carried off one-third of the inhabitants of Blithburgh, and 217 of the inhabitants of this house; therefore, those two years should be omitted in the comparative statement: the numbers will then stand, of inhabitants, admitted in 25 years, 4725; of deaths, 1064: or, annually, inhabitants, 189, deaths, 42.

Oulton house of industry. Number of inhabitants, on an average, annually, about 150 the last six years; of deaths, for the same period, annually, 11.

Shipmeadow house of industry. Number of poor, about 200 annually; number of deaths, about 20 in a year.

Melton house of industry. Number of poor in the house, from 230 to 240; the number of deaths, for the last three years, about 16 annually.

Tattingstone house of industry. Average-number of poor in the house, annually, for 23 years, 260; average-number of deaths, annually,

annually, for the same time, 33. In this computation, the three years are omitted when the small-pox and putrid fever prevailed: the deaths, in the three years when these contagious distempers were so fatal, bring the average-number of deaths up to 37 $\frac{9}{13}$ ths, as has been stated in the notices respecting the house.

Barham house of industry. Average-number of poor inhabitants, annually, for five years, as appears by the notices, 222; average-number of deaths, 42. In this house, also, the small-pox prevailed for two years, and destroyed 127 of the inhabitants; the average of deaths, otherwise, would not have been so high.

Semer house of industry. Average-number of poor inhabitants in the house, annually, from its institution, 180; annual number of deaths, 26.

Stow house of industry. Annual average-number of poor inhabitants, in the house, about 200; of deaths, annually, 24: but, in this house, a putrid fever prevailed three years, and was fatal to 163 people: the average, omitting these three years, and taking it for ten years only, is 15 in a year.

In the nine houses of industry which have been the objects of our attention, there are, constantly, one year with another, 1780 poor inhabitants, men, women, and children.

In the same houses there happen, annually, two hundred and forty-five deaths, as the number appears by the averages taken.

The number of deaths to the number of inhabitants, annually, in all the houses of industry in Suffolk is, therefore, as 1 to 7 one-third, or nearly one-seventh of the number dies every year.

It should be recalled to the reader's mind, that the inhabitants are composed of children, from birth, to the ages of 12, 13, or 14, when they are bound apprentices or get services: the chance of life in this early age is such as, in the healthiest towns, not half the number is alive at the age of 18, as appears from the tables in Dr. Price's

Supplement

Supplement to his Observations on Reversionary Payments; of old people, whose work is done; and of poor, of all ages, who, from sickness and infirmity, are unable to maintain themselves. Such being the description of paupers admitted into these houses of industry, it must again be observed that no comparison can be made between the chance of life, of such inhabitants, and of those inhabiting in cities, towns, or villages, in general; because, in the first instance, are comprized only the very young, the very old, and the infirm and diseased; and these are also poor, and of impoverished blood, and constitutions weakened by the effects of poverty; whereas the tables in Dr. Price's Supplement to his Reversionary Payments, and in the publications of other political arithmeticians, comprehend people of all ranks, orders, and situations, in life, as well the healthy and the robust as the infirm and the diseased; as well people of all classes, at those periods when the chance of human life is greatest, as at those when it is the least.

The question of the comparative chance of human life, in these houses, must, therefore, be left undetermined by any comparison with such chance in general; and, probably, the question would be more fairly tried, could a comparison be made between the mortality in the parishes incorporated, before such incorporation took place, and such mortality since, taking into the account the number of the poor of each parish who have died in the houses of industry.

The effect these institutions have had, with respect to population, might also, by means of such comparative researches, be more accurately ascertained, were it likely that such inquiries would be attended by certain information, which probably might be the case, with respect to the comparative number of deaths, by means of the parish-registers, and the books of the respective houses; but that part of the question, which respects comparative population, could not,

not, by any direct inquiry, be ascertained, and can only be computed from the births and burials in the parishes, which would afford, by no means, an exact result.

On the whole, this question must be left in doubt, for the present. To judge from every appearance attending the interior of the houses of industry, no one could hesitate to declare that they must tend to increase the chance of human life, and to increase the population of the districts: the same judgement must be deduced from all theoretic proofs, reasoning from probable, nay, almost necessary, consequences. But when the comparative number of the living to the dead, taken annually, appears to be only as seven one-third to a unit; or, in other words, that the chance of life, in a house of industry, is not equal to eight years; the fact strikes strongly, and occasions the judgement upon the question to remain suspended.

But still two great points are determined in their favour: they certainly tend to meliorate the morals of the poor, and they also tend to diminish the burthen of the expense attending their maintenance: that the other point is not, on experience, determined in their favour also, arises from the difficulty of acquiring every information necessary to its investigation, and from the inability of the writer to apply, with precision and certainty of proof, such facts as he had obtained: he still believes that this point will, whenever it falls under the pen of a more accurate inquirer, and an able political arithmetician, conduce also to the recommendation of district incorporated houses of industry, as tending to increase the chance of life and population.

I cannot take leave of this subject, without animadverting upon some information received respecting the dissatisfaction of the poor at the first erection of houses of industry, which broke out in riotous proceedings, and, in some instances, occasioned a great additional expense to the incorporated hundreds; the spirit of riot having proceeded so far as to pull down the buildings erected, and

to commit other flagrant acts of outrage. It is a well-known fact, proved by long experience, that the class of people, constituting what is called a mob, is never collected and excited to mischief, but at the instigation of an individual, or some few individuals, who poison the minds of their uninformed but well-meaning neighbours: these are men generally of a class a little superior to the mob itself; they are men who mix in conversation with them at the ale-houses, at the shop-keepers, and at barbers shops; are in general interested cunning people, who, under the mask of vast humanity, tender affection, and kind regard, for their poor neighbours, instigate them to these and similar acts of outrage. Examine the situations in life, the habits, the connections, of these people, when their secret machinations are discovered by the effects of open riot and mischief, and they stand the confessed encouragers of the mob: it must strike every inhabitant upon the spot, that a trifling degree of attention to the conduct of this description of people would have demonstrated before the fact; that those very individuals would be guilty of that clandestine incitement of the mob of the neighbourhood to the very deed of riot which has been committed, and consequently it would be proper in a district, where such an incorporation is intended, to be watchful of the conduct and conversation of that description of men, whose interests will be most injured by a plan of this nature, and to oppose the effect of their conversations on the minds of the poor, by every means which prudence can devise and the laws will sanction.

