

A letter to the King, in refutation of some of the charges preferred against the poor: with copious statistical illustrations demonstrative of the injustice with which that body has been assailed.

by John Bowen

1835

Text digitised and edited by Tony Woolrich 09/05/2021

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INTRODUCTION

John Bowen published this the year before the Bridgwater Union was formed, on Lady Day, (March 25), 1836.

He severely criticised the statistical basis on which the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was based. He drew his information from various Parliamentary publications and other published works, and demonstrated it in numerous tables. This raises the question of how he became aware and accessed these sources, living in rural Somerset.

Sincere thanks to Ros Boon for proofing this.



A LETTER
TO
THE KING,
IN REFUTATION OF SOME OF THE
CHARGES
PREFERRED
AGAINST THE POOR:
WITH COPIOUS
STATISTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS
DEMONSTRATIVE OF THE INJUSTICE
WITH
WHICH THAT BODY HAS BEEN
ASSAILED.
BY JOHN BOWEN.

The labouring people are only poor, because they are numerous. Numbers in their nature imply poverty. In a fair distribution among a vast multitude, none can have much.

Nothing can be so base and so wicked as the political canting language. It is horrible to call them "the once happy labourer "

Burke.

LONDON: JOHN HATCHARD & SON,
187, PICCADILLY.
1835.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

Sire,

One of the most humble of your Majesty's subjects, who has passed nearly his whole life, from the age of eleven years, either in labouring himself, or in superintending the labour of others,

ventures to approach his Sovereign on a matter of paramount importance to that numerous class with which he is by birth and education connected. The habitual attention which your Majesty's Royal Progenitors have paid to the interests of the Poor; — the amelioration which has been effected in their condition under the benign influence of the House of Brunswick; — the numerous Legislative enactments which that august House has sanctioned, providing for the necessities of the working classes, recognising their rights and protecting their interests, especially point to your Majesty as the natural guardian of that order of Society, which requires the countenance of Supreme Authority at all times, and never more than at present.

A new light, said to be the light of Philosophy, has, to some of your Majesty's subjects, opened new views of their duty towards their necessitous brethren. On those views, strongly urged by persons in high station, the legal right of the Poor to Relief has been abrogated, and a new measure established on other principles. A measure most ominous in its aspect; not so much from the character of its provisions, as from the partial and exaggerated statements on which it was founded; the dangerous doctrines propounded in its progress, and the principles on which it was said to have been based. The original enactments providing for the Relief of the Poor were denounced as sources of hideous evils: the Poor, themselves, were represented as lost to all natural affection; as deluging the land with crime, wallowing in idleness, and threatening, at no distant time, the destruction of all property. A measure introduced with so much of exaggeration and assumption, so much of distorted fact and false principle, is not likely to obtain the acquiescence of that great majority of the people, who, by various calamities, are liable to become subject to its provisions; or the cordial co-operation of that influential body, from whom alone it could receive effective support.

To fix the attention of authority on some of those exaggerated statements, with a hope that the evils inflicted under their influence may be mitigated, is the object of this humble Address. For this object, the sanction of your Majesty's name is supplicated, with an earnest belief, that when the

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merciful consideration of the Sovereign is dutifully invoked for the most suffering portion of his subjects, some attention might be deigned which would not otherwise be conceded to the efforts of an obscure individual. Thus your Majesty is approached, in your Constitutional character, as the fountain of mercy, under a deep conviction, that as that mercy cannot be capriciously exercised, so neither should it be idly invoked. With this conviction, the following remarks are most humbly submitted.



In ordinary times, important measures proposed by authority to Legislative Assemblies, receive, in their progress, that scrupulous attention which invests them with a moral influence, more powerful than mere legal sanction. But this is not the case in such times of excitement and confusion, as those were, in which the Bill for amending the Poor Laws was laid before the British Parliament. All measures which were then brought forward, by the Oracle of the day, were hurried through their stages with an impatient clamor, which peevishly resented all attempts at improving measures, as premeditated attacks on the man. Such factious subserviency is, perhaps, a necessary consequence of the loose materials with which popular assemblies are constructed during periods of epidemical presumption. Hence the immense importance, at such times, of influential measures being introduced by men of lofty views and commanding intellect, who are determined to justify the confidence reposed in them, by an inflexible adherence to principle, and a scrutinizing attention to detail.

Had the great Statesman, who has been lately driven from the Councils of his Sovereign, been permitted to employ his distinguished talents in averting from his humble fellow subjects, the evils with which they are threatened, by the rashness of his predecessors, these pages would have been unnecessary. His penetration must have already detected, the gross blunders and cruel mis-statements, which it is the object of this humble effort, to expose and to refute: and having detected them, his sound judgment and creative genius would have provided an effectual antidote. But as this boon has been withheld from the Poor; as the instruments of their injury are again become the

arbiters of their fate; that appeal, which would otherwise have been superfluous, if not indecorous, becomes a solemn duty, especially devolving on persons who, while they are by birth and education connected with the Poor, are not altogether incompetent to the refutation of the calumnies, by which they, in common with their brethren, are assailed. Under this conviction, an honest attempt will be made to examine, candidly and patiently, the Spirit which was displayed in the progress of this measure, and some of the delusive statements, by which the acquiescence of the Public was obtained.

No apothegm on legislation has obtained more general currency than the assertion, that "the Letter of a law is nothing: its Spirit every thing." If this be so, where the judges of the land solemnly propound the intentions of the legislature, how much must depend on the Spirit of an enactment, which, like the act for amending the Poor Laws, is not merely declaratory of legislative intention, but invests those who are to administer it with an authority to make other laws which, in their practical operation, may reach every poor person in the kingdom. Here the Spirit of the law is, indeed, every thing; and, as far as that can be inferred, from the Spirit displayed in the progress of that law, it may be fearlessly asserted, leaving the law itself unscathed, that no measure ever called more strongly for a serious examination of the circumstances connected with its introduction, the statements by which it was supported, and the existence of the overwhelming necessity which was pleaded for its enactment.

It is scarcely necessary to state, that this measure was introduced to the public by the appointment of a Commission "to make a diligent and full enquiry into the practical operation of the Laws for the relief of the Poor in England and Wales" and to report thereon. The Commissioners were directed to employ Assistant Commissioners in the prosecution of their enquiry; and, we learn from the Report, that these appointments were "accompanied by no remuneration". The service was a gratuitous one, and only a few of the gentlemen engaged in it have yet had their patriotism rewarded by lucrative employments, created on the recommendation of their own Report.

Editorial note. The copy scanned is in the Bodleian Library. Oxford. Page 6 was not scanned then, so when the opportunity arises to get a copy of the page, it will be added later.

for destroying that which exists, and for reducing the ratepayer to pauperism.

The destroyer of filial, parental, and conjugal affection.

PAUPERS.

Generally worthless and profligate.

Mostly made so by improvidence and vice.

The chief receivers of donations from charitable institutions and charitable ladies on whom they impose.

Receiving allowance frequently, much better off than the soldiers.

Generally made so by vicious habits, and not by unavoidable causes.

Made by lying-in hospitals, soup kitchens, blanket societies, and permanent charities.

The originators of riots and fires in Sussex.

In Sussex looked upon one who had been hanged for incendiarism as a martyr, exhibiting him in his coffin, and subscribed for his family.

In some parishes one mass of dissatisfaction, turbulence, and demoralization.

Aid each other in imposing upon magistrates and pariah authorities.

Drive others to receive allowance.

Disimprove rapidly both in skill and morals.

Continue, from generation to generation, raising their families on parish allowance.

Know accurately the allowance of food in each workhouse and each prison within their district, and try to enter where the largest and best is given.

In workhouses fare luxuriously, compared with the labourer of Ireland or Scotland.

Such is the general Spirit of a volume extensively circulated by authority, and left to fret and rankle on the public mind, under the pretence of preparing it for sober and impartial legislation. But even this bill of indictment of four hundred and thirty pages preferred against the Poor, was only the avant courier of the many hundred folios of heavy foolscap which followed in its train, under the name of a Report and Appendixes, crushing the whole question beneath a chaotic

mass of rubbish, from which no one has hitherto attempted to extricate it. The utmost that has been done, even by its advocates, was to select from this mass a few striking passages as themes for declamation, according to the taste or the interest of the selector. The Malthusian philosopher chose those which would best enable him to demonstrate the wickedness of agricultural labourers marrying and begetting families; the hungry expectant of place and perquisite under the anticipated Act, ferreted out instances to establish the sanative virtues of water – gruel and the vast sums which could be saved by curtailing the allowance of the pauper; while the restless slave of ambition pounced on those repulsive traits of character which promised to afford a vehicle for unbounded invective and savage vituperation, and mercilessly launched his bolts on the naked defenceless heads of the Poor.

Such were the Official productions of a Commission appointed “to make a *diligent and full enquiry* into the operation of the Poor Laws” with a view to their amendment. Instead of performing this duty impartially, they produce a nauseous compendium of abuses, improvidence, and crime, without citing a single example of the blessings distributed or the evils averted. To circulate such statements for the purpose of guiding the public to the best mode of cultivating their sympathies with their distressed fellow subjects, is as palpably dishonest as it would be to circulate the Tyburn Chronicle or the Newgate Calendar by authority, for the purpose of regulating our general intercourse with society.

If the effects of an influential enactment, or the characters of any class of the community were collected as mere matters of abstract speculation not intended to influence the acts of others, it would be little better than busy trifling to arraign such collections; but when they are made for the express purpose of guiding the Legislature on a most important subject, it is essential to the ends of justice that a faithful record should be exhibited. Instead of being guided by this principle, these men have raked in the very offal of morals. They have collected crime upon crime, with a frivolous and painful industry, and have brought the whole concentrated mass to bear with such an overwhelming force on the Poor that the public

mind is borne away by a flood of iniquity which scarcely leaves men time to consider that the history of all classes may be written in the same frightful manner. Were a number of gentlemen employed to perambulate England and Wales in search of offences committed by members of the Liberal Professions, or of the other Orders of Society, is there any Profession or any Order which would not furnish an appalling catalogue? But would it not be monstrous injustice, under any circumstances, to treat such a partial record as characteristic of the whole body; and most especially so if the avowed object of that record was to afford materials for legislating on the rights and privileges of the class? Would not such a proceeding be indicative of any spirit, rather than of that spirit of justice which ought to be the distinguishing characteristic of authority

But it is not only from these compendious libels on the Poor, of which the extracts cited from the Table of Contents are fair sample, that the Spirit of this Law can be inferred, the same Spirit was amply displayed in the preparation of the Bill. The most harsh and cruel suggestions of the Commissioners were adopted as the ground work; but of so bungling a character was the fabric attempted to be raised on these, that the Ministers relinquished their intention, not, as it appears, from any sympathy with the Poor, but from that incomprehensible versatility which leaves astonished mankind at a loss to determine whether such wavering is to be ascribed to a total absence of all principle, or to mere imbecility of purpose.

The next step was the introduction of a Bill, prepared under such auspices, to the Reformed House of Commons. Its management in this House was entrusted to a noble person with a mind so unhappily framed that he either could not, or would not, debate one of its provisions on statesmanlike principles. But this poverty of intellect was no bar to the progress of his favourite measure. My Lord Althorpe could not indeed command words, but he commanded that which was infinitely more potent: a blind and servile obedience to his behests. With a subserviency utterly unknown in that assembly since the days of Barebone, the confirmed idlers and dandies, who had been wafted into Parliament on the breath of a

deluded people, whom they had fawned on and betrayed, voted Yea or Nay at the nod of the Noble Lord, and left to his tender mercies the suffering and calumniated Poor. Not satisfied even with this triumph over unsuspecting credulity, — not satisfied with the common mode of expressing that natural antipathy which pert folly bears to wisdom, — these sapient Legislators yelled down every attempt which was made to humanize this measure with an audacity which at once attested the quality of their heads and of their hearts. The proceedings of Parliament were repeatedly interrupted by vulgarities which would disgrace a pothouse. The gentlemen of the public press, whose vocations obliged them to contemplate the degradation of their country in the persons of its Legislators, recorded their honest indignation at conduct contemptible for its servility, and disgusting for its callous brutality. Roused into an honest warmth of expression, one of the most influential and able publications of the day, which had been the unflinching advocate of that Parliament, declared *“that to dignify such a display of servility and clamour with the name of a deliberative assembly, was the deepest insult that could be offered to common decency”*

Astonished posterity will learn that those walls which once echoed the prophetic warning of Burke, the splendid and heart-stirring effusions of Fox, and the profound statesman-like expositions of Pitt, were contaminated by a motley assemblage which would only have been remembered for unmanly servility, had it not distinguished itself by exhibitions of unnatural buffoonery. The authenticated reports of these exhibitions contain daily accounts of public business being interrupted by Honourable Members, who demonstrated their claims to legislative distinction by imitating the gabbling of geese, the hissing of vipers, the braying of asses, and all such kindred sounds, true to the life. Such was the assemblage, as attested by the Reporters to the daily prints, in which the rights of the Poor were trampled under the hoofs of their deluders. Not that Spirits of another order were altogether wanting, but these were proscribed and hooted down by the audacious clamour of the day. All they could then do was, to bewail the degradation of their country, and patiently to abide their time for working out

its redemption.

This Bill was now to be introduced to the House of Lords; and it is difficult to speak in measured terms of the spirit in which this important duty was performed by Lord Brougham. Some of the assertions by which his Lordship prefaced his motion will be examined in detail; but the spirit of his oration may be inferred from the fact that he seriously expressed a strong apprehension of being himself reduced to the miserable condition of a Pauper by the operation of the Poor Laws. Yes, the Lord Chancellor of England, in the actual possession of a salary for his services far exceeding the net income of many persons exercising sovereign authority over extensive territories on the Continent of Europe, and with a retiring Pension of £5,000. per annum, secured by Parliament, laboured to influence the elevated assembly he was addressing by urging on them his own fear of becoming a Pauper! In spite, however, of such appeals to the fears and passions of that assembly, — in spite of the most terrific condemnation of the Poor, grounded on statements either utterly unfounded or monstrously exaggerated, — the cruel measure of the Commons was materially ameliorated in its progress through the Upper House. The Reformed Parliament had entirely deprived the Poor, requiring parochial relief, of the protection of the Magistracy; and had determined that, under all circumstances, relief should **be** left to the discretion of Parochial Authorities. This monstrous innovation on the long established privileges of the Poor was deservedly scouted by the House of Lords, and power given, or intended to be given, to the natural protectors of the People, the Magistrates, to order temporary relief in cases of urgent necessity. In any attempt to estimate the spirit which influenced the contrivers of this enactment it should be especially remembered, that when the Bill, so amended by the Lords, was taken back to the Commons, Lord Althorpe pathetically regretted that the Gentlemen of England should, under any circumstances, however distressing, be invested with the power of ordering relief.

“If I had had my choice, “said the Noble Lord, “I certainly should have been better pleased if no such power

had been given to the Justices “

How little reason his Lordship had to bewail the mercies of the Legislature may be learnt from the distressing scenes which are almost daily recorded in the public prints. Whole volumes of terrific instances of suffering, from the operation of this measure, might be collected, but to republish such would be to follow the unworthy example of the Poor Law Commissioners. It would be unfairly to prejudice the general question, by burying it beneath a load of sickening rubbish. It is sufficient to know that the Metropolitan Magistracy, and others, have repeatedly expressed themselves in the strongest possible manner on this subject.

“What am I to do I “said one of these Gentlemen, in reply to an application for relief under most distressing circumstances, “What am I to do! I have no legal power. I am constantly assailed in the public streets, as a Magistrate, by the famishing Poor, for orders on the Parish Officers. The Act of Parliament is to ambiguous and contradictory, — the one clause gives power, the next destroys it “

In another case, where the Overseers had refused relief, the Lord Mayor of London thus expresses himself:

“I am ashamed to hear of such inhumanity. A calculation seems to have made that poor old creatures will save the Parish expense by dying in the streets. I do not know how any man has not a stone in his bosom instead of a heart, can see such cases without relieving them. The Magistrates, however, have no power to compel Parochial Authorities to afford relief.“

Such is the condition to which the Poor of England are reduced! Such the utter helplessness of a humane Magistracy, while my Lord Althorpe bewails the trivial power still vested in that body, or intended by the house of Lords to be so vested, as too great a boon to be granted, even to those who are in the uttermost extremity of human misery “I certainly, “said he, “should have been better pleased if no such power had been given to the Justices.“

Thus, in the collection and preparation of materials by the Commissioners for elucidating this question; in the mode of its introduction; during its development, and throughout its entire progress, a hostile spirit was exhibited, which, perhaps, justifies more of apprehension for the ultimate consequences of this enactment, than any other measure ever submitted to a human tribunal.