Was any additional inducement wanting to recommend district houses of industry, the particular situation and temper of the times would be that inducement; the lower orders of the kingdom are now pressing on the next, and the toe of the peasant truly galls the kibe of the courtier; that relief which formerly was, and still ought to be, petitioned for as a favour, is now frequently demanded as a right; that idleness and intemperance, which formerly feared to be observed, now obtrusively presses forward to fight; the pauper is no longer

longer satisfied with his allowance, nor the labourer with his hire; the faint rumour of distant atrocities, which disgrace human nature, reaches the ear of the multitude cleansed from the blood and carnage, and assumes to them the pleasing shape of liberty and property: the only class of men who have the power to calm the rising storm are those in the middling ranks of life, and they are as much interested to preserve things as they are as any other rank in the state: property is the only solid bulwark of the nation; for, those who possess it have a natural desire to preserve it, and our laws and our constitution must stand or fall with it; besides, the danger lies immediately beneath this description of people: distinct houses of industry consolidate all the men of property, resident in the county, in the same laudable plan; the preservation of industry, good order, and a religious sentiment, among the million; the few gentlemen of fortune, who reside in the county meritoriously, take an active part in all the incorporated houses; the beneficed clergy resident there also do the same, and it does them honour, for it is equally their duty as their interest: so also do the more opulent yeomanry of the county, a body of men of the first consequence to the preservation of peace and order: permit, therefore, an individual, who thus freely declares his sentiments on a subject not generally understood, to assert, without the imputation of presumption or arrogance, that equally the duty as the interests of government call on them to encourage these institutions by every mode in their power; let every influence be made use of by them, and every persuasion, by men of rank and fortune, to establish houses of industry throughout the kingdom; they will present, by anticipation of the cause, a more sure barrier to the insolent attempts of sedition and the press of democratic violence, than all the barracks in Europe, and they will prove a more secure defence of liberty and property, rightly understood, than the best-disciplined standing army.

L E T T E R. XLVIII.

BEFORE this subject, of so much importance to us and our posterity, is finally closed; before any recapitulation is attempted of those points to which the minister of this kingdom must feel himself on every principle of duty to his sovereign, and to all ranks of his countrymen, and by every obligation of regard to his own unsullied reputation, bound to attend; it may be proper to suggest that the code of poor-laws, which regulates the conduct of upwards of seven millions of his majesty's subjects, is a vague, unconnected, inconsistent, piece of patch-work, in which there is no nicety of workmanship, no dove-tail exactness of joinery: but the original statute of the 43d of Eliz. stands, like some other elegant pieces of gothic architecture in this kingdom, exposed to the eyes of taste and criticism, with a prop in one place, an addition in another; each prop and addition, necessary, most probably, to support and render useful the original building, somewhat weakened by the flux of time and the alteration of circumstances; but certainly not conducive, in the manner they have been added, to elegant appearance of the whole of that structure, whose foundation, being in times past bottomed in humanity, justice, and policy, will reflect to ages yet unborn a credit on that country which laid the foundation, and reared the humane and necessary, although at present expensive, incompetent, and unsightly, superstructure.

Our highways were a few years ago managed and the conduct of them regulated by acts of parliament, collected from different parts of the code of statutes, in a manner somewhat similar to our poor-laws; but not so diffused over a legislation of centuries; nor a tenth part so intricate in their investigation and application; nor a thousandth part so important in their effects on the happiness of the multitude: but a steady light has been thrown on those laws,
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by reducing them under one plain intelligible act; and the roads throughout the greatest part of the kingdom are become good, without the inhabitants feeling any considerable expense; that *lucidus ordo*, which has done so much on our highways, would also do good in the cottages of the poor, in the vestries of our churches, and on the benches of our magistrates; and it is a self-evident truth, that a system of legislation, by which all the subjects of England and Wales are to be guided, and on which no inconsiderable part of their property, happiness, and comfort, nay, possibly, the existence of many thousands of them, depend, should be plain and explicit; that those who run may read, and that all who read may understand: this is to be effected in a plain and intelligible manner, in one comprehensive act, preserving the 43d of Elizabeth as the citadel, and the necessary additions to, or explanations of, it as outworks.

Another preliminary observation is also necessary: — whatever may be the rule laid down by the legislature for the conduct of the nation with respect to the poor, it should partake of the nature of municipal law; it should enforce what is right, and prohibit what is wrong; and, if right must be enforced, and wrong prohibited by penalties, those penalties should not appear in the statute-book only, but in the revenue raised for the maintenance of the poor; they arise from nonfeasance or misfeasance; both of them diminishing the revenue of the poor, or wasting it when raised: as soon as the sore is felt should the salve also; this may be done; not by subjecting the administration of the poor-laws to a new category of penalties, but by making the old the immediate and unavoidable consequence of the offence; by these means would the poor-laws be well executed, or the revenue raised for the poor be increased by the neglect of its managers: without some specific plan of this kind, every new regulation will only be a new stumbling-block, and will bring an increase of expense, not of revenue.

A minister

A minister who wishes to make use of the height of his power and authority, to alleviate the miseries of the poor, and save his country from a long ruin, impending from that very alarming quarter, must for a time divest himself of the thirst of popular fame; or at least he must emulate a famous character of antiquity; must be *smitten* with the love of that popularity which follows, not that which is followed. The present critical situation of the kingdom, with respect to foreign politics, may be suggested as a fearful, or at least an imprudent, time, to attempt much regulation at home; but the regulation which is wanted is in favour of the million; in favour of their liberty; in favour of the revenue raised for their maintenance; in favour of the general industry of the mass of his majesty's subjects: it is to their ease; to their comfort; to the most comfortable maintenance of themselves, their fire-sides, and families, this regulation tends. Whom will it affect in a contrary light? not people of rank; not people of property; not the honest; not the industrious; not the active; — but, if it did, those of this description feel they had rather take the lesser ill, than run a risk of undergoing the greater; they had rather part with a trifle than lose all. But whom would this strictness of discipline in these instances affect? the idle, the lazy, or the dishonest, only. And can a minister of state either fear the opprobrium of these; or care whether he preserves his popularity among them? No, he will answer, with the same great character of antiquity just alluded to: *siqua est invidia in conservanda republica suscepta, lædat invidios, mihi valeat ad gloriam.*

Permit me to dwell a little longer on this topic; permit a few egotisms to escape my pen without tainting the writer with the reputation of arrogance or presumption. I have acted some years as a magistrate, and am conscious, that, from neglect and inattention, I possibly may have been the cause, either that the revenue belonging to the poor in my neighbourhood has, in some instances, been neglected in raising, or diminished by improper application: these are faults, venial undoubtedly; but they are such, as had a penalty

attached itself inevitably to each omission of, or inattention to, duty, somewhat more would have been gained by the poor in increase of revenue, or decrease of expeniture; because, either my pride or my parsimony, disliking the record of the inattention, or the payment of the penalty, my duty would have been done with superior attention. In a similar manner I should conceive other magistrates and overseers of the poor would feel in similar instances; if so, undoubtedly would the execution of the poor-laws be enforced by these means with greater strictness of discipline; and many thousands of pounds be saved to such of his majesty's subjects as contribute to the maintenance of the poor; and, possibly, some thousands of lives of the poor themselves might be snatched from an untimely end.

If slight penal consequences, following instances of neglect, with the same unnerving certainty as the night follows the day, would have a good effect on the execution of this code, what should prevent such regulation taking place? a fear lest magistrates should be deterred from taking the *dedimus potestatem* upon themselves is the answer: but no such fear ought to be admitted; there is no occasion for it; the insertion of a name in the commission of the peace is now frequently solicited as an honour, and the lord-lieutenants of counties are looked up to as great patrons of provincial consequence and power: but duties are to be performed, and services to be executed, by all persons placed in offices of power and consequence; and it may be depended on, that such is the thirst for authority, that the office would be solicited, although the duties of it were to be more rigorously exacted.

This idea has, already, been more fully explained, and the heads of an act of parliament, touching the subject, roughly sketched, in a pamphlet which was submitted to the attention of the public when Mr. Gilbert's Bill was before the House of Commons.* To

* Defence of the Statute, passed in the 43d Year of Elizabeth, concerning the Employment and Relief of the Poor, with Proposals for enforcing it. Sold by Debrett, and B. White and Son.

retail now, in this tract, a plan so little noticed when the topic agitated the country, would be impertinent; because, had the proposition then deserved attention, it may be supposed it would have obtained it; as it did not, the repetition of it here would be serving up a kind of *crambe recolta*, very little palatable to most readers.

But, however, the fact certainly is now as it was then. No act of the legislature can be efficient for the purpose if not executed. We may make laws for ever and for ever; they may swell the pages of the statute-book, and serve to fill up the shelves of our library, but are a mere waste of paper, words, and time, if not enforced: some means should, therefore, be invented, not to multiply our penal functions, but to simplify and render unavoidable the execution of our laws. Supposing that to be done, we should proceed, in the poor-laws, just as a prudent man, in his possessions and economy, who is master of a large family: he would, in the first place, make his estates derived from his ancestors as productive as possible; consequently, if he thought that the prodigality, carelessness, or knavery, of those who had been in possession of them in past times, had wasted, neglected, or disposed of, any, without having right so to do, he would attempt all legal means to recover what had been so alienated or disposed of; he would himself occupy, or let to good tenants, at improved rents, what he possessed; he would bring his children up in habits of economy, industry, and sobriety; his servants he would train to regularity, honesty, diligence, and civility; he would excuse a single act of omission of duty, but not a regular inattention to it; he would punish the vicious, and reward the deserving: and surely he would not, if he had the power to prevent it, permit an ale-house to be close at his doors; he would also expect, that the numerous members of his household, or, at least, all of them that could be spared, from the necessary domestic duties of the day, (which duties he would reduce into as narrow a

compass as possible,) should attend divine service once a week at least, to return thanks to the Almighty for that state of regularity and comfortable order they have lived in during the last week, and to pray him to prolong it to another.

If those, who have it in their power, have it also in their heart, to do somewhat efficient in the code of poor-laws, they have only to extend the idea of such a family, so regulated, to the great family of the nation: the plan is plain and practicable; nay, possibly the existing code has done, as far as direction alone can go, nearly the whole business: little directory is wanting, — but, alas! too much executory.

If the different members of this prudent man's family here alluded to refuse to obey, or are negligent of executing, his orders, and his wisdom is so lulled asleep, by the ease of his temper, or the indolence of his habits, that he is averse to compulsion, the appearance of his household instantly changes; the example runs, like wild-fire, through the whole family; the peaceful scene of harmony, order, and decorum, vanishes, and he finds himself soon placed in the midst of riot, profusion, intemperance, and ruin.

To proceed to the illustration of this allusion: — our fellow-subjects, in that part of the kingdom affected by the poor-laws, are the large family, of which the legislature is the head or master. A large estate has, by the bounty of our ancestors, been given us for the maintaining our poorer brethren: whether it may be prudent to reclaim that portion of it which has, for many centuries, been diverted from its proper purposes, or whether, in fact, it is just so to do now, is a doubtful point, considering that the present possessors, and their immediate predecessors, for such a lapse of time, have enjoyed the usufructuary possession of the whole, not divided with those who, undoubtedly, at one time, had a right to a considerable portion of it, and they have so enjoyed it, neither by

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the fraud, covin, or bad faith, of themselves, or their immediate predecessors.

But, whatever may be the opinion of the nation at large, or the feelings of that respectable class of our fellow-citizens, as to these points, yet, it is taken for granted that they are *still* individually, in some measure, responsible for the religious sentiment and moral duties of that portion of his majesty's subjects, the tenth part of whose fruits and personal industry they claim as their right; and it is conceived that themselves would, were the question put to them, in general, answer, that such is their idea of the matter; therefore, would it not be proper that, where a duty arises, a power should be there given adequate to enable the performance of the duty? This might be done by an act, conferring, within their respective parishes, on the beneficed clergy, an authority, in the regulation and supervision of the poor, concurrent with, and equal to, the authority the statutes have given to magistrates within the precincts of their respective counties: such authority, in all instances of parish-relief, and in many other points, where authority confers consequence, would enable the clergyman of the parish to persuade, by strong arguments, the poor to attend some place of worship constantly, either the church, or the meeting-house of some sect dissentient from the church, if such should be in the parish, and such should be their religious tendency; and, by inducements of interest, they would be able also to regulate their moral conduct, and allure them to an industrious life: the consequence would be, better morals and more industry, which would meliorate the condition of the poor, and diminish the expense of their maintenance; while the clergy of the established church might, by these means, honourably to themselves, in the line of their clerical function, and beneficially to the present and future life of their parishioners, assist to reduce those burthensome expenses, which now lie so heavy on the shoulders of the laity principally. This being the fact, and such their duty, if the legislature should think proper to connect authority

authority with that duty, would not the nation have a just right to expect a beneficial consequence?

Another estate has also been left by our ancestors for the same purpose, in times long since the former, much of which it is to be apprehended is now perverted to different uses, by the knavery of some and the carelessness of others, for the recovery of which an Act of Parliament* is still in force, but not in use; this estate, therefore, ought not to be lost to the purposes for which it was left, nor ought the act of parliament to become a dead letter, but rather an active instrument to wrest these estates from the grasp of the present unlawful possessors.

The third part of their revenue has been raised for their support and maintenance nearly two hundred years, and has, like the young disease of the poet,

“ Grown with our growth, and strengthen’d with our strength.”

This is certainly raised with strictness, and expended with carelessness. In the increment of this part of their revenue, nothing more ought to be done, too much having been done already; but, in the application of it, much reform may be made. Here then is another point to which the attention should be applied.

The last, but not the least, proportion of their revenue arises from their individual industry and labour: here again ought the attention to be fixed as to an object of the utmost importance, involving in itself a multitude of considerations; but they may be reduced under a few general ideas.

A man of sober and regular mode of life, of good moral and religious principles, is more likely to acquire property by hard labour than one of a contrary description; and the consequence, which results to an individual, results also to a million, keeping the quantity

of work done, in a progressive state, *pari passu*, with the number: therefore, if a man, of regular habits of industry, will earn 20*l.* per annum, twenty millions will be earned by a million: if, on the other hand, the individual loses five pounds a year by idleness, and spends five pounds in drink, the million will produce towards their maintenance ten millions less; the conclusion which follows from the premises is so plain, that a recapitulation would be superfluous.

Thus are the moral and religious duties of the mass of mankind essential objects of attention to the interests of finance as well as to the public good; and it is not, in many instances, that so remarkable a coalition can be pointed out. Supposing, therefore, this important object to be attended to, we will proceed to the next.