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In proceeding from a consideration of the Spirit of this enactment, to an examination of some of the Statements and Assertions by which it was introduced and supported, it will be scarcely necessary to go out of the Report of the Commissioners, and that extraordinary Pamphlet, entitled a "Corrected Report of the Speech of the Lord Chancellor, in the House of Lords, on July 21st, 1834, on moving the second reading of the Bill to Amend the Poor Laws."

On the first point, the propriety of making any public provision for the Poor, these authorities are not entirely agreed. The Commissioners speak thus hesitatingly:

"The engagements of the 43rd of Elizabeth were, perhaps, dangerous engagement; but they were engagement which for 100 years were performed, apparently, without substantial injury to the morals and industry of the labourers, or to the general prosperity of the country "

"Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike,
"They *hint* a fault, and *hesitate* dislike, "

They do not venture to say that the solemn engagements of our ancestors, to preserve their distressed fellow creatures from perishing, were positively dangerous engagements; but that, *perhaps*, they were dangerous. They do not say that these engagements were performed, for 100 years, either to the benefit, or to the injury of the community; but that they "were performed *apparently* without substantial injury "Not without *any* injury, be it remarked, not even without *substantial* injury; but only *apparently* so. Such is the juggling equivocation contained in this vaunted Report! Such is the manner in which these Commissioners testify their respect for the engagements of their ancestors: engagements more comprehensive and important than any which have ever been entered into by any other Legislative body, and which have been followed by a national accumulation of property, and a general distribution of the means of physical and mental enjoyment beyond all which history records.

My Lord Brougham takes bolder ground than the Commissioners: he does not shelter himself behind "perhaps" and "apparently", but thus bitterly denounces what he terms "the grievous mischiefs inherent originally in the system of a

fixed provision for the Poor "

"By the origin of the mischief, I mean the origin of the Poor Law itself ". "Those who framed the statute of Elizabeth were not adepts in political science, — they were not acquainted with the true principle of population, — they could not foresee that a Malthus would arise to enlighten mankind."... . "The right to share in a fixed fund is the grand mischief of the Poor Laws, with the seeds of which they were originally pregnant."... . "I shall say nothing *at pretext* of repealing the Poor Law itself. I shall, *for the present*, assume that the statute of Elizabeth cannot now be dealt with."

Here we see that the appropriation of any fund to the object of relieving the necessitous is unsparingly denounced, and a resumption of the provision hinted at, but not "*at present*" Most persons have seen other legal and prescriptive rights denounced and threatened in a similar manner. The appropriation of property by individuals for instance, has been held by some philosophers to be an act of extreme injustice, and denounced as utterly inconsistent with the natural Rights of Man. But whenever the possessions of a philosopher of this stamp are attacked by a fellow disciple, the person so attacked does not stand on his natural right; he claims prescription, throws himself on the protection of the Law, and labours to banish or hang his brother philosopher for exercising an assumed right contrary to the laws of that society of which he is a member.

But my Lord Brougham, not satisfied with attacking a Legislative provision for the Poor, lays down what he calls "a truism, an obvious principle, a self – evident proposition, "contained in four assertions which, summed up, amount to this — "No man has a right to food which he does not earn." Now his Lordship has obtained from Parliament, for four years services, £6,000. per annum, during the rest of his life. This sum, at the Pauper scale, which seems to find the most favour with the Commissioners, would afford subsistence to nearly 2,000 labouring men, who require a little bread after their three score years and ten of unmitigated toil and suffering have passed over their heads, without enabling them to realize the trivial means of future subsistence. But his Lordship's doctrine shall not here be farther applied to his own case. His right shall not be impeached. It is established on custom. It is ratified by Law, and foul befall the man who

would disturb him in possession, on the authority of "obvious principles and self – evident propositions"

Abstract questions of Right are nothing more than exercises for metaphysical subtilty; mere themes on which ingenious sophists may descant for ever without reaching the line which separates justice from injustice. The abstract rights of the animal man are only limited by his power. Dominion has been given to him over the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air. This lord of the forest is omnipotent in his natural right. Ranging at will, he may transfix the bounding deer for his food, and level the proudest cedar for warmth or shelter. But when the surface of the earth is appropriated, with all its animal and vegetable productions, and protected by these conventional arrangements, which men call Laws, what then becomes of his natural rights? Can he exercise them without being liable to condign punishment as a violator of Laws? If then this natural right will not avail even the necessitous against Law or Prescription, which it certainly ought not to do, why should the Legal and Prescriptive Rights of the Poor be violated on the authority of Lord Brougham's "general truisms, and identical propositions?" The jargon of right, employed to justify such a violation, becomes a mockery and an insult, the foundation of most pernicious doctrines, which honest Statesmen are bound to repudiate.

The legal right of the Poor to relief is older than the right of four-fifths of the Landed Proprietors of the Country to their estates. That right was established by some of the wisest Statesmen, and most profound Lawyers, that ever adorned this country. It was well said by Mr. Whitbread, in his speech on the Poor Laws, in reference to this right, that "the great Christian maxim of doing unto others as you would they should do unto you, is embodied in our Statute Book "Blackstone emphatically declares that "charity is interwoven with the Constitution of this Country." And now, after nearly two centuries and a half of undisturbed enjoyment, the Poor are to have that right, so embodied in the Statute Book, and interwoven with the Constitution, impeached. And by whom is it so impeached? Not by the mere rabble orators of the Crown and Anchor, or the

Rotunda; but by the Russells and the Althorpes, and even by the Lord Chancellor of England, the guardian of right, the propounder of equity! With what justice can the Poor Man be expected to reverence the conventional rights of others when his own are so wantonly trampled on by authority ?

Both the Report of the Commissioners and the Pamphlet of the Lord Chancellor ascribe the most hideous evils to the operation of the Poor Laws. His Lordship says, that "consequences more pernicious have flowed from them than ever flowed from the enactment or the construction of any human law." With such large assertions it is impossible to deal. — It is only when criminative epithets take some definite form that their truth can reasonably be admitted or their falsehood demonstrated. The principal charges brought forward by his Lordship and the Commissioners shall, therefore, be individually considered; and first, as materially influencing public opinion, that "enormous increase of crime" which is alleged to have taken place, and ascribed to the operation of the Poor Laws.

According to my Lord Brougham, and his colleagues in the House of Commons, the Poor Laws have occasioned " the multiplication of miseries, the increase of every species of crime," and " have filled the calendar to overflowing, notwithstanding the improvement of our jurisprudence and the progress of education." This attempt to poison the source of mercy, by stigmatizing the Poor as a band of criminals, and the Poor Laws as the cause of their criminality, has been successful in an alarming degree. The unquestionable fact, that committals for offences have materially increased in England, has given a sanction to this kind of exaggeration which it could not other-wise have obtained. In as far as this is likely to operate in further misleading the public mind, and prejudicing the cause of the Poor, the alleged fact should be examined. To do so effectually would require a volume; but a comparatively small space will contain such materials for thought

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as will, if fairly used, be sufficient to relieve the Poor of England from that sweeping condemnation to which they have been subjected.

It is impossible accurately to compare the existing state of crime in this country with that of any other country in which there is not a compulsory provision for the Poor. France affords the best materials for such a comparison, but these materials are imperfect, and to a certain degree impracticable, because the returns from the Courts of Assize in France do not include many descriptions of crimes which are in this country brought to the Assizes. Even some crimes which are punishable by death in England, are treated as minor offences in France, and disposed of by the "Correctional Tribunals." A Committee of the House of Commons, who investigated this subject, thus stated the result of their enquiry.

"Without pretending to any great exactness on this subject, it may be inferred, that the whole quantity of crime is greater in proportion to the population in England than in France; but that of offences against the person there are more, both in proportion to the whole number of offences and to the population in France, than in England."

This Report was drawn up in 1828, but a comparison of the Criminal Returns of the two Countries at a later period would seem to afford grounds for a different conclusion. In 1832 the number of cases brought before the Courts of Assize in France only amounted to 8,237; while no less than 31,945 cases of simple larceny, swindling, uttering base coin, cutting and wounding, killing cattle, &c. &c. were disposed of by the Correctional Tribunals. If such offences are deducted from the Parliamentary Return of Committals for that year, in England and Wales, it will be found that the whole number will be reduced by more than three-fourths. But the strong distinction between the state of Crime in the two Countries, is the comparatively few offences committed in England, against the person; being, according to the Report of the Committee before cited, "in the proportion of 1 to 10 in France, while in England it is little more than 1 to 30"

But that Committee omitted an element of primary importance in a comparative estimate of Crime, that is: — the comparative amount of temptation. They say, "it may be inferred that the quantity of Crime is greater in England than in

France, *in proportion to the Population* but surely the additional temptation to crime, which is held out by the enormous wealth of this country, should be fairly estimated in any National comparison. M. Lucas, a distinguished French Advocate, admits,

"That the increase of offences against property in England ought to be measured, not only by the increase of population, but by the increase of property; and that it would be as inaccurate in regard to crimes of this nature, to omit an estimate of the wealth of a people, as to omit any other statistical fact, upon which a result might be established"

It being admitted that the extent of temptation is an essential element in determining the comparative extent of Crime in different Countries, it follows that no just conclusion can be arrived at by the mere comparison of the Committals of two Countries with their respective Populations; even if these Populations were similarly circumstanced in other respects. The comparative amount of this element in England and France it is difficult to estimate; but, perhaps, Dupin's estimate of the Power employed in the two Countries, for the production of Property, is as unexceptionable a measure as any other of the amount of Property itself, and consequently of the comparative amount of temptation.

FRANCE,	Population	31,800,000
	Power	11,536,352
GREAT BRITAIN,	Population	15,000,000
	Power	27,115,497

Thus it appears that, if Dupin's estimate of the power applied to production is a fair measure of the amount of property produced, and if the amount of property determines the extent of temptation, then the temptation to commit crime is more than five times greater in England than in France, compared with their respective Populations. When this important element is duly estimated, with the more heinous nature of the offences committed in France, and when the total absence of any thing like a preventive police in England, except in a few large cities, be contrasted with the formidable police, and general system of espionage established in France, the conclusion arrived at will inevitably be, — that the English Poor, and the Legal Provision for their Relief, have been most foully stigmatised by the clamorous opponents of that provision. But it may be said

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that whatever the comparative amount of crime is, the absolute increase is proved by the Parliamentary Returns of Committals, and that the railers against a compulsory provision for the Poor may possibly be justified in ascribing such increase to that which my Lord Brougham calls "the frightful scourge which is ravaging our Country

" — the Poor Laws.

The number of Committals from 1816 to 1831 stand as follows. The extent to which the country has been agitated, and the minds of the Poor unsettled since that period, would make later returns inapplicable.

Number of Committals for Crime in England and Wales.

YEARS	1816	1817	1818	1819	1820	1821	1822	1823
COMMMITALS	8, 964	13, 932	13, 567	14, 254	13, 710	13,115	12, 241	12, 263
YEARS	1824	1825	1826	1827	1828	1829	1830	1831
COMMMITALS	13, 968	14, 437	16, 164	17,921	16, 564	18,675	18, 107	19, 647

We here see that the Committals of 1817 exceeded those of 1816 by more than 50 per cent., but is this increase to be ascribed to the Poor Laws, or to the deplorable harvest of 1816, and to the 250,000 persons who, in consequence of the general Peace, had to seek new employments? If to the Poor Laws, or to any general deterioration in the morals of the Poor, we might expect a corresponding increase in other years; at all events a considerable increase, while we actually have a decrease in the seven years ending with 1824. In the eleven years ending with 1828, the increase of Committals is not one per cent, more than the increase of Population. About that time a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to consider the subject of Criminal Commitments and Convictions,

In their Report they thus honestly endeavoured to disabuse the public mind.

"Your Committee have much satisfaction in stating their confirmed opinion, that great part of the increase in the number of criminal commitments arises *from other causes than an increase in crime*. Offences which were formerly passed over entirely, or were visited with a summary chastisement on the spot, are now made occasions of commitment to gaol and regular trial "

"The malicious Trespass Act, the Act for paying prosecutors their expenses in cases of misdemeanor, and other Acts not necessary to mention, have tended to fill the prisons without any positive increase of crime."

"Another conclusion to which the Committee have come is likewise consolatory. It appears evident that the number of atrocious offences has *not increased in proportion to the increase in population* and that with the advancement of civilisation the darker crimes become less frequent "

Such testimony should induce every honest Englishman to pause before he permits his

sympathies with his fellow men to be perverted by philosophical subtilities and declamatory exaggeration. If, after having so paused, any should arrive at the conclusion that since 1817 the actual amount of crime exhibited has appeared to have advanced materially beyond the increase of Population, — the additional temptation held out by the increase of capital, and the powerful influence of the Acts of Parliament alluded to in the Report above cited, even then it would not be justifiable to refer such a presumed increase to the operation of the Poor Laws; because the amount of crime, and the character of offences were much more formidable before such Laws were in operation than at present. In the preface to Hollingshed, we learn from Harrison that 72,000 thieves were hanged in England in the reign of Henry the Eighth. The 37th of that Monarch, Cap. 6, declares —

"That divers malicious persons have of late invented and practised a new damnable kind of vice, damnifying the King's subjects, in burning frames set up for houses, cutting out heads and dams of pools, burning wains and carts laden with coals or other goods, burning heaps of wood prepared for charcoal, barking of trees, cutting out of beasts' tongues, cutting off the ears of the King's subjects, and divers other like kinds of miserable offences "

In preambles to Acts of Parliament and various other public documents of the next three reigns, abundant testimony may be found of the dreadful state of society at these periods. The 14th of Elizabeth, which is quoted by the Poor Law Commissioners, commences with the following recital.

"All the parts of this realm of England and Wales be presently with rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars exceedingly pestered, by means whereof *daily* happeneth in

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the same realm horrible murders, thefts, and other great outrages, to the high displeasure of Almighty God, and to the great annoyance of the common weal“

The 39th of Elizabeth, Cap. 17, commences thus —

“Whereas divers licentious persons have wandered up and down *in all parts of the realm*, and assemble themselves in the highways in troops, to the great terror of her Majesty’s subjects. And whereas many heinous outrages, robberies, and *horrible* murders are *daily* committed by these dissolute persons, and unless speedy remedy be had, many damages are likely to accrue to the commonwealth. Be it, “&c. &c.

To attempt, in the face of such official statements, by any mode of reasoning, to establish against the Poor Laws charges of having “multiplied miseries, and increased every species of crimes, “is at once to be absurdly illogical and grossly unjust.

But it is not only to other countries and to other times, that appeals may be successfully made in defence of the English Poor, from the sweeping

condemnation to which they have been subjected; the yearly records of crime, when analyzed, amply attest the foul injustice of such charges. Not only is the present state of crime unconnected with a provision for the relief of the necessitous, but it can only be in a very slender degree connected with that calumniated body. Even the number of Committals afford nothing like data for determining the criminal propensities of the labouring Poor, without a scrutinizing attention to local circumstances. This truth will be rendered abundantly evident by comparing the Committals of the County of Middlesex with those of other parts of the Kingdom removed from the influence of the metropolis. The following statement comprises the Principality of Wales and eleven English Counties, not selected, but cut off by a flowing line from one extremity of the Kingdom to the other, with a slight deviation which will be hereafter noticed.

<i>Counties</i>	<i>Superficies in acres</i>	<i>Population in 1831</i>	<i>Committals in 1831</i>
Cornwall	849,280	300,938	145
Devon	1,650,560	494,478	399
Somerset	1,050,080	404,200	616
Dorset	643,200	159,252	177
Salop	858,240	222,938	228
Wales	4,752,000	803,000	378
Yorkshire	3,815,040	1,371,359	1,270
Westmoreland	488,320	55,041	17
Cumberland	945,920	169,681	74
Durham	679,040	253,910	177
Northumberland	1,197,440	222,912	108
Middlesex	180,480	1,358,330	3,519
	<u>16,929,120</u>	<u>4,457,709</u>	<u>3,589</u>

Here we have the twelve Welsh and eleven English Counties, with a superficies equal to more than one – half, and a Population to more than one-third of England. The Committals for Crime in this extensive division, containing twenty-three Counties, many populous Cities, and four-fifths of the Seaport Towns in the Kingdom, with an immense manufacturing and mining Population, scarcely exceed the Committals in the diminutive County of Middlesex. In the latter County, the

Committals are 1 in 386 of the inhabitants; while the mean Committals of the twenty-three Counties is only 1 in 1,241, and in the extreme Counties do not amount to 1 in 2,000. Is this immense difference, or any part of it, to be ascribed to a general cause, acting like the Poor Laws, on the whole surface of society ! And if not, on what principle can a comparatively minute increase on the whole number of Committals be so ascribed? With such facts, standing on official authority, the

alleged inseparable connection between Pauperism and Crime becomes a fiction too monstrous for any unprejudiced man to entertain. Even Mr. Chadwick himself, after painfully labouring to make out a sad case against the Poor, thus states his conviction on this point.