The price at which labour is done follows of course; and here the golden maxim should be again repeated,—"the labourer is worthy of his hire." When these pages were first entered upon, the prevailing idea of the writer, excited possibly by a near view of human misery, was, that the labourer had not his hire; or, in other words, that his hire would not produce him the necessaries of life, which it ought to do, and some of the comforts also: the same doubt still prevails in some instances, but they are exceptions only, not being sufficient in number to form a general rule, and principally are apparent in manufactures, when the demand for the commodity is likely to be, or is actually, diminished by war or other unavoidable causes; although it is certain, that, on a different principle and from a different cause, have manufacturers diminished the prices of labour, viz. to increase the *quantum* of labour to be performed: this they have done with equal precision of logical inference, as dereliction of moral principle; reasoning in this manner:—A man must earn a certain sum to support his family a certain time: diminish his wages in piece-work a given time, and the quantity done in the time will be increased, ~~as~~ his family will be in want, which he will not suffer while his industry can prevent it. By these means we kill two birds with a stone, we gain by sup-

plying the demand, and we gain by decreasing the price of labour: so have reasoned the manufacturers; but the principle on which they, when reasoning thus, supposed the poor man to act, is now almost worn out; he will apply to the parish rather than work harder to make up his usual earnings; therefore, in such instances, when they happen, manufacture literally preys upon agriculture.

On the other hand, in agriculture these circumstances cannot occur; the demand for labour is constant, and nearly the same throughout the year; nothing, therefore, but individual instances of avarice in the employer are necessary to be here guarded against in defence of the poor and their rights, as far as the principle "The labourer is worthy of his hire" extends; for, it has been proved in these pages, that he in general is paid in these days by agriculture, in full conformity to the maxim, "The labourer is worthy of his hire."

The obsolete laws with respect to justices rating the wages of labourers in agriculture, at their quarter-sessions, therefore, need not be revived, at least the interests of the poor do not require their execution; nor indeed were they ever intended to raise so much as to depress the price of labour; *whether it may not be necessary for the interest of agriculture, to regulate the maximum-price of labour, so as to preserve some proportion between work and price in its extreme, is worth the consideration of those who calculate at what rate corn may be afforded to be sold, leaving the farmer a fair profit.*

The law of settlements, and the consequences flowing from it, occasion an enormous draft on the poor's rate, and diminish that part of their revenue which arises from their labour, by restraining them from going where they could make the most of it. It is probable, if these laws were repealed, preserving at the same time, or enacting anew, such restraints as tend to prevent vagrancy, the labour of the poor might be considerably more productive; and they would enjoy a degree of freedom they have a right to expect from society, if not inimical to peace and good order: but this must be touched

touched with a tender hand. The act of parliament respecting friendly societies, which passed the last session, may possibly be found, by the experience of time, to do all that need be done on the principle of increasing labour, by increasing the facility of choosing a residence; yet it is a doubt, whether we ought to wait for this probable, but distant, consequence.

Nothing will do so much in this point as early industry. Can it be supposed, that a generation of industrious adults will arise from a race of idle children? Is the adage of the poet so falsified by experience, as to prove that the tree will be inclined reversely to the bending of the twig? Unless we conceive persevering industry and a life of hard labour will be taken up, and the habit continued with equal readiness and facility as our necessary repasts and hours of repose, we act against our conviction, by expecting the man to be industrious, who, when a boy, was permitted to live in idleness. Schools of industry would effect much good in this respect, and an application of some part of the poor's rate to this purpose is in union as well with the letter as with the spirit of our poor-laws.

Houses of industry appear from the review which has been had of the general theory respecting them, and also from the inspection of such as are situated within that county which first made the experiment, to tend to every good end: they, by the means of sound morality, religious duties, good order, economy, and sobriety, make the revenue arising from the industry of the poor more productive, and expend less in their maintenance; at the same time, that maintenance is the result of an union of cleanliness, decency, and wholesome plenty; the reverse of what we see in the cottage; the reverse of what we see in the parish work-house. But it is much to be feared these houses of industry must be allowed, from the visibly good effects of them apparent to the sensible part of the nation, to take their stations slowly in the land, and cannot, with safety, be obtruded on our countrymen by the fiat of the legislature.

When youth has been trained to labour by habit, and that habit has been encouraged by rewards, the honorary and lucrative spur should not cease; nor should young people, so educated, be permitted to remain stationary, possibly to become retrogressive, from the incitement being removed in maturer life, of which they have experienced the effect in earlier days. Much more can be done by rewards than punishment, and the code of poor-laws at present holds out nothing but punishment; departing far from the principles of divine retribution, which, while it threatens with tremendous punishment the bad, offers eternal rewards to the deserving.

The mode and the means of following so excellent an example have been hinted at, and possibly the effect may be greater than the imagination can conceive. To corroborate this idea, something may be collected from amidst the mass of human miseries which now lays waste a neighbouring country: the French troops are undoubtedly brave, persevering, and determined; ignominy, together with the up-lifted axe, strike their attention on the one hand; rewards, suiting their enthusiastic ideas, or relieving their extreme poverty, on the other. God forbid that our fellow-subjects should ever feel the impulse to a discharge of duty from the uplifted axe! It is equally to be wished that they may experience the incitement from the fostering hand of reward.

But neither punishments will intimidate from wrong, nor will rewards allure to right, while seduction, in the semblance of articles of excise, strides, with an unbounded step, through this devoted country; while the financier and the moralist, the pulpit and the treasury, are at variance; and the defalcation of revenue, by a decrement of drunkenness, is more dreaded by the government than bad morals and a dissolute people. If ale-houses must preserve their ubiquity, if the village must, by means of these hot-beds of seduction, partake of the vices of a populous town; the populous town of an overgrown metropolis; because the treasury-coffers require replenish-

replenishing, in vain are all our endeavours to preserve morality; she will disappear from among us, and debauchery, with his companions, will take her place: it has been the case; it is so now; and the effects are visible throughout the land; although the remote, but certain, consequences are not attended to. Here should the determined patriot strike; at this he should aim the shafts of his eloquence, not at a change of political party, making an invective on political measures the means; all nonsense to the million; who, whatever administration rules, must live, and ought to live comfortably. Let the true patriot give them the chance of living soberly, by exciting the legislature to remove, from their too easy grasp, the temptation to vice: that being done, they will live industriously, and become a benefit, not a burthen, to the community.

Such are the principal objects which ought to strike the attention of the patriotic statesman as he surveys the vast horizon which the view of our poor, their rights, duties, and the laws respecting them, offers to his contemplation. If what has been advanced in these pages has the good fortune to point out any leading feature in the landscape to his notice, and society itself, or the poorest individual in it, receives any benefit from such an incitement of his attention, the purpose of the writer has been answered, — he has not employed himself in vain.

 L E T T E R XLIX.