“Previously and subsequently to my acceptance of the post of Assistant Commissioner, I have paid much attention to the subject of the connection of Pauperism with Crime, and I can state that evidence is at variance with the popular opinion. The following is an extract from the evidence of Mr. Wontner, the benevolent Governor of Newgate: —

“Does any, and what proportion of the average number of criminals who pass through your gaol consist of Paupers receiving parochial assistance at the time of the commission of the offence! — Perhaps one – fortieth: I might say not one-fiftieth. “

But it is not on Mr. Chadwick’s opinion, or even on Mr. Wontner’s testimony, important as that testament is from the character and experience of the deponent, that Englishmen should implicitly rely. These Gentlemen may be mistaken. But there can scarcely be any mistake in conclusions, logically derived, from the state of Crime in this Country before there was any legal Provision for the Poor; — from the state of Crime in some of the most civilized parts of Europe, where there are no such provisions existing — and from its present state in the different divisions of this kingdom. Such an enquiry, even from the slender materials contained in these pages cannot, it is presumed, be fairly pursued without leading to the conclusion; — that the labouring Poor have been traduced, by servile and factious political adventurers, who, to attain their own selfish objects, trumpeted themselves forth as advocates and guardians of the people, and then basely maligned and betrayed them.

However desirable it may be to endeavour to remove a part of the prejudice which has been so cruelly raised against the Poor, by representing them as a band of criminals, it is not less important that the deterioration, said to have been effected in their character and condition, by the operation of the Laws intended for their Relief, should be considered. Those who declaim on the present degraded state of the Poor assume as a fact that, before the statute of Elizabeth was passed, the labouring classes in this country were a

prosperous and independent race. It is not wonderful that such maudlin trash should be put forth by the ephemera that cater for the insatiate readers of the day, who must have something new and vastly interesting; but that men in authority should substitute fiction for fact, and gravely make such statements, almost surpasses belief. The condition of the labouring classes at the period in question, as attested by contemporary authorities, was a condition of extreme indigence and degradation. To that fact, we have not only the testimony of the Chroniclers such as Harrison and Hollingshed, but that of Erasmus and Scaliger. Modern enquirers have likewise uniformly arrived at the same conclusion. Mr. Bicheno, the Secretary to the Linnean Society, thus states the result of his enquiries on the subject: —

“In examining the old authors, about the time of Elizabeth and James, all the facts that are stated by them bear me out in saying, that the condition of the peasantry in this country, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was very similar to what now exists in Ireland “

To those who know Ireland, it is unnecessary to say more. Those who do not, may find the condition of the Poor accurately described by Mr. Inglis. The details are too horrible for more than a short extract.

“In at least three-fourths of the hovels which I entered, there was no furniture of any description, save an iron pot: no table, no chair, no bench, no bedstead; two, three or four little bundles of straw, with, perhaps, one or two scanty or ragged mats, were rolled up in the corners. The inmates were old, crooked, and diseased; some were younger, but emaciated and surrounded by starving children “

This description of the condition of the labouring classes in Ireland, where there is not at present any Provision for the Relief of the Poor, is strictly applicable to this Country before such a Provision was established. Contemporary writers expressly describe the habitations as being generally huts, without any floor but the natural earth, without chimneys, without windows, without furniture: and we learn, from innumerable sources, that the wretched inmates of these styes were the constant victims of pestilence, and, not unfrequently, of famine. Such was the “*prosperous*” condition of the Labourers of that period; and as for their alleged “*independence*”, our early statutes, without one exception, exhibit a uniform spirit of injustice and tyranny towards all the labouring classes. No child could be apprenticed to

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any craft unless the parents were possessed of a certain yearly rent. Unmarried women under forty were compellable to serve, if they were thought "meet for service", and in case of refusal might be committed. Men absconding from service were to be outlawed and, when taken, burnt in the forehead with the letter F. The 12th of Richard II, C. 7, (1388) —

"Prohibits any labourer from departing from the hundred, rape, wapentake, city, or borough, where he is dwelling, without a testimonial, showing reasonable cause for his going, to be issued under the authority of the Justices of the Peace. Any labourer found wandering without such letter, is to be put in the stocks till he find surety to return to the town from which he came"

But the most satisfactory evidence of the condition of the Poor may be found in the 5th of Elizabeth, C. 4, and in the 14th and 39th of the same reign. The 5th expressly declares that the existing Laws cannot conveniently be put in execution "without the great grief and burden of the poor labourer and hired man" It is, therefore, to be considered as an Act of grace and mercy. Nevertheless, it re-enacts a great part of the tyrannical provisions of the statutes which it professes to repeal. Clause the 4th declares what sort of persons shall be "*compellable*" to serve in any craft. Clause 7, what sort of persons, "between the age of twelve years and of sixty," shall be "*compellable*" to serve by the year in husbandry. Clause the 10th, declares — "That none of the said retained persons in husbandry, or in any of the arts and sciences abovementioned, after the time of his retainer. expire, shall depart forth of one city, town, or parish to another, unless he have a testimonial declaring his lawful departure "

Clause 22 provides —

"That in the time of hay or corn harvest, the Justices of Peace, and also the Constable, upon request, shall and may cause all such artificers and persons as be meet to labour, to serve by the day, for the mowing, reaping, shearing, getting or inning of corn, grain and hay, according to the skill and quality of the person; and that none of the said persons shall refuse so to do, upon pain to suffer imprisonment in the stocks by the space of *two days and one night*: and the Constable of the town shall have *authority*, by virtue hereof, to set the said offender *in the stocks for the time aforesaid*."

The 14th of Elizabeth, as cited by the Poor Law Commissioners, enacts —

"That all persons thereafter set forth to be rogues and vagabonds, or sturdy beggars, shall for the first offence be

grievously whipped, and burnt through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron of the compass of an inch about; for the second, be deemed felons; and for the third, suffer death as felons without benefit of clergy

Among rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, are included all persons whole and mighty in body, able to labour, not having land or master, nor using any lawful merchandise, craft, or mystery; and all common labourers, able in body, loitering and refusing to work *for such reasonable wages as is commonly given*"

Such were some of the Laws affecting the great body of the people previously to any Provision for their Relief being in full operation. They were then liable to be dragged forth, even at the caprice of a Constable, and subjected by him to a punishment which would now be considered too monstrous to be inflicted under any circumstance. They were then deemed "Rogues and Vagabonds" for refusing to work for such "wages as were commonly given and as such were liable to branding, whipping, slavery, transportation and death. They are now in the full enjoyment of Political Privileges. They are, beyond all comparison, better lodged, better clothed, better fed and better educated, than they were before the passing of that measure which is falsely said to have degraded their character and condition. They are in possession of many comforts to which even the more elevated classes in the 15th and 16th Centuries could not aspire. They have, speaking of them in the aggregate as an entire class, several millions at interest in Savings Banks, and perhaps ten times as much, in Funded and other Property. What then can be more unfounded than to assert that their condition has been deteriorated by the fixed Fund established for their Relief?

But not only has it been attempted to prejudice this question, by falsely describing the condition of the Labouring Classes, attempts have likewise been made to rouse the passions of the other classes of society, by exciting their cupidity. The sum raised for the Relief of the Poor has, for several years, been a standing theme for declamation. The amount is deemed enormous, and said to be pressing down, by its weight, all the vital energies of the State. The impoverished Capitalists are represented on the point of annihilation, and their requiem, with that of the Landowners, pathetically chanted by their dear friends, the Philosophists, who having wickedly

endeavoured to rouse the passions of the multitude against that important body, whom they unsparingly denounced as monopolizers of the necessaries of life, now invert the process, and cry down the Poor as preying on the vitals of the rich. But whatever may be the amount, or the consequences, of Parochial Contribution for the Relief of the necessitous, these Gentlemen do not fairly state their case. The sums raised for that object is treated by them as a payment made by the Capitalist to the Poor; but surely this is not so. The sum so levied generally increases the price of the products which it is levied upon; and would, were it fairly assessed, be just as much paid by the consumer, as most of the other charges to which produce is liable. Nearly three-fourths of the inhabitants of Great Britain belong to that class which includes Paupers in its number; and are, individually, liable to be reduced to that lamentable condition, by a want of employment, by prolonged illness, and by several other contingences, this class, of which Paupers, be it remembered, are a *fluctuating* portion, and not a *distinct* body, do pay, in proportion to their consumption, their full quota of the increased charges which produce bears in consequence of Parochial Assessment. And when it be considered, that the sum raised for the Relief of the Poor is principally levied on Agricultural Produce, and on the Stocks of Retailers; and that the Labouring Poor are the greatest consumers of such Produce and Retail Stock, it will be seen that they are, beyond all comparison, the greatest contributors to that fund, which is falsely said to be the contribution of the other classes of society, for the Relief of the Poor.

It is not intended to deny, that the other classes do contribute largely and, in general, most cheerfully to the necessities of their humble brethren, but merely to show that they are not the only, or even the principal contributors. As for the ruin said to be suspended over them, by the intolerable pressure of the Poor, it is difficult so to restrain an honest indignation as to examine, in detail, this most groundless assertion. What is this pressure? Or rather, on what class has it pressed from the age of Elizabeth to the present time? Has it pressed on the great Landed Barons, whose forests and morasses have been converted into

gardens, infinitely surpassing in beauty the pictured ones of Alcinous and Armida; while dreary castles and rush strewn floors have, by the labour of this proscribed population, been exchanged for all of luxury and splendor which modern refinement, stimulated by ancient examples, can suggest? Has it pressed on the means of that Mercantile Class which is enabled, by the simple interchange of the produce of the Poor, to outvie in magnificence, and in princely liberality too, the once enterprising Senators of Venice and Genoa? Has it pressed on Professional Men, who are, perhaps, ten times more numerous than they were in the beginning of the last century, and whose well-earned incomes enable them to live in a style to which the Princes of the Olden Time seldom attained? Or can the Poor be said to have pressed on that most numerous Class, the Shopkeepers, who have, in most cases, by dealing in the labour of others, been enabled to exchange their cheerless bulks and open sheds for splendid apartments, carpeted rooms, and silken furniture? Has it pressed on these men, who neither reap nor sow, and who, without increasing the National Stock, contrive to enjoy, from the labour of the Poor, more of the comforts of life than were enjoyed by Princes in the Court of the Plantagenets and the Tudors? I do not now feel; I never did feel, one spark of envy at the enjoyments obtained by any individual, or any class of individuals; but when it is asserted, that a compulsory Provision for the Necessitous has pressed down the other orders of society, the assertion is denied as utterly irreconcilable to fact.

It admits of all the proof that can be brought to bear on similar subjects, that there never was a period in the History of this Country, when the exertions of the Poor procured so many enjoyments for those who do not labour as at present. And at no period, in this Country, or in any other, were there ever so large a proportion of the Population subsisting on the labour of others, as are now enjoying every luxury under heaven from the sweat of the Poor Man's brow.

To compare, in detail, the present number and condition of the middle classes, with their number and condition before the introduction of the Poor Laws, would be a mere waste of time. That influential and numerous body has been

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multiplied more than twenty fold since the age of Elizabeth; previously to which it can scarcely be said to have had any recognised existence. What was the origin of this Class? From whom are they sprung? Are they the descendants of the upper classes, reduced to the middle order? Or have they sprung from the Poor? If from the latter, which is most unquestionably the case, their existence triumphantly refutes the calumnious charge, that a Provision for the Poor has been fatal to their industry and provident habits. It is evident that one steadily progressive march of improvement and accumulation has, from the age of Elizabeth, abundantly multiplied and distributed all the means of enjoyment which our own climate affords. The whole habitable earth too, has been ransacked for objects of luxury and taste, and every region, in its turn, made to contribute its choicest productions to an unsated appetite for novelty and ornament: an appetite, not merely indulged in by the few, but by millions. In addition to the immeasurable mass of wealth accumulated at home, means have been furnished, by this denounced Population, to foster rash

speculation and chimerical enterprise in distant parts of the globe. Upwards of seventy-two millions have been subscribed, in this Country, to Foreign Loans since 1821, and about eight millions have been squandered in American Mining and other Foreign Schemes. All this is the result of the Poor Man's labour, aided by accumulated capital, *created by former labour*; and amid this exuberant profusion, derived from such a source, the Legislature is invoked to save the Country from the ruinous consequences of the Poor Laws.

It is difficult, even for persons not unused to such efforts, to preserve the integrity of their judgment against the clamour which has been raised on this subject. A material aid towards effecting this may be derived from steadily contemplating the prodigious change which has taken place in the Commerce and Public Revenue of this Kingdom, since the date of the Poor Laws. Misselden states the exports in 1613 to have been £2,090,640; they are now upwards of forty millions annually. The Public Revenue, from 1558, is thus given by Pebrer.

Public Revenue of England, from the Reign of Elizabeth to the present time.

	<i>Anno.</i>	£
ELIZABETH	1558	500,000
JAMES I	1602	600,000
CHARLES I	1625	895,819
COMMONWEALTH	1648	1,517,246
CHARLES II	1648	1,800,000
JAMES II	1685	2,001,885
WILLIAM III AND MARY	1688	3,985,225
ANNE (1706)	1704	5,691,803
GEORGE	1714	6,762,643
GEORGE II	1727	8,552,540
GEORGE III (1783)	1760	15,372,971
DITTO	1800	36,728,000
DITTO	1815	71,153,142
GEORGE IV average 1820 to	1826	58,000,000
DITTO ditto 1826 to	1830	60,000,000
WILLIAM IV average of Three Years	...	46,620,165

It would be easy to show, were this the place for such an enquiry, that the Revenue is collected

with less inconvenience to the subject, at present, than it was in the age of Elizabeth: a conclusive

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answer to those who charge the Labouring Poor with having impoverished the Nation. When the clamourers against a provision for the indigent complain of the millions collected for Parochial Relief, they generally compare the amount so raised with the Revenues of other States or other times, and then pronounce it to be “enormous.” Enormous, indeed, it would be, if compared with the Revenues of the Tudors; still more enormous if

compared with the early Parliamentary grants: but what has such comparisons to do with the subject? The question is, what proportion does this “overwhelming burthen”, which, according to my Lord Brougham and his late colleagues, is to crush the whole fabric of society, — what proportion does this crushing burthen bear to the national resources as estimated by the latest authority?

Estimate of the value of Produce and Property annually raised and created in Great Britain and Ireland, by the combination of Capital with all animate and inanimate Power, from Pablo Pebrer.

AGRICULTURE	£	£
Grain of all sorts	86,700,000	
Hay, Grass, Field Crops, &c	113,000,000	
Potatoes	19,000,000	
Gardens, Orchards, and Nurseries	3,800,000	[Total] 246,600,000
Timber cut down, Hops, Seeds, &c	2,600,000	
Cheese, Butter, Eggs, &c	6,000,000	
Manure, and Labour in Rearing Cattle	3,500,000	
MINES AND MINERALS	21,400,000	
INLAND TRADE	48,425,000	
COASTING TRADE	3,550,000	
FISHERIES	4,550,000	
SHIPPING AND FOREIGN COMMERCE	34,398,059	
BANKERS — Profits of this Class	4,500,000	
FOREIGN SECURITIES, &c	4,500,000	
MANUFACTURES	£	
Cotton	31,000,000	
Silk	8,000,000	
Woollen	16,250,000	
Linen	11,000,000	
Leather	15,000,000	[Total] 148,050,000
Hardware	17,300,000	
China, Glass, Pottery, &c	5,900,000	
Jewellery, Plate, &c	3,400,000	
Paper, Furniture, Colours, Printing & Book Apparatus, &c &c	9,000,000	
Miscellaneous	31,200,000	
		£514,823,059

Without pretending to vouch for the accuracy of these details, it is sufficient to know that they are the results of unwearied application and of the best information which could be collected on the subject. The basis of this estimate is that of Mr. Colquhoun. The products of Agriculture are, in its present depressed state, certainly estimated too

high, while some of the other amounts are too low. Taken in the aggregate, the whole may be considered as a fair approximation to the amount of “Produce and Property annually raised and created in Great Britain and Ireland, by the combination of Capital with all animate and inanimate Power.” It is with this amount that the

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sum required for the necessities of the Poor should be compared, and not with the amount of income in ages of slow production, when not an hundredth part of the present amount of Capital was accumulated.

The next point for consideration is, the amount of the sum expended for the Relief of the Poor. In the year ending on the 25th of March, 1833, the sum *said* to be so expended was £6,790,799. But from this amount should be deducted the sum paid as wages out of the Poor Rate, on the Allowance System. This sum cannot, by any mode of reasoning, be treated as a payment for the Relief of the Poor. In nine cases out of ten, it must as directly be admitted to be wages as the sums actually paid under that name. There is the authority of the Commissioners for declaring that this practice is a general one: not confined to Agricultural Counties, but in full operation in some of the Manufacturing Districts. It stands on the same authority, that, in many cases, more than one-third of the wages is so paid. Without any pretensions to accuracy on a point which does not admit of it, it may be fairly assumed that a sum, far exceeding one million sterling, is paid from the Rates which ought to be directly paid by employers as wages. It is believed that the amount is even double that; but, assuming it to be one million, there remains

“ Abstract of an Account of the quantity of unmanufactured Tobacco, of manufactured Tobacco and Cigars, and of Snuffs, imported into the United Kingdom, in the year 1833; with a statement of the quantity retained for Home Consumption, and the amount of Duty paid thereon.

	Quantity imported	Retained for Home consumption	Amount of Duty
	lbs	lbs	£
Unmanufactured Tobacco	22,082,579	20,626,800	3,090,782
Manufactured Tobacco and Cigars	386,608	143,868	64,726
Snuffs	3,864	138	41
Totals	22,473,051	20,770,806	3,155,550

To this sum must be added, the cost of the commodity, expenses of manufacture, charges of transit, interest of capital, expenses and profit of more than 120,000 Licensed Dealers. Attempts have been made to ascertain what proportion the Retail Price bears to the Duty, including, of course, Cigars and Snuff of English manufacture. The result of these enquiries is, that the gross produce of the *retail sale* cannot be estimated at less than

1833.

£6,790,799. as the sum said to be *expended* on the Poor. This is not the sum actually *received* by them, for the Report of the Commissioners shows gross fraud and extravagance in the administration of this revenue; in some cases to the amount of 40 per cent. These frauds are not necessarily consequent on a provision for the indigent, and, therefore, afford no argument against the principle of Parochial Relief; but no deduction shall be made, either on this account or on others that will readily suggest themselves. Be it admitted that £5,790,799. is the amount paid for the Relief of the Necessitous in England and Wales. This may either be a large or a small sum, according to the Capital of the Country in which it is levied: it is only by comparison that its magnitude can be understood. The means have been afforded, in a former page, of comparing this amount with the amount of Property annually created; but a more minute comparison may be advantageously made with some particular source of expenditure. The sums paid for Tea or Beer so materially exceed the amount of the Poor Rates, as to be quite out of the question; but the amount expended in Tobacco and Snuff - comes sufficiently near to be applied in illustrating this matter. The following is from the Parliamentary Paper, No. 212

two and a half times the amount of Duty. If this be correct, we have £7,888,875. as the Sum so expended in 1833; but even take two millions from this sum, on account of Ireland and Scotland, and of any presumed inaccuracy, and the residue will still exceed the amount expended, in the same year, on the Poor of England and Wales! Here we have a practical matter of fact standard, which every man is competent to apply

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EXPENDED FOR THE RELIEF OF THE POOR. 5,790,799

EXPENDED FOR TOBACCO AND SNUFF 5,888,875

Such is the result of the engagements of Elizabeth, which the Poor Law Commissioners insinuated were "dangerous" engagements! Such is the "National incubus" which the Althorpes and the Russells drivelled over in their House of Commons! Such is the weight by which, according to my Lord Brougham, "we are pressed down," and which threatens "the destruction of all Property" If from this point we take a retrospective glance, we perceive that the Poor themselves bear a large proportion of that "pressure" of which we have just seen the comparative weight; — that the Middle Classes, instead of having been annihilated by it, as the sciolists complain of, are immensely increased in number, wealth, and importance; — that the Revenue of this Country has advanced under it ninety fold, while the Property, annually created, is nearly one hundred times greater than the sum expended for the Relief of the Poor.

But if this result be contemplated prospectively, what cheering views does it not open to the honest Politician? The declaration of the great Statesmen who adorned the age of Elizabeth, that the Poor of this Realm should not be suffered to perish for want while their fellow subjects abounded, is the first example which legitimate history affords of such a comprehensive declaration. A declaration which involved the most important problem ever propounded to a Legislative Assembly IS THE ADMISSION, ON THE PART OF A NATION, OF A SOLEMN OBLIGATION TO SUPPORT ALL ITS DISTRESSED SUBJECTS, COMPATIBLE WITH PROGRESSIVE ADVANCEMENT IN CIVILIZATION, WITH INDIVIDUAL ACCUMULATION AND VAST NATIONAL WEALTH? That problem is solved on the experience of two hundred and seventy years. For more than two centuries and a half, practical effect has been given in England to an admitted principle of unbounded Charity, administered without any regular system, without any efficient control, with accumulated abuses and most incompetent agency; and, even under these disadvantages of administration, the Country has progressed in power and wealth beyond all example, and the sum disbursed in

consequence of the large principle admitted, is less than that expended in one of our idlest indulgences. With such facts before us, it becomes a public duty to refute the sophists who would despoil the Poor under the pretence of averting national impoverishment and ruin; to expose, by incontrovertible facts, their fraud or their folly, and to denounce them as most dangerous deluders of mankind. It is no less a duty to invite the attention of the Christian Philanthropist to the important truth, that the most comprehensive example on record, of Legislative obedience to the paramount command, of doing unto others as you would be done unto, does not entail on this Country, after having been in operation two hundred and seventy years, a pecuniary sacrifice so heavy as that which is made for an absurd indulgence.

But it is said, that the moral and contingent consequences of the Poor Laws are, in some instances, unfavourable to the Poor themselves, and to the interests of society. Grant this; and what then? Are there no contingent advantages to counterbalance those evils? The beneficent Author of our being has permitted that even HIS bounties should be liable to abuse; and what are *we*, that we should petulantly disobey our bidding, because our best intentions may, in some cases, be frustrated? If arguments against the existence of any institution are to be founded on its liability to abuse, and to be considered conclusive, what is there in Legislature or in Jurisprudence that would survive such an ordeal? Men are unquestionably bound to use their sober efforts to purify from taint, those institutions by which civilized man operates, and having used these efforts patiently and humbly, we are not to be repelled, by finding some defects which we cannot remedy, some abuses which we cannot remove. For such apparently irremediable evils we should continue to provide such checks and palliatives as experience may suggest; and this, not merely from year to year, but from generation to generation, as a proof of our obedience, and a legitimate exercise of our temper and faculties.

The evils contingent on a Provision for the

A letter to the king, in refutation of some of the charges preferred against the poor :with copious statistical illustrations demonstrative of the injustice with which that body has been assailed.

by John Bowen

1835

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Relief of the Poor, as that Relief has been usually administered, lie on the naked surface, and offensively obtrude themselves on our notice. Not so the contingent advantages; these, although most important, are not always obvious. The Poor Law Commissioners, for instance, complain that English "Paupers fare luxuriously, compared with the Labourers of Ireland or Scotland." Without intending to palliate any approach to extravagant expenditure, it may be stated, as an unquestionable fact, that if the Poor Laws have been the means of elevating the *general* standard of subsistence in this Country, they have, without any reference to the immediate relief afforded to the suffering Poor, procured incalculable advantages for the other classes of society. When the Poor lived on pulse, the diet of the Rich was proportionably coarse. When the Poor pined under dearth and famine, Rich and Poor were swept off together by the pestilence which invariably follows this dreadful visitation.

It is said that the Poor of England enjoy more than the Poor of other Countries. They most certainly do so, to the decided advantage of the whole community. The peace of society is preserved, and its general tone elevated, by the alleged superfluities of the Poor. In seasons of scarcity the Poor can, and do, relinquish such superfluities, and, by so doing, are generally enabled to weather the storm; while the Poor of other Countries, existing habitually on the lowest articles of food, on rice, potatoes, or oatmeal, for instance, are already at the bottom of the scale, and have nothing to fall back on. They have no superfluities which they can sacrifice for necessaries, to mitigate the dispensations of Providence. Under such circumstances, a small deficiency creates an alarming scarcity; a real scarcity becomes a grievous famine. Such are the necessary consequences of a low standard of subsistence.

In as much as the Poor Laws have elevated the general standard of subsistence in this Country, they have aided in bestowing an inestimable boon, not only on the Poor, but on the other classes of society; who are thus preserved from being periodically committed in a deadly contest with a starving and infuriated populace. Have the

opponents of a Provision for the Poor yet to learn that, although a certain measure of distress and suffering calls out the best feelings of our nature, yet, under more heavy dispensations, when men become familiar with scenes of unusual horror, and at length involved in them, or fearful of being so, the generous feelings of poor suffering human nature give way, and are smothered beneath the pressure? The records of famine and pestilence attest this truth. They prove that in extremities of misery, a demoniacal selfishness is generated, fatal to our kindly feelings, and most fearfully dangerous to all who are within its influence. Under such circumstances, men glare on each other like wolves. The elements of society dissolve; and those very scenes which, without the light of experience, we should expect would awaken all the slumbering sympathies of human nature, are rife with plunder, and brutality, and recklessness, and murder. From such scenes we have been long preserved, under circumstances which, in other Countries, would have infallibly produced them; and to the operation of the Poor Laws, under Providence, that preservation is to be chiefly attributed.

But such general reflections as the immediately preceding ones, must not, in the very limited compass of a Pamphlet, be further indulged in. Loose, sweeping charges against the Poor, and the Legal Provision for their Relief, must be left to their fate, in order that specific accusations may be fairly met. One of these, strongly urged by the Commissioners, is, that the Labouring Poor consider the sums said to be raised for the Relief of the Impotent and Indigent as an inexhaustible fund, and unhesitatingly apply to it on all occasions. Admitting this to be true, which it is not to the extent stated, what other course could be expected from the Poor? Who has set them an example of respecting this fund? Why the very Report of the Commissioners, with its Appendix, contain numerous instances of these funds being perverted to venal and factious purposes, to the grossest jobbing, and the most shameful imposition and chicanery. Is it to be expected that the Poor, surrounded as they are by temptations, will be sufficiently disinterested to practise self-denial, with such pestilent examples before them?

Has the Legislature, itself, respected the integrity of Parochial Funds? So far from having done so, scarcely a Parliament has sat, for the last half century, without charging the Rates, avowedly levied "*for the necessary Relief of the Poor*" with some payments for other objects, which ought to have been provided for out of the general Revenues of the State. Parliament after Parliament have considered the Poor-Box as a Treasury for miscellaneous purposes, and the Overseer as a man of all work: they have thus eradicated every idea of its being a hallowed fund, which it would be infamous to pilfer or to pervert. It was the duty of those who, in their legislative capacity, were to determine the appropriation of this alimentary fund, not merely to preserve the integrity of its distribution, but to enlist our very prejudices in its behalf; and to endeavour to invest it with that sacred character which preserves the robin unharmed amid the gambols of a hundred urchins. Had our Lawgivers endeavoured to do this, their example must have been beneficial, and would, perhaps, have been effective; but having found it convenient, in the hurry-scurry of slovenly legislation, to put their hands into the Poor-Box for innumerable purposes not connected with the Relief of the Impotent and Indigent; and having yielded to the temptation, it could only be expected that the Poor would follow their example. This is not offered in defence of *individual* instances of fraudulent application for relief; but in reply to the *general* charge, that the Poor are disposed to pervert Parochial Funds from their legitimate application.

The Poor Law Commissioners assert, that "*even the least contact with Parochial assistance seems to be degrading.*" In support of this sweeping assertion they cite the following case, from the returns of one of the Assistant Commissioners.

"The change that is made in the character and habits of the poor by *once receiving parochial relief*, is quite remarkable; they are demoralized *ever afterward*". I remember the case of a family named Wintle, consisting of a man, his wife, and five children. About two years ago, the father, mother, and two children, were very ill, and reduced to great distress, being obliged to sell all their little furniture for their subsistence; they were settled with us; and as we heard of their extreme distress, I went to them to

offer relief; they, however, strenuously refused the aid. I reported this to the churchwarden, who determined to accompany me, and together we again pressed on the family the *necessity of receiving relief*; but still they refused, and we could not prevail upon them to accept our offer. We felt so much interested in the case, however, that we sent them 4s. in a parcel with a letter, desiring them to apply for more, if they continued ill: this they did, and from that time to this (now more than two years) I do not believe that they have been for three weeks off our books, although there has been little or no ill health in the family. Thus we *effectually spoiled* the habits acquired by their previous industry "

This case is not encumbered with any technical difficulty. An industrious and, as may be inferred from the Report, a most respectable pair, having five children, become, with two of their children, "*very ill.*" This visitation reduces them to "*great distress,*" under the pressure of which "*all their little furniture*" is sold for their subsistence. They are then heard of as being in a state of "*extreme distress.*" Parochial assistance is tendered to them which they "*strenuously refused*" to receive. The tender is again made, and again rejected. At length, four shillings is pressed upon them, and this, according to the Commissioners, ruins them for ever! For two years afterwards, they were not three weeks off the Parish books. Thus, says the Reporter, we "*effectually spoiled the habits acquired by their previous industry.*" And this case is cited by the Commissioners to prove that, "*even the least contact with Parochial assistance seems to be degrading*" Admit for a moment the statement of the Reporter, and the inference drawn by the Commissioners; grant that this family was degraded by their "*contact*" with Parochial assistance. Grant even that such a degradation is a general result; should this industrious couple, struck down by disease and calamity, have been left, without furniture, without food, without fire, with their five children, to perish, lest they should be degraded by relief? This, on a question of *principle*, is the point to be solved by the Legislature. Should the axe, in such cases, be laid at the root of all public charity, because the fruit may not be precisely that which our rash impatience and narrow views would anticipate? So much on principle. On a question of *expediency* it may be asked, if the sufferers in such cases are to be left to struggle on to the last gasp, is there not a probability that the revolting spectacle of

industrious persons, being so left to perish by disease and famine, may generate a desperate ferocity something more dangerous to society than the *degradation* which, according to the Commissioners, is the result of affording relief?

So far on the assumption of these unfortunate sufferers having been actually degraded, and of that degradation having been occasioned by their receiving Parochial Relief. But what is the proof of their having been degraded?

Why they remain on the Parish books, with but little intermission, for two years. And, under such circumstances, is this to be received as a proof of degradation? Let us consider what they had to attain before they could recover their former position. From as much of their character as appears in the Report, it may be supposed that, before they were overtaken by this calamity, they had some little savings; at all events, they had furniture, and no doubt were well clothed. When reduced by disease, the first thing would be to fall back on their little hoard, if they had such; the next, to pawn their apparel; they would then, most probably, endeavour to obtain that credit with the chandler's shop which the industrious honest Poor can generally command. This resource failing, the next would be to sell "*all* their little furniture," article by article, and to this last extremity they were reduced. Disease and hunger had enfeebled their bodies, and the sight, under such utter helplessness, of their suffering and starving children had no doubt distracted their minds. They receive some trivial relief, eventually recover, and for nearly two years require assistance, although there was "little or no ill health in the family " And what then? Is it probable that a family of that number could, with the recovery of health, immediately recover the ability to obtain the means of daily subsistence. They had nothing to fall back upon, be it remembered, as they had in their previous time of need; no hoarded guinea to help out their diminished earnings; no apparel to pawn; no furniture to sell: these were all gone, and the two latter were to be again procured. On what grounds can the Commissioners, or their Reporter, conclude that human creatures, reduced to such an utter state of destitution, ought to recover their wonted energies and former independence in two

years? The expectation is monstrous. The charge of degradation most unjust. That a painful depression of spirits, and a subdued tone of feeling should follow such calamities is naturally to be expected. But surely such dejection, and its consequences, should be ascribed, not to the hand that held out relief, but to, the yawning desolation which made relief necessary.

Another specific accusation, and one that requires to be considered in the most cautious spirit of candor and truth, is the sweeping charge made against the Poor Laws of having almost eradicated natural affection from the breasts of the Poor. The fact is taken for granted, and is thus commented on by the Poor Law Commissioners in their Report: —

"The duty of supporting parents and children, in old age or infirmity, is so strongly enforced by our natural feelings, that it is often well performed, even among savages, and almost always so in a nation deserving the name of civilized. We believe that England is the only European country in which it is neglected."

My Lord Brougham, in his own peculiar manner, thus amplifies the heavy charge made by the Commissioners: —

"The law of nature says, that a man shall support his child — that the child shall support his aged and infirm parent — and that near relations shall succour one another in distress. But our law speaks another language, saying to the parent, "Take no trouble of providing for your child" — to the child "Undertake not the load of supporting your parent, — throw away none of your money on your unfortunate brother or sister, — all these duties the public will take on itself." It is, in truth, one of the most painful and disgusting features of this law, that it has so far altered the nature of men. It is now a *common thing* to hear the father say, "you allow me only so many shillings a week for children, I will drive them from my doors, and deny them the shelter of my roof." and it is not *unusual* to hear the child say, "If you do not allow my aged mother more, I shall take her out of my house, and lay her in the street, or at the overseer's door." I state this from the text of the evidence "

It is here distinctly declared, that this part of the subject is approached with an overwhelming feeling of its importance; with a deep sense of the awful responsibility which would be incurred, if one sentence were written to palliate the alleged crime, and with a solemn conviction, founded on a most intimate connection with the Poor, that the charge itself is, in its general application, a gross libel on that calumniated body. The Poor Law

Commissioners, in that spirit which has been already commented on, have succeeded in raking together certain examples of this crime. They might, with the same pains, have collected an equal number of instances of murder, and with the same regard to justice, they might, on the facts so collected, have preferred a general charge against the Poor of being a body of murderers.