THE legislature gave its sanction to no general act respecting the poor, from the time that Mr. Gilbert's plan met its fate; as has been mentioned, until the session of parliament which was held in the year 1793; except that, by the last clause to an act

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passed,

passed in 1792, to explain and amend the Vagrant-Act, it was enacted, that, if it shall be made appear to two justices of the peace that any poor person shall not use proper means to get employment, or, if he is able to work, by his neglect of work, or by spending his money in ale-houses, or places of bad repute, &c. he shall not apply a proper portion of his earnings to the maintenance of his wife and family, and they shall become chargeable to their parish, he shall be deemed an idle and disorderly person, and punished as such.

By 33 Geo. III. c. 35. some alterations were made in the act passed, in the twenty-second year of his present Majesty, for the better relief and employment of the poor; but, in the mean time, many districts and parishes had, individually, applied for, and obtained, acts of parliament for incorporating themselves, and managing their own poor, in a manner different from that established by the statute-laws of the realm.

It has been remarked, in a preceding letter, that but few, if any, parishes had taken the benefit of, and carried into execution, the plan formed by Mr. Gilbert in the statute alluded to; and a reason for that peculiarity has been suggested: but, by the bill passed this session, it appears, that all the clauses in that act were not so perfect as to leave nothing in uncertainty; and that the wording of one or two of them, for want of necessary technical precision, might involve the parishes incorporating themselves in disputes and lawsuits. It was enacted, "That two-thirds, in number and value, of persons qualified, according to the recited act, who shall attend at any public meetings, and signify their approbation of the provisions of the act, shall be a sufficient compliance with the recited provision." This amendment was intended to prevent those who did not choose to attend the meetings afterward coming forward, and opposing the measure when the parishes had incurred an expense.

The second clause is, to enable the two-thirds of the owners and occupiers of land to recommend two guardians of the poor, if they shall be of opinion that one will not be equal to the duty.

The third clause is, to enable all the parishes uniting to relieve their casual poor, conjointly, and in the same proportion as they are directed to contribute for the general purposes of the said act.

These were certainly necessary amendments to the twenty-second of Geo. III. c. 83. But the objections pointed out by Sir F. M. Eden, in the first volume of his History of the Poor, page 366, are not so obvious.

He says, — That few incorporations of parishes have taken place under the act, is not to be wondered at, when it is considered that, "although it empowers the parishes uniting to borrow money, on the security of the poor-rates, it directs, that the persons sent to the poor-house shall be maintained at the general expense of the parishes uniting.

Section 24, of this act, undoubtedly so directs. And it says, "according to the terms and in the proportions directed and prescribed by this act."

I must confess myself unable to see any objection to this clause. The poor sent to the house are maintained by the consolidated fund formed of the poor's rates of the incorporated parishes, or for which those rates are mortgaged, and, of course, the poor in the house must be maintained at the general expense of the parishes uniting, as they must be maintained out of that fund: and I am more induced to think that no solid objection has appeared to this clause, because it escaped the notice of those applying for the amendment in 1793: neither can much doubt remain on the minds of magistrates with respect to the sending children of the poor to the house under the 30th section of this act.

It says, that all infant-children of tender years, and who, from accident or misfortune, shall become chargeable, may be sent, &c.

"But,

“ But, if the parents or relations of any poor child sent to such house shall desire to receive and provide for such poor child, and signify the same to the guardians, at their monthly meeting, the guardians shall, and they are hereby required to, dismiss such child from the said poor-house.” — “ Nothing herein-contained shall give any power to separate any child, or children, under the age of seven years, from their parents, without the consent of such parents.”

I should conceive the meaning of this clause to be, that all infant-children who shall become chargeable may be sent to the poor-house; but, if the parents or relations of a child so sent shall apply to the guardians, at a monthly meeting, they may take their child out again to provide for it; and that children under the age of seven years shall not even be *sent* to the poor-house without the leave of the parents. The argument, at the sessions at Kingston, the learned baronet rightly observes, turned on a different point.

Rather later in this session, by chapter 54, were the friendly societies within the kingdom put on a new, secure, and respectable, footing; and an institution which originated voluntarily among the best-conditioned of the mass of his majesty's subjects, earning their subsistence by their daily labour, and which was calculated, as it respects themselves, on every principle which can do credit to a human being, whose sole patrimony is his ability to labour; and, as it respects their countrymen, from whom the poor-rate is taken, with a laudable intention to relieve them from the burthen which might be laid on them by the infirmities and accidents of life the subscribing-members are subject to, and to set a good example of economy and prudence to their fellow-labourers; received, by the means of the zealous and unceasing attention of Mr. Rose to every matter which respects the interests of this kingdom, a stability from the legislature, which gave, to what was before the passing of this act, an airy nothing, a local habitation, and a name: but, as the
act

act itself has been commented upon at large, in a former letter, the heads of it shall not be again repeated.

In conversation very lately with a gentleman high in office in the Court of Chancery, on the subject of the poor, he expressed his general approbation in strong terms of this act; but observed, that his situation gave him proofs of the inconvenience attending one of the clauses, which enacts that treasurers, &c. shall render accounts and pay over balances: "And, in case of neglect or refusal to deliver such account, or to pay over such moneys, or to assign, transfer, or deliver, such securities or funds in manner aforesaid, it shall and may be lawful for every such society, in the name of the treasurer or trustees thereof, to exhibit a petition in the High Court of Chancery, or the Court of Exchequer, or the Court of Session in Scotland, or the Courts of Great Sessions in Wales, which shall and may proceed thereon in a summary way, and make such orders thereupon, on hearing all parties concerned, as to such court in discretion shall seem just. And, by sec. 9. no fee, reward, emolument, or gratuity, whatsoever, shall be demanded, taken, or received, by any officer or minister of that court for any matter or thing done in pursuance of this act." He also remarked, that, if this had been left with the quarter-sessions, it would have saved the parties much time and expense, which unavoidably were incurred from the application to the higher courts, although no costs could be given; and, as that was the case, the treasurers, &c. might continue, and had continued, their refusal until attached by the process of the court for contempt.*

It appears, from the very able treatise on the police of the metropolis by a magistrate, that upwards of seventy thousand

* This observation has certainly much truth in it; and it is to be lamented, that the matter had not been considered in time, to have introduced a clause to that purpose in the act which passed 35 Geo. III. *cap.* 111. which extends the powers of the Friendly-Society Act.

families are benefited, by the heads of them being members of friendly societies, within the bills of mortality. Page 166.

The same very intelligent magistrate informs us, in a note to page 164, that it is estimated, in the present extended and improved state of the metropolis, there are 162,000 inhabited houses, supposed to contain about 240,000 families, including lodgers of every description, residing in nearly 8000 streets, lanes, alleys, courts, and squares.

It is supposed, that this number of families is not confined to the bills of mortality; therefore, no exact comparison can be made between the number of families benefited by the friendly societies, and the number of families inhabiting within the bills of mortality, by the information derived from this author; but we also find in the same publication, under the article Institutions for Charitable Purposes, 600 friendly societies in the metropolis and its vicinity now incorporated by act of parliament, composed of mechanics and labouring-people, who distribute to such as are members, and for funerals, 36,000 *l.* a year, raised by monthly payments.