The instances of unnatural brutality, collected by the Commissioners, may be safely left to the execration of mankind. They defy any attempt at extenuation, and scarcely admit of being aggravated. But is it not an act of folly to assume that these criminals would have been humane, dutiful, and affectionate had it not been for the Poor Laws? Have not all societies, and all classes, their monsters? And would not every class furnish terrific instances of individual depravity? The very impression created by such recitals, is a proof that the cases are not common; and, if not common, they cannot be fairly ascribed to the operation of a cause which, like the Poor Laws, affect the great mass of the People. It is scarcely possible to treat any class of persons with more injustice than to cite such instances, for the purpose of criminating the whole body to which the offenders belong. The individual cases may be specifically true, while their sweeping application involves a cruel libel; so much the more injurious in this instance, as it was the bounden duty of public men, collecting information for so important an object, to fortify their minds against these monstrous anomalies, and not to permit them to disturb the equity of their judgment.

No reasonable man of competent experience, disposed to look fairly at this momentous subject, would attempt to deny that there are instances of children, who could support their parents, consigning them to the care of the Parish. But such instances, where the ability to afford support is unquestionable, or even highly probable, so far from being the general practice of the Labouring elevated, because these holy duties are frequently performed by the Poor under circumstances, not merely of affliction, from which no order of society is exempt, but under the pressure of great distress, of actual privation, of hunger, fatigue, pain, and misery. Numerous examples of dutiful and affectionate conduct, under such trying

circumstances, may be produced for a single instance of positive neglect; but while Commissioners, and Secretaries, and Orators combine to set forth the few excepted cases in all the frippery of rhetorical declamation, the host, who are patient performers of their duty, are passed without notice, or noticed only to be included in the general proscription.

In pursuing this enquiry, the idle rodomontade, in which the Chancellor indulged as follows, is too obviously absurd to require the slightest notice.

“Our law speaks another language, saying to the parent, ‘Take no trouble of providing for your child’ — to the child, ‘Undertake not the load of supporting your parent, — throw away none of your money on your unfortunate brother or sister, — all these duties the public will take on itself.’ “

This rant may be suffered to pass, because every body knows that the Law speaks a language diametrically opposite to that which is here ascribed to it. But his Lordship’s bitter philippic against the Poor includes a class of cases which ought not to be passed over, requiring, as they do, especial consideration. These cases are described in the following extract from the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners,

“Those whose minds, “say Messrs. Wrottesley and Cameron, “have been moulded by the operation of the Poor Laws, appear not to have the slightest scruple in asking to be paid for the performance of those domestic duties which the most brutal savages are in general willing to render gratuitously to their own kindred.’ Why should I tend my sick and aged parents, when the parish is bound to do it! or if I do perform the service, why should I excuse the parish, which is bound to pay for it!

“At Princes Risborough we *turned over* the Minute Book of the Select Vestry, and found the following entries: —

“‘Samuel Simmons’s wife applied to be allowed something for looking after her mother, who is confined to her bed; the mother now receives 3s. 6d. weekly. To be allowed an additional 6d. for a few weeks.’

This case is followed by three others of a similar kind: the parents being ill, and children applying for some additional relief. There is nothing on the face of the cases so cited to justify the assertion, that:

“Those whose minds have been moulded by the operation of the Poor Laws, appear not to have the slightest scruple to asking to be paid for the performance of those domestic duties which *the most brutal savages* are in general willing to render gratuitously to their own kindred“

It is even impossible to determine from Messrs.

Cameron and Wrottesley's notes, as quoted in the Report, whether these cases are deserving of the slightest reprehension. That point can only be determined by an accurate knowledge of the circumstances of each case. The facts of the first case, as contained in the Report, are simply these. Samuel Simmons's wife has a bedridden mother, receiving 3s. 6d. a week from the Parish, the daughter applies "to be allowed something for looking after her mother, and 6d. a week is ordered for a few weeks "From this statement the general poverty of the family may be inferred, as well as the existence of some particular necessity which a weekly sixpence would relieve, and which was likely to be removed in a short time. It is possible that Simmons and his wife could have provided the means of attendance without any additional allowance, or even without any allowance at all. If so, they belong to that class of hardened offenders which have been already disposed of. But suppose this Simmons was a poor labouring man, with a numerous and ill-fed family, requiring the whole attention of their mother. Suppose that mother was in a condition to say to the Select Vestry, "my poor mother is bedridden, and requires attention night and day. I have a child at my breast, and others that cannot take care of themselves. I am worn out with constant toil and watching, and cannot possibly continue to pay my mother the attention she requires. I shall sink under the burthen, unless you allow me something to hire a little girl to assist in nursing; I will then try to rub on until my poor mother is relieved by death or otherwise" Whether this does or does not apply to Simmons's case, it applies to thousands of cases that are brought before Overseers. Sometimes the application is for a small sum to cover the expenses of a nightly fire while watching: even a little caudle or rushlight, and such other trifles as are necessary in nursing the afflicted, are not unfrequently entirely beyond the means of poor families, who have been impoverished by the long illness of one of its members.

Where single women make application to be allowed something for "nursing" an helpless parent, it generally turns out, upon enquiry, that the daughter has been at service, or supporting herself by labour. That she could not attend to her parent without relinquishing her employment.

That having done this, her little savings were soon expended in supporting herself and assisting her parent; perhaps even her apparel sold, before she could be brought to apply for any relief; which, when granted under such circumstances, is usually entered in the Parish Book as "an allowance to for looking after her mother," and the application registered in the same manner.

Considerable pains have been taken to ascertain whether the above observations are consonant with the experience of those who have the best means of acquiring extensive information on the subject: Clergymen, Medical Practitioners, and well informed Overseers have been consulted, and, without a single exception, they agree in the view here taken. An Assistant Overseer, of extensive experience, was asked —

"Have you known many cases of persons applying to be paid for nursing their sick Parents?"

Not one: I never heard of such a case.

Here are entries in the Parish Pay Book, in your own handwriting, "paid for nursing "father or mother. How do you reconcile these entries with your answer?"

"It is the usual form of entry in some particular cases of pressing necessity; but it is never understood that the sum is literally applied for, or paid, as a remuneration for nursing, but to procure food, fire, candles, or some other necessary in cases of illness, where the means of a family are exhausted."

"Why then are such sums entered as money paid for nursing?"

"To prevent its becoming a permanent weekly charge. If it were charged to the daughter without any explanation, she would be considered as being a regular Pauper on the list; and if to the sick parent, the additional sum might be considered as settled weekly pay, and an attempt to reduce it, in case of recovery, might occasion complaint."

"Do you often hear of any disinclination among the Poor to attend their parents in illness?"

"Never. Nothing can surpass the kindness which the Poor show to each other under such circumstances, even without any relationship. It comes frequently within my knowledge, that persons, who have been toiling all day, sit up with their sick neighbours night after night, until they become terribly reduced themselves."

"What do they charge for this attendance?"

"Charge! Why what can they get from the bedridden Poor? When we allow a shilling a week or so for the

A letter to the King, in refutation of some of the charges preferred against the poor: with copious statistical illustrations demonstrative of the injustice with which that body has been assailed.

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expenses of "nursing" they do sometimes get a little tea to drink in the course of the night."

This evidence is generally characteristic of that numerous class of cases, which are included in such entries as were ferreted out in "turning over" the Minute Book of the Select Vestry of Princes Risborough. It is on such cases that the Poor are charged, by these Assistant Commissioners, with being worse than "the most brutal savages!" The Commissioners reiterate the foul charge, and even publish these garbled extracts as materials for legislating on; while the great Orator, lashing himself into a whirlwind of fury, pours forth a foaming torrent of declamatory invective against the Poor.

Monstrous as this exhibition must have appeared to all who knew the truth, with others it was effective; still it, probably, had less weight than the sober declaration of the Commissioners.

"The duty of supporting parents and children, in old age or infirmity, is so strongly enforced by our natural feelings, that it is often well performed, even among savages, and almost always so in a nation deserving the name of civilized. We believe that England is the only European country in which it is neglected "

Here we have a charge made by authority with that cautious gravity which bespeaks for the accusers a confidence in their candor, information, and truth. The importance of this subject demands a patient examination of how far this confidence is deserved. That the duty insisted on by the Commissioners is not neglected in England, except by a very small proportion of the Poor, has been already made evident; this makes it unnecessary to refer to the general charge, further than to invoke the earnest attention of the other classes of society to the real conduct of their poor neighbours and dependants. Let these classes not permit themselves to be carried away by a first unfavourable impression, without patient examination, the necessity for which, even in cases daily before the public, may be satisfactorily demonstrated by the following fact. The Bedfordshire Agricultural Association was induced to offer prizes for men who had brought

up the largest families on the wages of labour, without any Parochial assistance. It is said —

"Mr. Whitbread assented to the proposal, without expecting that it would bring forth *any claimants*. At the first distribution, he was surprised to find *swarms of candidates* for the inspection of their certificates; those certificates having been required, in a way to preclude the possibility of fraud; and he was not less affected by the emotion manifested, even to tears, by those to whom the rewards were adjudged. He could not, he says, help exclaiming to the farmers about him: "Do you see this sight? Could you have believed the existence of these men, if they had not been produced before your eyes? Let it be a lesson to us. The idle, the profligate, and the clamorous, are constantly obtruding themselves upon our notice. They defraud, irritate, and fatigue us, and we are apt to judge and condemn all their brethren in consequence of this misconduct. Virtue is patient, silent, and unobserved." "The extent to which misapprehension existed on the important subject in question, proves the necessity of a patient examination of facts. The general charge being disposed of, the comparative question, raised by the Commissioners, remains to be dealt with. England, they say, is the only Country in Europe where this duty is neglected. This most unfounded assertion cannot be subjected to any examination without materials for ascertaining the habits and condition of the Poor in other parts of Europe. The Statistical Works of Sweden, although trivially minute in some cases, do not furnish the necessary information. For the same reason, the Netherlands cannot be made the subject of comparison, although the Tables, officially published at the Hague, have been carefully examined for that purpose. France appears to be the only Country which affords materials for an unanswerable refutation of the calumnious charge made against the English Poor. The Works of Villeneuve, the Report of the Prefect of the Seine to the Municipal Council, the *Etat Numerique, &c. &c.* contain a body of information conclusive on this subject. From these authorities it appears that, in the Departement du Nord, of which Villeneuve was Prefect, there were 163,453 Paupers, in addition to 7,667 aged and infirm persons supported in the Hospices: the entire Population of the Department being only 962,848, nearly four hundred thousand less than the County of Middlesex!

"In Lille, the population is 70,000 and the paupers are	23,281
Valenciennes	19,031
Cambrai	17,031
Dunkirk	24,517
	5,047
	4,150
	4,880"

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1835

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The number of persons entered for Relief at Paris in 1834, on the list of the Established Charity Boards was 68,986, of whom 16,167 were men, 28,021 women, and 24,798 children. It is distinctly stated, that a single Private Association, the "Maisons de Secours," disbursed at least half as much as the Public Boards

But that portion of Pauperism which is more directly applicable to the subject immediately under consideration, is to be found in the numerous Establishments for Aged and Infirm Persons, and for Foundlings. The Hospices for the former, in Paris, according to the Prefect of the Seine, contained, in 1834, 13,737 persons. In the same year, the number of children deserted by their parents, and received in the Parisian Foundling Hospital, was 5,693; which, added to the previous occupants, amounted to 23,126. The number of these Establishments is not published, but the number of Foundlings in France, is given as follows: —

1815.	1820.	1825.	1830.
84,600	102,100	119,900	125,000

The increase, within the last four years, is said to be still more extraordinary, notwithstanding the rate of mortality among the Foundlings is

Official Statement of the Number of Births and Deaths, in the City of Paris, in 1834, 1826, and 1830.

	1824.	1826.	1830.
BIRTHS IN PRIVATE HOUSES	23,450	24,337	23,063
BIRTHS IN HOSPITALS	5,362	3,633	3,522
TOTAL BIRTHS	28,812	20,970	28,587
LEFT BY THEIR PARENTS TO BE SUPPORTED BY CHARITY	7,843	8,084	7,749
DEATHS IN PRIVATE HOUSES	13,961	13,647	13,664
IN DEPÔTS FOR THE DESTITUTE	7,706	8,901	10,754
IN THE MILITARY HOSPITALS AND PRISONS	600	461	678
DEPOSITED IN LA MORGUE	260	332	375
	22,617	23,311	27,466

Here, in 27,466 deaths, no less than 10,764 are of persons separated from their families, and left to die in those frightful pesthouses, generally deserted by all their connections. And it is in the face of this appalling statement, officially authenticated, that the Poor of England are represented as being so immeasurably inferior in "natural feeling," to the Poor of any other

something more than *seven out of ten* in the first year. In the Hospices, the number of deaths is equally out of proportion to the deaths in other classes of society. It appears that the highest rate of mortality known, among any adult population in the world, is in the Depot of Mendicity at St. Denis: nor will this appear wonderful to those who have visited these huge Barracks for the Deserted, and who are acquainted with the condition of the labouring Population of France. Villeneuve, in his description of the Paupers, states that, among others, they consist

"Of aged persons, prematurely infirm, and abandoned by their children; of children and orphans, a great number of whom labour under incurable disease or deformity; and of numerous families of hereditary paupers and beggars, heaped together in loathsome cellars and garrets, and for the most part subject to infirmities, and addicted to brutal vice and depravity "

Dupin asserts, that nearly one-half the deaths of Paris takes place in the Hospices and other Charitable Asylums, and that not a fourth part of the inhabitants are even buried at the cost of their families. But the authorized Annual Statements of Births and Deaths afford the most unquestionable evidence.

"European Country!"

But it is not sufficient to have so calumniated the Poor of England, by an injurious comparison made between them and the Poor of other Countries, the Rural Population of this Country must be especially denounced that the Manufacturers may be propitiated. The Poor Rates are higher in some Rural Districts than in

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Manufacturing ones; and from this it is inferred that, while the Manufacturing Population are miracles of industry and frugality, the Agricultural Labourers are miracles of another kind. My Lord Brougham calls them "the degraded Peasantry, the lazy Peasantry" but this would not be a matter of much consequence, if the sciolists did not endeavour to establish practical measures on the assumed distinction. The Poor Rates in Lancashire, it is said, only amount to 4s. 5d. per head, on the whole Population, while the average of the Kingdom is more than double that sum, and, consequently, the Poor Rates may be reduced one-half, without bringing the Poor below the standard

of those in Lancashire. A most sapient conclusion, in every respect worthy of its authors, but certainly requiring a cautious examination.

It must be evident to every unprejudiced person of competent information, that, in the County of Lancaster, there are circumstances in operation which make the general standard of Parochial Expenditure for England and Wales, totally inapplicable to that County. The following Summary, compiled from the Population Returns by Mr. Rickman, will afford some materials for estimating the peculiar position of Lancashire.

General Summary of Occupation "in England and Wales, 1831.

	<i>England & Wales</i>	<i>Lancashire.</i>
AGRICULTURAL OCCUPIERS	161,188	6,658
AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS	914,724	30,663
EMPLOYED ON MANUFACTURE	320,324	97,517
EMPLOYED IN RETAIL AND HANDICRAFT	1,007,403	86,079
CAPITALISTS, PROFESSIONAL MEN, &c	185,187	17,614
LABOURERS, NOT ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE	185,187	60,546

Here we see that while Agricultural Labourers are, throughout England and Wales, nearly three times as numerous as Manufacturers, the proportion is inverted in Lancashire, where Manufacturers are more than three times as numerous as Agricultural Labourers; thus making a proportional difference of 9 to 1. Or, it may be

said in other words, that Lancashire has men transferred from that class of persons who obtain the lowest remuneration for their labour, to another class generally earning 60 per cent, more than the mean Agricultural Wages of the Kingdom. Mr. Henderson, one of the Assistant Commissioners, gives the following Statement:

A Statement of the Number (and Wage) of the People in the Employ of Messers. Birley, Hornby, and Kirk, made out in January, 1833, and not materially varied up to the subsequent October, when I visited the Factory.

<i>Average wage of persons employed</i>	<i>Spinners</i> £. s. d.	<i>Weavers</i> £. s. d.	<i>Number employed</i>	<i>Average Wages of the whole Number</i> £. s. d.
MEN	1 0 6	0 15 1¼	MEN 379	0 18 4
WOMEN	0 11 3½	0 9 7¼	WOMEN 563	0 10 5
CHILDREN	0 5 10	0 5 7¼	CHILDREN 634	
			TOTAL 1563	

Other Statements cite the remuneration for labour at a higher rate, but the Parliamentary Papers shall not be travelled out of for any information which can be obtained from that

source.

The second circumstance which operates in Lancashire, to keep the Poor Rates at a low standard, compared with the average of the Kingdom, is of still more importance than the one above cited. The Manufactures of that County, not

only afford a comparatively high remunerating price for the labour of adult males, but they supply employment for women and children, beyond any other field for labour in this Kingdom. Mr.

Rickman says —

“The males, upwards of twenty years of age, employed in these manufactories, is but small, in proportion to the boys and females, yet the number of men is not much less than 97,000 “

In Mr. Henderson’s Report to the Poor Law Commissioners, it is stated that —

“Young persons, especially females, readily get employment, and at the age of sixteen or eighteen, are frequently in receipt of as large wages as they can expect to earn at any period of their lives “

A reference to Mr. Henderson’s Statement of Wages, in a former page, will show that more than three – fourths of the 1,576 persons in the employ of Messrs. Birley, Hornby, and Kirk were women and children. Can any thing be more preposterously absurd, as well as unjust, than to blame a Rural Population, where wives and children can seldom procure any employment, even at one shilling a week, throughout the year, for being more necessitous than families are where women earn ten shillings a week, and children five shillings each? Such a comparison is equally insulting to the feelings and to the understanding of the Agricultural Poor.

The two causes, above stated, are so overwhelming in their operation, that no other circumstance need be referred to; still it would not be proper to pass, without notice, the large number of persons who are returned as “Labourers not engaged in Agriculture“ An amazing number of such persons press forward, from all points, to this great mart for human labour, many of whom do not obtain a Settlement in Lancashire, and, consequently, can seldom become chargeable. The number of Labourers, not employed in Agriculture, is stated, in the last Population Returns, at 60,546. Mr. Rickman declares, that not less than 50,000 of them are employed, in various capacities, in Manufactures and Commerce: in Liverpool alone, 16,095 are returned as being so employed; one-half of whom, at a moderate estimate, are natives of Ireland. Mr. Henderson, in his Report to the Poor Law Commissioners, states that

“Workmen, who have trades, seldom fail to obtain

employment and good wages; the usual wages of common labourers are 3s. a day. Of the multitude resorting to Liverpool for work, some submit to receive lower wages, but these cases are exceptions “

“At Wigan, where about 2,000 of the inhabitants are Irish, not 30*l.* is expended annually in relief to them. It must, however, be borne in mind, that this saving is purchased by severe privations, and the alternative must, in many cases, have a very brief operation, especially as the removal, almost invariably, is made to Dublin, though the parties may be natives of the remotest parts of Ireland “

Here we have it in evidence, that a large part of the Population, of which Pauperism is composed in other Counties, is not usually chargeable in this County: the obligation is evaded by the “*very harsh operation*“ of shipping off the applicants to Dublin, to find their way as they can — frequently to the most remote parts of Ireland. Even this circumstance would make it unfair to compare the Poor Rates of Lancashire with the amount in other Counties, where they have not the means of shipping off their Labourers when reduced to want, by a dearth of employment, by age, disease, or any other calamity.

It is in the face of such facts as the above, that my Lord Brougham brands the Agricultural Labourers as being lazy, degraded, and improvident, because a part of that body sometimes requires relief; and, as if it were not sufficient to assail this enduring class with all the invective which a vocabulary prolific of such ornaments can supply, insult is to be added to injury, and the Agriculturists, generally, taunted with the superior management and condition of the Manufacturing Districts. But let his Lordship speak for himself; taking care to remember, that he is apostrophizing the libellous Report of the Poor Law Commissioners.

“Look at that volume, the record of *Idleness*, and her sister *Guilt*, which now stalk over the land. Look at the calendar, which *they* have filled to overflowing, notwithstanding the improvement of our jurisprudence, and the progress of education. Industry, the corner-stone of property, which gives it all its value, and makes it the cement of society — but not under the poor-law! for it is deprived of its rights and its reward, finds its place usurped by indolence, and sees wrong and violence wear the garb, and urging the claims of right; so that all property is shaken to pieces, and the times are fast approaching when it shall be no more! In this devastation but *one exception* remains, in those seats of industry, where the

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miracles of labour and of skill have established the great triumph of the arts, and shed unnumbered blessings on all around; those arts, whose lineage is high — for they are the offspring of science, whose progeny is flourishing — for they are the parents of wealth. They have, indeed, stayed for a season in the districts which they nourish and adorn, the progress of the overwhelming mischief: but long even they cannot arrest its devastation, and this last pillar cannot long remain, after all the rest of the edifice has been swept away! “

Here we have the dramatis personae skilfully marshalled by a mighty master in the science of constructive fiction. Idleness, and her sister Guilt, stalk over the land. They fill the calendar to overflowing. All property is shaken to pieces, beneath their footsteps, and “*but one exception, remains*” to this overwhelming “*devastation*” which is — the Manufacturing Districts! This would, indeed, be a most terrific picture were it only true; but it is here most distinctly and deliberately asserted, that there is not one word of truth in the whole charge. The Rural Population is not generally improvident; — not lazy; — not criminal; and the management of the Poor, in most Rural Districts, is not inferior to the *average* management of Manufacturing Counties. That such places as Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham should afford materials for constituting a more effective Parochial Board of Management than most other places in the Kingdom, is evident. There are many Parishes in England and Wales actually without the means of constituting a business-like vigilant Board. To arraign such communities for imperfect management of the Poor, is about as just and wise as it would be to declaim against them for not having in their Hamlets omnibuses and gas-lights. In justice to such Parishes, it should be stated, that there is scarcely any mode of bad management practised in the Kingdom, which is not to be found in full operation in these vaunted abodes of science and of wisdom. Even the allowance system is extensively acted on in most of the Manufacturing Districts. Mr. Henderson, among other instances, states, that the low wages earned by the hand-loom weavers,

“ Has led to the *general practice* in the weaving district, of making an allowance to able-bodied weavers with more than two children under ten years of age. There is no fixed scale for this allowance; but the practice is to make up the earnings of the family to 2*s.*; or, in some places, to 1*s.* 6*d.* a

head

The same Gentleman, in his Report to the Poor Law Commissioners, affords us the following information on Workhouse Management in Lancashire.

“In the workhouse at Wigan, there are three married couples, who have had seven children, begotten and born in the workhouse “

“At Manchester, husband and wife are invariably separated; and a case occurred, where an old man of *eighty*, who, although in great distress, turned back from the house, when he found that he must be separated from his wife, an old woman of *seventy*. He was afterwards, however, *compelled by want* to take refuge in the house, and *died there*, after remaining some time, according to the rule, *deprived of his wife’s society*“

That such a murderous practice should exist in a Christian Country, as separating a poor old man of eighty from his wife of seventy, is most astounding. But these extracts are not made for the purpose of being commented on, although the latter makes one’s blood thrill. They are merely selected to display the system of Management which has been distinguished by the especial approbation of my Lord Brougham. With this explanation, some examples of Out-Door Relief shall next be produced from the Lancashire Report of Mr. Henderson.

“I happened to attend a meeting of the rate-payers, where one of the persons present, and clamorous during the proceedings, was, as I was informed, a pauper, who had *thrown himself out of work* on a reduction of his wages from 1*l.* to 18*s.* a week, and became a pensioner on the parish“

“Several other cases were cited, where workmen, on trifling disputes, had quitted their employers, and were *taken into the pay of the parish*. In one instance, a man *threw up work* at which he was earning 1*l.* a week, on account of a dispute as to 3*d.* a week in rent. Whatever may be the merits of the dispute, a man must be destitute of the spirit of independence, who can thus throw his family on the parish; and it is only by a gross abuse that the parish funds can be made applicable to support him in such a case“

This *is* staying “the progress of the overwhelming mischief; “ — this *is*, indeed, “arresting the devastation” with a vengeance! Why what is there equal, among the Rural Population, to these Gentlemen throwing up their 18 or 20 shillings a week, to be “taken into the pay of the Parish?” Here are examples under the three great heads of abuse, cited by the Commissioners. THE

ALLOWANCE SYSTEM. WORKHOUSE MANAGEMENT. OUT-DOOR RELIEF. Ten times as many could have been selected from the Report and Appendix, but these are conclusive. They demonstrate that the adulatory incense, which my Lord Brougham so officiously offers up to the Manufacturers, is as utterly undeserved as the vehement abuse which he pours out on the "lazy Peasantry," and their Employers.

But it is not by an incidental notice that this charge of laziness, which is preferred against the Agricultural Labourer, should be met. A page or two may be well employed in examining the charge and its foundation. Among the printed Queries circulated by the Poor Law Commissioners, throughout the Kingdom, is the following.

"QUESTION 37 "Is the *industry* of the Labourers in your neighbourhood supposed to be increasing or diminishing; — *that it*, are your Labourers supposed to be better or worse workmen than they formerly were!"

Not believing it to be possible, that two things so utterly dissimilar as industry and ability could be confounded with each other, and united by "*that is*," it was supposed that the printer or his imp was accountable for this absurdity; but, on enquiry, this did not prove to be the case. The question, as here printed, was actually put by the Commissioners, and on the answers to that question, so absurdly put, the whole Rural Population of the Kingdom are to be condemned as sluggards. The following answer of a Cornish Magistrate shows the common sense feeling of an English Gentleman on the subject.

"I should say rather increasing. A man may be a good workman, and not all an industrious one. If you mean whether the work is better put out of hand, I should say it is "

The answers to this puzzling question or questions, whichever it may be termed, afford no

Agricultural Occupiers not employing Labourers	114,849
Agricultural Labourers	<u>799,857</u>
	914,724

Here are nine hundred and fourteen thousand men keeping the face of this beautiful Country like a garden, and producing by their labour, with comparatively little assistance from other countries, food for nearly FOURTEEN MILLIONS of

satisfactory information. The most contradictory replies were returned, in some cases, from the same Parish. From Great Missenden, in Buckinghamshire, we have the following: —

"The great mass of our labourers are certainly industrious, and ready to do a good week's work for the regular pay "

"By inquiry of old people, and by the inference which may be drawn from the increase of the poor rates, the industry of the labourers is *diminishing* "

From Shrivenham, Berkshire.

"*Diminishing*, as this mode of parish relief does away with industry "

"They are *much in the same state* as they have been for many years past "

From Bledlow, Buckinghamshire.

"I do not know that they retrograde in point of skill; but I believe there is less energy at work, and less time given to it; but then there is less pay "

"*Much worse*, in every possible way of taking the question "

The result of these enquiries, in seven Counties, as published by the Commissioners, excluding neuter and unsatisfactory answers, may be thus stated: 34 persons declare that "industry is increasing," 49 that it is "much the same" or "not diminishing," while 66 assert that it is "diminishing" Thus we have 83 against 66, admitting the Commissioners schoolboy arithmetic to be decisive.

But it is not by such a standard that the Agricultural Poor should be tried. If every answer had put a direct negative on their industry, the fact would still have been the same. To demonstrate how wantonly those laborious men have been stigmatized by Lord Brougham and his Colleagues, it is only necessary to contemplate the products of their labour. A careful analysis of the occupations of the Population in 1831, gives the following result

persons! In France two-thirds of the Population are employed in raising food for themselves and for the other one-third; while in England only one-third of the Inhabitants are engaged in Agriculture, supplying their own wants and those

of the other two-thirds: thus making a difference of four to one in favour of the English Labourer. And in the face of these overwhelming facts, "the Poor Law Commissioners dispatch Gentlemen to every corner of the Kingdom, to enquire whether the industry of the Labourers is increasing or diminishing;" that is, "whether they are better or worse workmen than formerly; and on garbled extracts from the matter so collected, my Lord Brougham furiously denounces the "lazy Rustics"

Equally unfounded is the charge of improvidence and crime, which has been so strongly urged against the Rural Population "Idleness and her sister Guilt," it is said, "have filled the Calendar to overflowing" and "but one exception remains to the general devastation." Some fleeting glimpses have been already caught of this fairy region, this blooming Oasis in the waste of crime; where the devastating course of guilt "is, indeed, stayed for a season, by those arts whose lineage is high, and whose progeny is flourishing" But why should all this flourishing be taken for granted? The fact is a matter for numerical, and not rhetorical, figures; and as such it shall be examined in a spirit of candour and truth. If the crimes of the Rural Population have devastated this once blessed Country, why let that Population lie and writhe under my Lord Brougham's proscription. If there is "but one exception remaining," if the progress of this alleged devastation has "been stayed for a season," why let the inhabitants of the modern El Dorado, in which it has been so stayed, continue to bask in the sunshine of his Lordship's adulation. This is strictly a matter of figures and not of speculative opinion. But before these are applied, the comparative remuneration obtained for labour in Rural Districts and Populous Places, may be again adverted to.

It is hoped that it will not be considered unpardonably presumptuous if, for the purpose of elucidating this point, a hard working rustic, exposed from sunrise to sunset, should be placed in the scale with a journeyman tailor. It appears in the manifesto issued by the London tailors, in the late thread-paper rebellion, that they were actually

expected to work ten hours a day, for thirty-six shillings a week! This, by the oppressed tailors, was considered as an enormous exaction on the part of their employers, and resisted accordingly. Now the Agricultural Labourer is expected, at all seasons, to work at least the same time for nine shillings a week, which is about the average Agricultural wages of the Kingdom. The tailor marries and has, according to the metropolitan average of families, in the Tables, two children and eight-tenths; but give him two-tenths of a child, and say he has three children. Here are five persons, the tailor, his wife, and three children, to be supported on 36s. a week. This is about the average wages of four married Agricultural Labourers, who have four children and five-tenths each assigned to them in the Tables. In the one case the sum of thirty-six shillings has to support *five* persons, in the other case *twenty-six* persons. This immense distinction should be kept in view, with all its modifications, down to the Lancashire Gentlemen who throw up their eighteen or twenty shillings a week to "be taken into the pay of the Parish." If, upon examination, it should appear that the Rural Population saves less than the Manufacturing, it may be because they earn less. If it should appear that they commit more crime, this may be from additional distress and privation; but if that Population actually saves more, and commits less crime than the Manufacturing, then the charge, so elaborately made by Lord Brougham, stands without a parallel in the regions of fiction; and that is the point to be ascertained.

The first part of the following Table comprises the three great Manufacturing Counties. The other part contains that large division of the Kingdom which has been subjected to some examination in a former page. This latter division includes several extensive Manufacturing Districts: such as the West Riding of Yorkshire, the Eastern Division of Somersetshire, &c.; the Returns for which are comprised in those of the Counties in which they are respectively situated. This has increased the amount of offences by many hundred cases, but the results will still be sufficiently striking.

A Statement of the Population, the Number of Committals, and the Number of Depositors in Savings Banks, in the following Counties; compiled from Parliamentary documents.

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1831	Population	Committals	Depositors in Savings Banks
Manufacturing Counties			
LANCASHIRE	1,336,854	2,352	26,147
STAFFORDSHIRE	410,512	644	7,387
WARWICKSHIRE	336,610	665	3,266
	<u>2,083, 976</u>	<u>3,661</u>	<u>39,800</u>
Other Counties			
CORNWALL	300,938	45	5,513
DEVON	494,478	399	26,564
SOMERSET	404,200	616	12,141
DORSET	159,252	177	5,526
SALOP	222,938	228	9,234
WALES	803, 000	378	10,204
YORKSHIRE	1,371,359	1,270	30,161
WESTMORELAND	55,041	17	674
CUMBERLAND	169,681	74	4,016
DURHAM	253,910	177	4,578
NORTHUMBERLAND	222,912	108	6,987
	<u>4,457,709</u>	<u>3,598</u>	<u>115,598</u>

Here, let it be again observed, we have all Wales and eleven English Counties, with a superficies equal to more than one-half, and a Population to more than one-third of England. The number of Committals in this extensive division, containing many populous Cities, and four-fifths of the Seaport Towns in the Kingdom, is seventy-two less than the Committals in the three Manufacturing Counties. In the latter, the Committals are in the proportion of 1 to 669 of the Population; while in the former division, they do not amount to 1 in 1,241. In the Manufacturing Counties, the Depositors in Savings Banks, are as 1 to 62; while in the other division they are as 1 to 38. THUS, IN PROPORTION TO THE POPULATION, THE COMMITTALS ARE 4,242 LESS IN THE LATTER DIVISION THAN IN 30,469 MORE DEPOSITORS IN SAVINGS BANKS! Still it was asserted by the Chancellor, the Oracle of Government, in the House of Lords, and the assertion circulated in *his* Pamphlet throughout the Kingdom, that Guilt stalks through the land, that the Calendar is filled to overflowing, and that the Manufacturing Districts afford the only exception to this devastation; and this calumnious assertion, which is proved to have been so monstrously false, is made on an occasion as vitally important to the People of England, as any which ever claimed the sober attention of the Legislature.