Although no precise comparison can be drawn from this information between the number of poor inhabitants in the metropolis and its vicinity, and the number benefited by friendly societies, still enough appears, if the information be correct, to convince us that a large proportion of that class of inhabitants, who are likely to be at some time in their lives a burthen on the poor-rates, does already partake of the benefit of these societies in London and its vicinity: probably, nearly as great a proportion is benefited by them in the country. If such be the fact, or in proportion with the extent of such a fact, any encouragement, compatible with prudence, that may tend to spread the good arising from them still wider among the mass of our population, must be productive of general benefit; as it will tend to supersede, or render needless, any measure to introduce a similar effect, under the form of a parochial fund; which, however excellent in its theoretic principle, will, it is feared, if it
arises

arises not from a voluntary principle, be attended with too large an expense, and too lax an attention of those concerned in its execution, to be ultimately effective.

There is undoubtedly a selfish, but yet a prudent, principle attending these friendly societies, which excludes all those who are not likely to become profitable members; the aged, the infirm, the maimed, cannot hope to be admitted by ballot; it is not to be expected, that those, carrying about with them certain indications of the present want of assistance, should willingly be received into a society on payment of a small periodical sum, which will entitle them to that assistance of which they apparently, at present, stand in need; while the general appearance and real situation of the members of these societies indicate sound health and ability to labour. The legislature cannot think of opening the door of these societies wider than the individual rules of them admit, for the purpose of taking in a description of men different from such as those rules point out; consequently, a certain description of poor will never be benefited by them, unless some means could be invented to proportion the price of admission, and the *quantum* of periodical payment, to the apparent state of health, and ability to work, of the person proposed, still leaving the matter optional on the part of the society: in that case, it might be a good speculation for the parish to pay the expense.

Whether, for the purpose of giving these unhappy men a rest from their labour, and a prospect in the decline of life of something better than the workhouse, any other institution on similar principles should be established by authority of the legislature, is a matter of no small difficulty to determine: to take from those, who, from their disability to do much work, can earn but little, any periodic, although small, portion of their earnings, with a view to an advantageous return of it in the shape of weekly allowance, when their diseases increase and old age presses on them, and to give them a certain weekly parochial assistance, whether in proportion to the

number of their children, or to the actual pressure of their prevailing infirmity, that they may be able to pay a certain sum periodically for this purpose, is somewhat like taking from Peter to pay Paul, and that, also, at the expense of considerable trouble, arising from the necessity of keeping accounts of some degree of intricacy.

There is, also, another class of the poor, whose comforts are chiefly negative, but whose misery is strikingly affirmative, where the eye of humanity must see much ought to be done, but where, probably, prudence will allow of but little alteration; I mean the women, whether wives or widows, of the labouring-poor, and those, also, who pass their lives in celibacy. Their oppressed situation, particularly of the married women, shall be the topic of the next Letter.

L E T T E R L.

THE farther we recede from civilized society, and the nearer we approach to savage life, the more wretched do we find the condition of the females: it should seem from this, that, in proportion as men make use of that *as sublime* which induces them to look up to, and attempt, at a humble and infinite distance, to imitate the virtues, and render themselves worthy of the protection, of the Creator, do they sensibly feel the blessing he has granted them, in giving them, as a companion, not as a slave or an inferior, a sex, whose best energy consists in modest domestic virtues, in discharging her painful duties with submissive patience, in soothing the cares, and averting, as much as possible, the anxieties, attendant on her more active companion in his journey through human life. But it is civilization, and its concomitant, education, which elicits these best propensities, both in man and woman: in proportion

proportion as these advance, we more clearly perceive the philosophic maxim of the historian to be founded in nature and truth:—

“ Omnis nostra vis in animo et corpore sita est, animi imperio corporis servitio magis utimur; alterum nobis cum dis, alterum cum belluis commune est.”

These ideas press themselves on my mind by the recollection of that train of disagreeable sensations which has too often been occasioned by the discharge of the duties of a magistrate situated in this part of the kingdom, and subject to applications by the poor for an order of relief: frequently have those applications been made by females, and happy must he have felt himself when the laws have permitted him to relieve their distressing complaints of want of food or clothing. This could not be the case when mothers of large families of infant-children, the wives of lazy, depraved, and brutish, husbands, have, with all the pathos of truth and diffidence, related the starving miserable condition of their children and themselves, attempting, at the same time, to conceal, or explain away, the cruel conduct of their lazy or improvident husband. I will venture to say, many magistrates have heard of, and known that there existed, such instances of distress arising from the bad conduct of husbands and fathers of families, as would appear, if in print, to those of the rich, who know but little of the miseries of the poor, scarcely to be within the pale of probability in this kingdom, and have been obliged to dismiss the suppliants, hopeless of relief from the poor's rate, by informing them *their husband* must apply to the overseers for relief: if they refuse *him* relief, *he* may then apply to the magistrate. Alas! their husbands, conscious of their imprudence, their drunkenness, or laziness; conscious, either that they earned sufficient to support their families, but spent it in an ale-house, or that they were lazy and had refused work, would not apply to the overseers, and all order for relief from the magistrate was stopped. In some instances, interference has done mischief, and the overseer has been *desired, not ordered*, to relieve: it has been

complied with : he has then applied for a warrant against the husband, as an idle and disorderly person, by virtue of 32 Geo. III. sec. 45. he has been sent to the house of correction, as such, for a short time ; has returned *punished*, but not *reformed* ; and has added, to the former neglect of his wife and family, cruelty and ill-usage, looking on her complaint as the cause of his punishment.

Another bad custom has, of late, been in practice among the class of labourers : the appropriating a small proportion of his week's earnings for the maintenance of his wife and family, and expecting her and his children, who are at home, and probably unemployed, to find the rest. The consequence arising from this has been, that every child, from the youngest that can creep about to those of maturer age, girls especially, are lurking about the fields and farm-yards all day, stealing whatever they can come at : the girls soon lose all sense of modesty and propriety of conduct, and become, at a very early period of life, initiated in all debauchery : for it is experience that informs us, those who, from their bad conduct and character, have not been able to get away from their families into service, or some separate establishment, but still continue to earn a livelihood at home by doubtful means, are astute and zealous in seducing their younger neighbours, by information how themselves have found means to obtain better fare or more finery.

The laws respecting property militate greatly with the common interest among the lowest orders of society : — that principle which gives the *femme coverte* no right to personal property, but vests the whole in the *husband*, not only occasions innumerable instances of aggravated distress, but appears to be repugnant to the general good. How many families might, and would, be saved from destruction, had the wife but a right to what she could acquire ! Industry and economy stand in need of this natural incitement : — that the industrious and economic should possess a property in what their industry and economy have obtained or saved.