On matters of mere idle speculation, figurative

Orators, like his Lordship, may fairly address themselves to the passions of mankind. When engaged on such subjects they revel in a world of their own, and may be safely indulged, even, to the utmost limits of a distempered fancy. But this privilege cannot be conceded to them when they profess to examine, for important public purposes, the characters, concerns, and institutions of men. The Government that falsifies these, by its Official Organs, falsifies the vital elements of Civil Society; and, in a mixed Constitution, subjects the best disposed Legislative Body to the chance of inflicting a moral pestilence on mankind. Of this crime, my Lord Brougham and his Colleagues are convicted, on the authority of Parliamentary documents. The same authority triumphantly vindicates the Rural Population from the charge so wantonly preferred against them; but it does not shield them from the consequences of that charge. Under these consequences they are now suffering. The Law which was introduced by this Official vituperation, has gone forth, in all its harshness and severity, without being redeemed by one single kindly feature. This could never have been effected had not the public mind been most grievously prejudiced against the Poor; — an infallible method of producing such a result. As human nature is constituted, designing Politicians, intent on personal aggrandizement, cannot devise a more effective mode of sacrificing one

description of men to propitiate another, than by first stripping their intended victims of every virtue, accusing them of every vice, and thus offering them up a polluted and helpless sacrifice to the foul spirit of sordid ambition. The adepts in this art, compounded of adulation and ferocity, would recklessly sacrifice the Monarch or the Peasant, to propitiate any class, which, from number, turbulence, or combination, seemed capable of being moulded into effective instruments for accomplishing the crooked purposes of selfish ambition.

In quitting this part of the subject, it is distinctly declared, that no attempt has been made to make out a case against the inhabitants of the Manufacturing Districts; neither would it have been fair to have done so. These persons have not come forward offensively to sound their own praises. They have been wantonly dragged forth, and indiscreetly lauded to the skies, for the selfish purpose of depressing, in public opinion, a helpless and a most injured body. In repelling the accusation so injuriously made, not an atom of evidence has been quoted which was not believed to be indispensably necessary to the vindication of the Rural Population. Even the number of Committals is not cited for any other purpose than to disprove the monstrously false assertion, that the Country is devastated by Crime, with "but one exception — the Manufacturing Districts."

The next point which requires to be examined in detail, is the last that will be so treated in these pages. Nothing, but a conviction of the importance of this part of the subject, would induce to a perseverance in that minute course of examination, which, although most tedious to the writer, can scarcely be expected to be less so to the reader. The point to be examined is contained in the following passage, copied from the Report of the Commissioners.

"It is with still further regret that we state our conviction, that the abuses of which we have given a short outline, though checked in some instances by the extraordinary energy and wisdom of individuals, are, on the whole, *steadily and rapidly progressive*.

"It is true, that by the last Parliamentary Return, (that for the year ending the 36th March, 1833,) the total amount of the money expended for the relief of the poor, though higher than that for "any years the year 1820, appears to fall short of the expenditure of the year ending the 25th

March, 1818; the expenditure of that year having been 7,890,014*l*, and that for the year ending the 25th March, 1832, 7,036,966*l*. Yet it is to be remembered, 1st, That the year ending the 26th March, 1818, was a period of extraordinary distress among the labouring classes, especially in the manufacturing districts, in consequence of the high price of provisions, unaccompanied by a corresponding advance in wages; 2^{ndly}: That in the year ending the 26th March, 1832, the price of corn was lower by about one-third than in 1818, and that of clothes and of other necessaries of life lower in a still greater proportion; so that, after allowing for an increase of population of one-fifth, the actual amount of relief given in 1832 was much larger in proportion to the population than even that given in 1818, which has generally been considered as the year in which it attained its highest amount"

These Gentlemen then proceed to make some remarks on Labour Rates, and such fraudulent contrivances for shifting the burthen from one man to another. It is probable that all the evils are progressive, which were created by this system of shuffling; but this has no necessary connection with a Provision for the Poor. The above detail from the Report is confined to the amount returned to Parliament as being expended for the Relief of the Poor. That this amount did for some time progress at a rapid rate is most certain; and it is essential to a right understanding of the subject, to ascertain whether that progressive advance is to be ascribed to the operation of causes which militate against the principle of Parochial Relief, or to a combination of circumstances, not likely again to occur. To arrive at a reasonable conclusion on this part of the subject, it is necessary to glance at the 43rd of Elizabeth. That enactment provides for two distinct classes of the necessitous, not necessarily connected with each other. It directed that materials should be provided

"For setting to work persons, married or unmarried, having no means to maintain them, and using no ordinary and daily trade of life to get their living by" and funds for "the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other among them being poor and not able to work"

Here are two distinct responsibilities admitted; to provide labour for applicants who are capable of labouring, and relief for the impotent and indigent. The latter class of Paupers, would at all times, with slight exceptions, bear the same relative proportion to the whole Population. The other class does not bear that immutable relation to the whole number; it may even fluctuate to

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almost any assignable extent. Therefore the expense incurred by finding employment for those who are able to labour, which at one period might be trivially light, may, at another, progress so rapidly as to become oppressive, without affording any grounds for supposing that it will continue to progress in the same ratio. When the Statesmen of the age of Elizabeth determined that labour should be found for the unemployed, they imposed no duty on the Overseers which those persons were not entirely competent to the performance of, without calling for any material sacrifice on the part of the public. Nearly all our manufactures were, at that time, domestic manufactures; and could, in general, be well performed by a man's own fireside. Profitable employment could then be easily found, over the whole face of the country. But, in the progress of time, when machinery was substituted in a great degree for domestic labour, and the introduction of the Steam Engine aggravated the pressure on the Rural Poor, by concentrating the demand for labour in particular districts, profitable employment could no longer be found in many parts of the Kingdom. To provide labour for the unemployed then became exceedingly onerous, without any person being to blame for the change.

Between the years 1770 and 1800, a complete

“The attention of the advocates and friends of truth if directed to the Analysis of occupations below; at the period of 1769, and for 20 years subsequent thereto, the habitations of Nos. 1, 2 and 4, 5, noted with answer to many Manufacturing Establishments, earning on an average from 2s. to 6s. per week, which earnings supplied the means of domestic comfort and tended to social and moral order; — the introduction of Machinery has concentrated the operation of Spinning with an imposing effect upon the minds of superficial thinkers, but it has annihilated the domestic operation, and deprived from 1,200,000 to 1,300,000 Families of the means of comfort.

revolution was effected in our whole manufacturing system. Hundreds of thousands of persons, particularly women and children, were divested of profitable domestic employment. This, with other causes, produced, within these periods, a rapidly progressive increase in the Poor Rate. It was no longer possible for the Parish Authorities to find remunerative employment. To purchase, according to the enactment of Elizabeth, “a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, and iron, to set the Poor at work on,” was no longer applicable to the existing state of things. The attempt to rival Manufacturing Establishments would have been absurd; the consequences ruinous. In the progress of society, the means of providing domestic employment had vanished, in most parts of the Country, while the obligation to find labour or support remained. Thus thousands became chargeable for the relief of others, at the very time when their own means of support were materially reduced. To understand the extensive operation of this disturbing cause on the general surface of society, it is necessary to attend to details, which can scarcely be better introduced than by the following remarks of Mr. Marshall, in his introduction to those Tables which were published in 1833, pursuant to a vote of the House of Commons

Analysis of Occupations	Number of Families		Total Number of Persons, 1831
	1821	1831	
1. AGRICULTURAL OCCUPIERS	*250,000	250,000	1,500,000
2. AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS	*738,956	800,000	4,800,000
3. MINING LABOURERS	110,000	120,000	600,000
4. MILLERS, BAKERS, BUTCHERS	*160,000	180,000	900,000
5. ARTIFICERS, BUILDERS, &C.	*200,000	230,000	650,000
6. MANUFACTURERS	340,000	400,000	2,400,000
7. TAILORS, SHOEMAKERS & HATTERS	150,000	180,000	1,080,000
8. SHOPKEEPERS	310,239	350,000	2,100,000
9. SEAMEN AND SOLDIERS	319,300	277,017	831,000
10. CLERICAL, LEGAL & MEDICAL	80,000	90,000	450,000
11. DISABLED PAUPERS	100,000	110,000	110,000

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12. PROPRIETORS, ANNUITANTS	192,888	316,487	1,116,398
TOTALS	2,941,383	3,303,504	16,537,398

If, after fairly considering the above Statement, it be admitted that the labour of one million families was disturbed, directly and incidentally, to an average amount of 4s. a week for each family, then the sum abstracted from that description of persons would amount to £10,400,000, per annum. In addition to this frightful defalcation in the revenue of the Rural Population, on whom nearly the whole of it fell, a succession of seasons unparalleled for severity, in modern times, inflicted an immense mass of suffering, at a period when the people were, from the circumstances above stated, but ill able to meet such an exigency. It is true that the wages of male adults did advance during the war, but not in proportion to their necessities, which were, for many years, aggravated by a strange combination of causes. Even the Militia Charges which were thrown upon the Poor Rate, amounted, in direct payments, to half a million per annum; while the contingent consequences were, perhaps, scarcely less onerous. Under the operation of all these causes, the amount of the Poor Rate did progress rapidly. But is this rapid progression a matter of regret? Are the Philosophists justified in citing it as a proof, that a Provision for the Poor contains, within itself, a ruinous principle of indefinite extension? Is it probable that any combination of causes will again so *generally* disturb the market for labour, as the introduction of machinery did; by which ten millions per annum was transferred from the family earnings of the Rural Poor to a few Manufacturing Districts, where women earn ten shillings a week, and children five?

Surely it is not to be considered a matter of regret, that the Poor Rate accommodated itself to the exigencies of the time; — that it effectually met the pressure of these tremendous mutations, by obliging Capitalists to contribute, in a small degree, towards averting the consequences of an alarming deficiency in the means of the Poor. Let those who would contemplate this subject, for practical purposes, earnestly endeavour to divest themselves of that accursed spirit of Philosophical subtilty which is the bane of the age. They will then consider the operative principle of the Poor

Laws, even if contemplated as a mere political engine, deserving the highest degree of admiration, for adapting itself to a fearful combination of circumstances, equalizing the effects of unexampled pressure on the Poor, and thus preserving from destruction a large proportion of the Productive Classes.

Having endeavoured fairly to state some of the leading circumstances connected with this period of rapid progression, the amount of the Sums, said to be raised for the Relief of the Poor, at a later period, are now to be considered. The Commissioners, in support of their general assertion, select the expenditure of the year 1818 to compare with that of 1832. In the latter year, they say the Price of Corn was lower, by about one-third, than in the former; so that, after allowing for an increase of Population of one-fifth, the amount of Relief in 1832 was larger, in proportion to the Population, than it was in 1818. Here then are three distinct elements admitted by the Commissioners: — the Amount of Relief, — the Price of Corn, — and the Number of the Population. One of these elements, the Price of Corn, requires, in its application, to be subjected to some limitation. The advance in the Price of Wheat, and the increase in the Population, between 1803 and 1813, amounted to nearly 120 per Cent., while the amount of Relief was only increased 64 per Cent. As that amount does not always advance in equal proportion with the advance in the Price of Corn, it cannot surely be always expected to fall in an equal proportion with that commodity; therefore this element may require to be limited in its application. The following Statement of the Amount annually expended for the Relief of the Poor, and the average Price of Wheat, is compiled from Parliamentary documents, commencing with the first detailed Return worthy of credit, that for the year ending on the 25th of March, 1803. No Returns of Parochial Expenditure were made between that period and 1813. The Price of Wheat differs somewhat from the Corn Tables, these being made up to the 31st of December; while the Prices, here quoted, are calculated to the 25th of March, the end

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of the Parochial Year.

Amount expended for the Relief of the Poor, in England and Wales, from the Year 1803 to 1832, with the Average Price of Wheat, per Quarter.

<i>Anno</i>	<i>Expended for the Relief of the Poor</i>	<i>Average Price of Wheat per Quarter</i>	<i>Anno</i>	<i>Expended for the Relief of the Poor</i>	<i>Average Price of Wheat per Quarter</i>
1803	£ 4,077,891	s/d 63/2	1823	£ 5,772,958	s/d 41/11
1813	6,676,105	128/8	1824	5,734,216	56/8
1814	6,294,584	98/0	1825	5,786,989	62/9
1815	5,418,864	70/6	1826	5,928,504	64/8
1816	5,724,507	61/10	1827	6,441,088	56/0
1817	6,918,217	87/4	1828	6,298,000	54/2
1818	7,890,148	90/7	1829	6,332,441	63/3
1819	7,531,651	82/9	1830	6,829,052	64/3
1820	7,329,594	69/5	1831	6,798,889	66/4
1821	6,958,445	62/5	1832	7,036,968	64/0
1822	6,358,702	53/0			
<i>Population of England and Wales</i>					
	1801 8,872,090	1811 10,163,676	1821 11,987,075	1831 13,897,187	

On examining the above statement with the Population Returns, it will be found that the assertion of the Commissioners, on the comparative Expenditures of 1818 and 1832, is incorrect. This is not material, except as an additional proof of the loose and slovenly manner in which these Gentlemen, or their Secretary, performed a most important part of their duty. But it is material; nay, it is essential to the interests of the Poor, that the alleged rapid advance of the amount expended for their Relief, should be carefully examined. To effect this, the Expenditure for Relief, and the Price of Wheat, should be compared with the Population; an approximation to which, for any given year, may be obtained by adding yearly one and a half per cent., commencing with the preceding Census. By this process 9,141,164 will be obtained as the Population in 1803. The amount raised for the Relief of the Poor, divided among this Population, will give 8s.11d. as the contribution of each individual, which, at the Price of Wheat in the Table, is equal to 141-thousandths of a quarter of wheat. If this be compared with the Returns at the period of the last Census, when the Population was 13,897,187, the amount expended for Relief £6,798,889, and the Price of Wheat 66s. 4d. per quarter, it will be found that the contribution of each individual was 9s. 9¼d., equal to 147-

thousandths of a quarter of wheat. Here we have the amount of advance for a period of twenty-eight years. And what is the rate of progression, which seems to have driven the Commissioners out of their senses, and with which, as terror rapidly propagates itself, they have succeeded in "frighting the Isle from its propriety" What, it is again asked, is the rate of this enormous advance? Why about one-third of a penny per annum in money; or in corn, a fraction of a farthing's worth, too minute to be worth expressing! But, even admitting *any* advance, is vastly over stating the question; as the extension of the Allowance System, since 1803, has materially increased the amount of the sum *nominally* collected for the Relief of the Poor, by charging, to that account, vast sums of money which are *actually* paid as wages. A few extracts from the Report of the Commissioners will illustrate this point; whole pages, of a similar character, might be cited if necessary.

"All that apply to the vestry for employment have *half their money, or more*, out of the poor rates

"In some of the adjoining parishes the allowance system is carried to such a length that I have known a labourer receive *twopence per day* where he worked, and the rest of his wages made up from the poor's *book*. The children are usually sent round, and *paid wholly* by the overseer"

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“The rate of weekly wages paid by the parish is, to a single man under twenty, 3s.; above twenty, 4s.; married men, without children, 5s.; and so on. We asked what wages the farmers gave; the answer was, *the name at the parish*”

“At a Vestry Meeting, holden in the Parish Church of Edgefield, on Monday, April 8, 1833, Resolved, — That the rate of wages for *able-bodied men* be reduced to 4s. per week; that 1s. per week be given to each wife, and 1s. for each child per week. If there is not any children, allow the wife 1s. 6d. per week”

With the horrible abuse, of which the above are examples, pervading, according to the Commissioners, a large part of the Kingdom, the progressive advance of the Poor Rate in 28 years has been about one-third of a Penny per Annum on each individual of the Population! But, if any

reasonable deduction be made for the extension, since 1803, of that vile system, the payment of Wages out of the Poor Rate, the amount, actually expended for the Relief of the Poor, will be found to have been *materially less* in 1831 than it was 28 years before, when Wheat was at a lower price, and wages at least 15 per Cent, higher than at the latter period.

It has been already stated, that there were no Returns of Parochial Expenditure between 1803 and 1813, therefore the nearest materials for rigid comparison with the Censuses are to be found in the Returns for 1821 and 1831. These stand as follows.

<i>Anno</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Expended on Relief £</i>	<i>Contributed per head, in money s/d</i>
1821	11,987,075	6,958,445	11/7¼
1831	13,897,187	6,798,889	9/9¼

It here appears, on the most correct data which the Legislature could procure, that the Poor Rates, instead of having advanced, in a larger proportion than the Population, actually fell from 11s. 7¼d. a head to 9s. 9¼d. in ten years!

But the Commissioners say there is another element to be taken into the computation, which is, the Price of Corn. Then be it so taken, and let these calculating Gentlemen soberly ponder over the result.