Another

Another circumstance would originate, from this proposition, favourable to individual comfort and to the general good : we might then see friendly societies of females which would assist them in the time of labour and sickness, and, while they are suffering under the painful lot the sex is heir to, some drops of comfort might then be mixed in their cup of affliction. While this assertion is ventured, let it not be imagined that any material alteration in the general law of property, as it may affect married women, is recommended, or that, indeed, any change is hinted at, any farther than what tends to secure, in the lowest ranks of society, to the woman and her infant-children, a right to some proportion of the earnings of her partner and her own, which may ensure them from starving while the husband is at the ale-house. In a former part of this work, the infinite mischief done to morality, to economy, to industry, to the health, and, of course, to the political prosperity, of the kingdom, by these licensed promoters and receptacles of every vice disgraceful to human nature, has been sufficiently dwelt on : if they must still remain the glaring opprobrium of our religious and moral government, we must be satisfied to pay back, in the shape of relief, to the mothers and children of starving families, out of our pockets, some portion of that revenue which is collected by means of this mistaken policy of the state.

Sir F. M. Eden, among the mass of information collected in the second and third volume of his History of the Poor, has given, under the title " Parochial Reports, Carlisle," an instance of a female friendly society, and specified some of their rules ; and, at Lancaster, has briefly given an account of five societies of a similar kind, but has not made such deductions, from the information he has collected, as might have proved the quantum of good, society in general, or the members themselves individually, may be likely to receive from these female institutions, while man remains the lord and master of whatever property his wife may possess.

Was the legislature to encourage these institutions, by giving the wife a right to such property as may accrue to her as a member of one of these societies, still the husband, by withdrawing his assistance, and expecting that the allowance received from these societies should save a proportion of his earnings, which must, otherwise, be applied towards her maintenance in child-bed, would still leave his wife in as bad a situation as ever, and no great good would arise: it is difficult to say what should be done; and, while the mind is in that state of uncertainty, good sense will say—do nothing.

 LETTER LI.

EARLY in the year 1794, I first had the honour of a conversation with Mr. Rose on the poor-laws: he then pressed me to give my attention immediately to the subject; and, as soon as possible, to send him my sentiments in writing, accompanied with a sketch of what, on the whole, would be most advisable, in my opinion, to proceed first upon. In consequence of this request, within a few days, I sent him the following two memoirs, accompanied with a letter; and also, by his recommendation, sent a copy of the History of the Poor to Mr. Pitt, with an offer of my best services.

Memoir I. By 43d Eliz. c. 2. sec. 2. the church-wardens and overseers shall, within four days after the end of their year, and other overseers are nominated, make and yield up, to two justices, a true and perfect account of all sums by them received, or rated and assessed, and not received; and also of such stock as shall be in their hands, or in the hands of any of the poor, to work; and of all other things concerning their office.

And also, by sec. 4. any such two justices may commit to prison any one of the said church-wardens and overseers which shall refuse

fuse to account; there to remain, without bail or mainprife, until he has made a true account.

And, by 13 Geo. II. c. 38. the same officers shall yearly, within fourteen days after other overseers shall be appointed, deliver up to the succeeding overseers a just account in writing, fairly entered in a book to be kept by them for that purpose, and signed by them, of all sums of money by them received, or rated and not received, and also of all materials that shall be in their hands, or in the hands of any of the poor, to be wrought, and of all money paid by such church-wardens and overseers so accounting, and of all other things concerning their office; which account shall be verified on oath before one justice, who shall sign and attest the same, at the foot of the account, without fee.

By virtue of these authorities, two justices issue their precepts to the high-constables of their districts, to direct their warrants to the petty constables, to make out a list of householders to be overseers, and to return such list on a certain day; that the justices may appoint other overseers, and also to give notices to the overseers to appear on that day to swear to their accounts.* At this meeting the high constables, as well as the petty constables, are present.

It

* A Specification of the Mode recommended for the annual Account of Totals to be laid before Parliament. — The Sums and Figures are ideal.

1796.

RECEIPTS.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	
Suffolk, Risbridge-Hundred, Clare.	From the late Overseers.	Charities. Specifying them.	Poor's Rates.	Labour of the Poor.	Total.
	£24 2 1	Banfon-Farm, one year, Michaelmas, £28 16 0 Goosecroft, one year, Lady-Day, £14 6 8 £43 2 8	£448 14 2	£14 2 10	£530 1 9

EXPENSES

It is proposed, that, for the purpose of the intended information, their accounts, which are now kept in a very confused manner, should be reduced under the following heads.

RECEIPTS.— 1. From the hands of the late overseers.— 2. From estates in land left for the purpose of general charity. From ditto, for the purpose of particular charities, inserting, by name or description, any charities, if such there be, which are unproductive, and the reason. From dividends of funded property, or interest of money out at use, for the benefit of the poor of the parish, if any.— 3. From assessments to the poor's rate.— 4. From the work of the poor.

DISBURSEMENTS.— 1. Application of money to county-purposes, vagrants, militia, bridges, gaols, &c. Expenses not concerning the poor, as repairing churches, roads, salaries to ministers, &c. if any.— 2. Ditto, of overseers in journeys, attendances on magistrates, &c. Ditto, of entertainments at meetings relative to the poor. Ditto, of law-orders, examinations, removals, appeals.—

EXPENSES.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
County-Rates, and Expenses not concerning the Poor.	Mitcellaneous Expenses.	Workhouse, and Number of Poor therein.	Poor relieved out of the Workhouse, and Number relieved.	Schools of Industry, and setting the Poor to work.	Total.
County-rates, £38 5 4 Hiring one man for navy, £31 10 0 £69 15 4	Overseer's expenses attending magistrates, £3 5 0 Parish-meetings, £2 2 0 Orders of removal, and law-expenses, £11 19 0 £17 6 0	Men . . 12 Women . 14 Children, 26 under 14 years of age, £160 12 6	Men . . 22 Women, 13 Children, 68 under 14 years of age. <i>Note.</i> These are all the children at home under 14, belonging to the families relieved. £274 11 10	No school of industry. £6 7 2	£525 12 10

Receipts
Expenses

£530 1 9
525 12 10

Due to the parish

4 8 11

3. Ditto

3. Ditto, of workhouse, specifying the number of men, women, and children, therein, under 14, taken on an average throughout the year. — 4. Ditto, of those relieved out of the workhouse by clothes, food, or money; specifying the number of men, women, and children, under the age of 14, so relieved. — 5. Ditto, in setting the poor to work.

The overseer's accounts being thus kept under separate heads, and the truth of their accounts verified on oath, of *voir dire*, to all such questions as shall be put to them, touching their accounts, and being signed by two magistrates.

The high constables shall be directed to return, to the clerk of the peace of the ensuing quarter-sessions, a true copy of the several *totals* of the receipts and disbursements in the parishes within their district, which shall be verified by oath at the quarter-sessions, by the high constable, to be a true copy; and he shall receive from the county-stock, for the account of each parish so returned, the sum of —.

That the clerk of the peace be directed to return, within — days after the quarter-sessions, in a book, a fair copy of such totals to the committee of the house, appointed for the purpose of inspecting the situation of the poor, their rights, duties, and the laws respecting them.

And that a committee of the House of Commons be appointed for that purpose.

If an act of parliament could be passed previous to the next nomination of overseers, which will this year fall very late, and the attention of the people could be excited to the subject, by the judges mentioning it on the circuit to the grand juries, or by other means, the first returns might be made to the House of Commons soon after Easter; and, by the same time on the following year, the information of two years may be obtained; which, it is apprehended, may be sufficiently ample and conclusive to form a specific plan; which, without touching the corner-stone of the poor-laws, the 43d of Eliz. may, with great probability of success, tend to diminish

diminish the expenses of the maintenance of the poor between one and two millions annually; and, at the same time, introduce a system of morality, industry, and comfort, more congruous with their rights as men, and their duties as subjects of the British empire.

Memoir II. Since the House of Commons received the last information on the subject of the poor, which contained answers from all the parishes in the kingdom to interrogatories applied to the overseers respecting the revenue raised for the relief of the poor, and its expenditure, during the years 1783, 1784, 1785, eight complete years are passed, during which there is every reason to believe that the poor-rates have been rising, throughout that part of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws, by rapid strides; in some instances doubling, in others trebling, and, in all, very considerably increasing, the then amount: the expenses attending the relief of the poor have, consequently, increased in a similar ratio.

There is also reason to fear, that the mass of human misery among our countrymen, which one might conceive would diminish in proportion as larger sums have been applied to the relief of the miserable, has not diminished, but has increased.

The information alluded to was incomplete, inasmuch as, although it told the House of Commons the sum expended, and some of the different heads of expense, it did not inform them of the number of poor relieved; an information necessary, to judge of the competence of the sum raised to the object to which it has been applied.

Nor did it inform the house of that part of the revenue, applied to the use of the poor, which arises from estates, real and personal, which have been left by will, or given for charitable purposes, throughout the kingdom, which is received and distributed by the church-wardens and overseers of the poor. This account was attempted

attempted to be obtained by a subsequent act of parliament, but the returns were very incomplete.

No particular attention, in the information which was obtained in 1786 upon this subject, was paid to the incorporated houses of industry; institutions which then had profited by the experience, in those districts where they are situated, of some years, and now have the experience of an additional number of years. An inquiry into their receipts and disbursements will throw some farther light on the subject.

When the proposed information shall be returned to the House, and rendered as perfect as the nature of a return to an inquiry of such magnitude and extent is capable of, it will constitute a foundation on which some propositions may be offered which will tend to meliorate the condition of the poor, and decrease the expenses of their maintenance; some of which may now be cursorily hinted at, but not specifically dwelt upon.

By a repeal or alteration of that part of the law of settlements which restrains the poor from getting their bread where they best can earn it, at the same time taking care that such liberty shall not degenerate into vagrancy. The names of Adam Smith, Mr. Hay, Mr. Townsend, and Sir William Young, all sanction this idea.

By instituting schools of industry, on the powers already given by the 43d of Elizabeth, to set poor children to work, and by adding what other powers are necessary.

By compelling the overseers of the poor to find work for the adult.

By encouragement of box-clubs; and by obliging the pauper who removes from his place of settlement to another parish to contribute to the box-club where he resides; or, if there is none, or the club there instituted will not admit him, by obliging him to make a small periodical payment, while in health, towards his maintenance in time of distress, to the overseers of the poor of that parish, and to send his children to such schools of industry.

By constituting some farther control over the conduct and accounts of the overseers of the poor.

And by a reduction of the various acts relative to the regulation and relief of the poor, which now are dispersed, through a legislation of near two centuries, into one or two plain and intelligible acts, somewhat on the plan of the Highway-Acts, so that the overseer may know each article of his duty with as much ease as the surveyor.

Before the end of the present sessions of parliament, it is conceived that some plan may be digested, printed, and laid before the House of Commons, containing the outline of some such alterations in the poor-laws as have been here suggested; and it may take somewhat the form of an act, that the alterations may be considered of by gentlemen during the vacation, and that such other lights and suggestions may be offered on the subject, during the next session, as may tend to render the system of poor-laws more conducive to the happiness and comfort of the poor themselves, and less expensive to the nation at large.

L E T T E R LII.

WITHIN a few days after my return into the country, I sent another Memoir, farther explanatory of my design, to Mr. Rose, of which the following is a copy.

Memoir III. The information, expected from the Bill recommended, presses principally on three points:

1. The revenue of the poor.
2. The expenditure of that revenue.
3. The number of the poor relieved.

Therefore,

Therefore, this information, when obtained, will be a *terminus a quo*. The future good which may be reaped from a new modification of the poor-laws may be dated and estimated.

Consequently, as much exactness as can be expected from the extensiveness of the inquiry, and the ability of those who are to make a return to it, should appear in the returns of the overseers; and that exactness or deficiency may, in some degree, be made apparent, as to the articles of receipt and expenditure, by comparing the returns made to this bill with those made in the years 1783, 1784, 1785; any glaring variation, either of receipt or expenditure, being marked as an object of revision.

And, probably, an office-letter, directed, during the vacation, to the nearest magistrate to that parish where such manifest difference appears, requesting him to order the overseers to attend him with their book of accounts, to revise the totals transmitted to the clerk of the peace, and to send the account so revised to the officer appointed to receive the same, will be the shortest and most effectual means to render the returns perfect before the next session of parliament.

An annual check, or control, to be held over the overseers' accounts, by their return of those accounts to, and the inspection of, parliament, is one of the heads of regulation most likely to operate in the reduction of the poor's rate and expenditure, and the amelioration of the state and condition of the poor.

Their conduct and accounts are not subject, as the laws now stand, to the revision of any person, save individuals of the parish, who are often too much interested to wish for any revision. The magistrates, if they have the authority to swear the overseers to answer to the truth of such questions as they shall ask them touching their accounts, are not generally in the habit of the practice; consequently, their accounts may be kept in a fallacious, desultory, and equivocal, manner.

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The reduction of the overseers' accounts under proper heads, similar to such as are, by the intended bill, made the means of obtaining the information, was mentioned, in the first Memoir, as a subject of permanent regulation; but, possibly, it will better form a part of the general systematic reform of the poor-laws, than become, at present, a permanent act.

The sketch and plan contained in the first two memoirs having been approved of, I was desired to attend Mr. Lowndes, at his chambers in the Temple, that the act of parliament I recommended might be drawn under my inspection as soon as possible, as it was intended to be immediately proposed to the House of Commons; that, if approved of by parliament, and passed into a law, the overseers might have time to make up their accounts, and return answers to the questions in the manner specified in the schedule, at the usual time of passing their accounts, before the magistrates, at the following Easter.

Accordingly the act was drawn, and I left town in the full belief that, in as short a time as might be, it would pass the two Houses; and, receiving the royal assent, it would, at the ensuing Easter, be the rule for passing the accounts of the overseers throughout that part of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws.

But other matters more pressing occasioned the measure to be postponed, and it has since been abandoned, as far as I understand, on account of the expense attending such an inquiry.

It would be presumption to assert, that sufficient information respecting this important subject is *not* already collected, and in the possession of those from whom the nation expects an amelioration of the present system of our poor-laws. A great body of information may be got together by the inquiries of individuals: each one fixing his attention on a particular point may certainly collect sufficient intelligence on that point to be able to form a general rule: it may be so done; and, if it is so done, it is well done; but, unless something of the kind has been done, it can scarcely be supposed but that general principles would be with greater certainty ascertained,
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