<i>Anno</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Wheat per Quarter s/d</i>	<i>Contribution per head in 1,000ths of a Quarter of Wheat</i>
1821	11,987,075	62/5	, 186
1831	13,897,187	66/4	, 147

Here we see, that while the contribution, in 1821, amounted to, 186 of a Quarter of Wheat for each individual, in 1831 it only amounted to, 147; being a reduction of about twenty-one per Cent, in ten years!! But this most important fact was never hinted at by the Commissioners; they selected for comparison the years likely to create a strong impression on the public mind, and prefaced their garbled statement by asserting a steadily and rapidly progressive rate of advance: while it is proved that, for 28 years, even the *nominal* advance was only about one-third of a penny per head per annum; and that between the period of the

Censuses there was an actual *decrease* of twenty-one per Cent, measured by the Price of Corn!

For any purpose practically connected with sober legislation, all the thousands of pages, heaped together by the Commissioners, were but of trivial import to the simple fact, that, with much bad management, and a severe pressure on some particular places, the Poor Rate was, on the whole, in a course of reduction, until the agitation, consequent on a great political measure, disturbed the industry of the People. Had this fact been fairly stated by the Commissioners, they would have been left without any pretence for those heartless

enactments which can only be ascribed to the operation of terror, lest all property should be annihilated by providing for the Relief of the Poor. On the representation of the Commissioners, Lord Brougham treats the Poor Laws as "a remorseless pestilence," "a foul disease," and talks of providing "an effectual remedy" But how can an effectual remedy be provided if the disease is misrepresented? If the patient is sound at the heart's core, and daily progressing towards general health, with a few scratches on the surface requiring local treatment, why is he to be constitutionally tampered with, as a putrid mass on the point of dissolution? Never can public men be more wanting to their duty, than by becoming organs of alarm to the timid and unthinking. The blind terror they create and participate in, is the very antipodes to enlightened precaution. To see difficulties without astonishment, and to provide for them without perplexity, is the distinguishing characteristic of great minds.

It is not to be expected that any Statement, however carefully made, will effectually undeceive the Public on the alleged ruinous amount, and rapid progression of the Poor Rate. Under the superintendance of Lord Brougham and Lord John Russell, the whole machinery of the Cheap Press, as it is called, is employed in propagating the error, and otherwise grossly misrepresenting the case of the Poor. The exaggerated Statement of the Commissioners, founded on a pretended comparison of the Expenditure of 1818 with that of 1832, is published, by these Noble Lords, under the pretence of "diffusing *useful* knowledge," and is introduced with the following assertions and remarks.

"The total amount of the money levied for the year 1832-33, was 8,606,3011., which, if we take the population, as in 1831, at 12,186,673 souls, makes an average of rather more than 13s. 1d. per head. *For this object alone*, therefore, England and Wales have been *taxed twice* as much as the Austrian dominions, which do not raise more than 6s. 8d. per head for the whole expenses of the State; and *three* times as much as the *Papal* dominions, which, for those expenses, do not *exact* above 4s. 3d. per head. It was more than equivalent to their amount in *Prussia*, whose entire expenditure is about 12s. per head "

Perhaps, in no paragraph of equal length, was there ever an equal contempt for truth displayed.

The Genius of Falsehood seems to have lavished all the meretricious resources which could, in such a short statement, be brought to bear against a Provision for the Poor. It is said that England and Wales have been "*taxed*" £8,600,501 "*for this object alone*" while the fact is, that no less than £1,694,669. of the sum levied, was returned to Parliament as having been expended "*for other purposes* than the Relief of the Poor;" — such as Bridges, Roads, Prisons, Prosecutions, and all the innumerable items of Expenditure which are unfairly thrown on the Poor Rate. Still further to swell the individual amount of Contribution, the Population of England and Wales is stated at only 12,086,675 souls! By this gross falsification, 13s. 4d. is obtained as the contribution per head, which sum just tallies with *double* the 6s. 8d. tax of Austria, and *treble* the 4s. 5d. said to be *exact*ed in the Papal dominions. Thus, for the mere purpose of admitting a sweeping inference to be drawn unfavourable to the English Poor, the Population is understated by more than two millions of persons, and the Expenditure overstated by more than a million and a half sterling! A more flagrant example of imposition was never held up to the execration of mankind.

On data so grossly falsified by an hireling of these Knowledge Diffusing Lords, a comparison is made, grievously to the disadvantage of the English Poor, between the sums levied for their Relief, and the more moderate *exactions* of the Austrian and Papal Dominions, and of the Prussian Monarchy, But what do such comparisons prove, except the culpable ignorance, or the wicked intentions, of those who make them? It is the condition of the people which must determine the character of such contributions; otherwise the Esquimaux, the Ottomacks, or the Chippewaws would be objects of envy, from the absence of any Institution, which requires a contribution for its support. The following extracts from the Appendix to Mr. Jacob's first Report are decisive of the condition of some of those persons who are held up as objects for the envy and the imitation of this Country.

"The working classes — both those who work for daily wages and those who cultivate their own little portion of land — cannot be compared to *any* class in England. This large description of the inhabitants (upwards of a million)

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live in dwellings provided with few conveniences, on the lowest and coarsest food; potatoes, or rye, or buck-wheat, are their chief, and frequently their only food. While an earthen pot that will bear fire, forms one of the most valuable articles of their furniture “

“If they have bees and a plot of chicoree, their produce serves as a substitute for sugar and coffee; but, too often, these must be sent to market, to raise *the scanty pittance which the tax-gatherer demands.*” “The peasants live in wooden huts covered with thatch or shingles, consisting of one room, with a stove, around which the inhabitants and their cattle crowd together, and where the most disgusting kinds of filthiness are to be seen. Their common food is cabbage, potatoes sometimes, but not generally, pease, black bread, and soup, or rather gruel, without the addition of butter or meat “

The following is from the evidence of Isaac Solly, Esq. before the House of Lords, on the Corn Question.

“It is a horrible sight to see the vessels which are bringing down some of the finest wheat that Europe produces. The men who are bringing it down having no covering but a species of sackcloth, sleeping on straw, under a sort of ledge or shelf, exposed to the open air, and their food principally grey hog pease, boiled in water “

Such is the state of existence, which is ostentatiously held up to the admiration of English Rate Payers, on the plea of their being *taxed* more for the Relief of the Poor than is *exacted*, in those favoured Countries, for *all* the Expenses of the State! Why, it is asked, are the Rate Payers to be taunted with being so taxed! Why are English Labourers to be insulted, by a comparison with persons in such a pitiable state of destitution? If this is preparatory to an attempt at bringing them down to the miserable condition of the Prussian Peasantry, to save Lord John Russell, and his Colleagues, from that horrible *exaction*, the Poor Rate, surely the Noble Diffusers of this “Useful Knowledge” should likewise be brought down to the Prussian standard. Lord Brougham’s official salary would have paid somewhat more than ninety Prussian Judges. Even his Pension, for four years’ services, is not materially less than all the judicial salaries of one of the twenty-six Provincial Governments of the Prussian Monarchy. The spoils of the English Poor, on which the Russells batten, would feed half a million Prussian Peasantry on “black bread and gruel” If the Labouring Poor of this Country are to be brought down “to sackcloth, a bed of straw, and hogs

pease, boiled in water only,” surely, it is again said, the Diffusers of this kind of “Useful Knowledge” should enjoy the benefit of their own teaching.

Even admitting that efforts to prejudice the public mind against the *exaction* of Poor Rates, may, possibly, be well intended, the hirelings who teach the new Philosophy, under such patronage, should be directed to pay some attention to appearances, at least, if not to truth: but it has been shewn that, in utter contempt of both, they give us false data, false calculations, and false comparisons, leading to most dangerously false conclusions. And all this nauseous mass of falsification, where millions are fraudulently added or subtracted, is circulated throughout the land, bearing on its front, in staring capitals, the names of — Chairman, the Right Hon. the Lord Chancellor Brougham, F. R. S., Mem. Nat. Inst, of France; and Vice – Chairman, the Right Hon. Lord John Russell, M. P., Paymaster of the Forces.

The laborious task of selecting information, for the purpose of exposing in detail some of the falsehoods by which the Poor are assailed, has, it is hoped, been sufficiently persevered in, to induce some competent persons to examine this most important subject, uninfluenced by any of the theories of the age. Among these theories, the most mischievous, beyond all comparison, is that of Mr. Malthus, whose speculations have more effectually deterred men from making a sober estimate of their duty towards each other, than **any** other recorded hypothesis. His followers appear to be eternally haunted with visions of “Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimæras dire.” Under the influence of these visions, and trembling for the direct consequences of the “latent law of increase,” Lord Brougham introduced his Poor Law Amendment Bill, with an outrageous panegyric on Mr. Malthus, the sturdy opponent of *any* Provision for the Poor. To advocate a Bill, said to be, for the Relief of the Poor, by panegyricizing a man who was, on principle, opposed to all such Relief, was as preposterous as it would be in a Chancellor of the Exchequer, while moving the Civil List, to perform the apotheosis of that distinguished economist, Mr. Thomas Pain; or for a Secretary at War to move the Army Estimates in an harangue from a

Quaker's Meeting, demonstrating the sin of resistance. If Mr. Malthus deserved, for his doctrine, all the laudatory matter which the Chancellor lavished on him, then should this Bill not have been moved at all. But if the dogmas of that Gentleman were not to be received as incontrovertible authority, then it was an insult, as well as an injury, to cite them on such an occasion.

It is said by my Lord Brougham, that Mr. Malthus is abused for merely saying to the Poor, "Who would ever buy more horses than he can afford to pay for, or afford to keep? Then why should you marry when you have scarcely the means of supporting yourself, for the mere purpose of bringing into the world a number of

SUBSISTENCE	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	10
POPULATION	1	2	4	8	16	32	64	128	256

"In two centuries, the Population would be to the Means of Subsistence as 256 to 9; in three centuries as 4,096 to 13; and in two thousand years the difference would be almost incalculable"

Here we have a most formidable display of figures. Nothing can be more awful to speculative hypochondriacs than to pore over Mr. Malthus's astonishing prediction, that in three hundred years, after the World has been fully Peopled up to all the Means of Subsistence, the Population *would be*, to the quantity of Food, as 4,096 to 13! But, fortunately, we have nothing to do with this latent law of increase. As far as human labour is an element in the production of Food, that production would keep pace with the increase of Labourers, provided there was space to operate in and elements to combine. Beyond this we may safely predicate that, when acre has been added to acre, and every possible amelioration effected, let the latent law of increase be what it may, *latent* it must remain; for no activity can be given to a principle of increase beyond the means of supply. We have, therefore, nothing to do with

Subsistence.. 1.. 2.. 3.. 4..5, &c.

Population.. 1.. 2.. 4.. 8.. 16, &c.

These magical numbers never can be called into reality. No expansion of the terms can carry Population beyond Subsistence. $1/1$ $2/2$ $3/3$ and there is an end of the series for ever. All beyond is mere delusion. The first progression in the two ratios is

miserable wretches for whom you have no bread?"

Passing over the delicacy of this illustration, as not being essential to the subject, it should be especially remembered, that Mr. Malthus appeared before the Public in two capacities. First, as the vaunted discoverer of the latent law of increase; and, secondly, as the proposer and advocate of certain Legislative measures to remedy the blunders which he had detected in the economy of creation. In his Philosophical capacity he tells us, that while Food only increases in an Arithmetical Ratio, Population increases in a Geometrical one. The result, he says, would be as follows: —

the same, the next step never can be taken. Population cannot proceed from 2 to 4 while Sustenance remains at 3.

As an employment for the faculties of an ingenious man, the doctrine of the Ratios is well enough. It may fairly rank with squaring the circle, or any of the laborious attempts with which perverted ingenuity has puzzled mankind. In all ages of the world, querulous men have managed to cull some sources of terror out of presumed imperfections in the laws of Providence. One discovers that we may be brought into collision with a comet, and whirled off, in its vortex, into unknown regions of immeasurable space. Another is terrified lest the continual emission of light and heat should, in a series of years, exhaust the stock in its presumed reservoir, the sun. While a third apprehends that the regular deterioration of atmospheric air, by the absorption of oxygen, and the generation of azote and carbonic acid, must ultimately render the whole mass too noxious to sustain animal life. And now comes Mr. Malthus with his ratios, forsooth, which never have, and never can, come into operation. An inevitable necessity refutes the gloomy predictions of his disciples; and, if the dreams of a presumptuous Philosophy did not blind their eyes to practical truths, they might be induced, with humble adoration, to "Look up and trust the Ruler with his skies"

But it is not of Mr. Malthus, in his Philosophical capacity, that the Poor of England have to complain. It is only when he assumes the Legislator, and calls upon the British Parliament to sanction an act of palpable injustice to the Poor, that he is fairly committed against them. His hypothesis may be harmless; but when he labours to obtain for it a Legislative sanction, and prevails with the first Equity Judge of the Realm to become his active partisan, his theory is no longer an ingenious paradox, but a pestilential heresy, blasting the sympathies of mankind.

If Pain had merely written an heavy essay, to prove that the French Republic was the best of all possible forms of Government, and that Danton and Robespierre were the purest of all possible Patriots, there would have been no tangible offence committed. But when he incited Englishmen to emulate the fame of these impure Patriots, he was no longer entitled to be considered as a simple enthusiast. He was then a reckless desperado, engaged in a series of active hostilities against the peace of society. So with Mr. Malthus, when, throwing off his philosophical gown and slippers, he actively incites the legislature to pass a Law, declaring "that no child born from any marriage, taking place after the expiration of a year from the date of that Law, should be entitled to Parochial Relief," he is no longer a mere theorist, but a Quixotic opponent of that Charity, which has been well said to be interwoven with the Constitution of this Country. It is in this capacity that Mr. Malthus has been arraigned.

On the authority of that Gentleman, a Provision for the Poor, and its Authors, have been unsparingly denounced. My Lord Brougham declares in his Pamphlet, said to have been spoken before the House of Lords, that "those who framed the Statute of Elizabeth were not *adepts* in political science, — they were not acquainted with the true principle of Population, — they could not foresee that a Malthus would arise to *enlighten* mankind "But what are the practical effects of this vaunted illumination?" First, — a vast increase of the Population is ascribed to the operation of the Poor Laws. Secondly, — that increase is denounced as a national calamity.

On the first point, there is no doubt that when

Vestry Meetings determined, that a single man should be paid 4s. a week, and a married one 8s., that the single man might be prematurely driven into matrimony, in self defence. But what has this to do with the object of Mr. Malthus's hostility, the Statute of Elizabeth, providing for the "*necessary* Relief of the Poor?" The real question is, — are the Poor frequently induced to marry, from a belief that their progeny will be bred up by the Parish? This question is satisfactorily answered by Mr. Rickman, who had the examination and arrangement of the Population Returns.

"There is reason to suspect that the Poor Laws are less conducive to an increase of Population than they are usually stated to be in argument, and in the remarks inserted in the Population Returns; because the ratio of increase in Scotland does not materially differ from that in England and Wales; not more than would be expected did no Poor Rate exist "

But, in reply to this unanswerable fact, the Malthusians may say, whence comes this increase of Population, but from the increased number of marriages? And whence the increased number of marriages but from the encouragement held out to imprudent unions by the Statute of Elizabeth? The same unquestionable authority supplies an answer to the first query

"Houses less crowded, better food, better clothing, and more cleanliness among the numerous classes of society, cannot have been without some effect; and to these may be added, the increased extent of surface drainage, and of underground drainage, both which may have acted beneficially on the health of the Agricultural Population. The improved treatment of diseases was stated, in some of the Returns, as a cause of increasing Population, and especially the substitution of vaccination for the small-pox; — infectious fevers have almost disappeared, even in the metropolis; and intermittent, which heretofore, under the name of ague, infested the country very extensively (especially the Fen Districts), are no longer spoken of"

An elucidation of this statement, as well as a satisfactory answer to the second question, may be found in the following Table of the Ratios of Marriages, Baptisms, and Burials, in all England, and in the five here we see that, instead of Marriages having enormously increased under the "unnatural stimulus of the Poor Laws," as my Lord Brougham calls it, they have actually fallen off considerably; while, from the general improvement in health, there were, from an hundred Marriages, 407 Children produced,

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instead of 343. And, as if it were to spite the Malthusians, the number of Burials decreased, in the same period, from 310 to 226. This decrease in the Counties which were the most unhealthy, and have been the most improved. The authority is Mr. Marshall's Parliamentary Tables.

"The following Ratios deserve, in a very high degree, the attention of the Statesmen, Physiologists, and Moralists of all Countries. During the period of the important changes which the account below exhibits, the Marshes in the Counties in question, have been converted by drainage, from dreary and pestilential wastes, to the most productive tracts in Europe

Statement shewing the Ratio of Marriage, to every 1,000 of the Population, and the Ratio of Baptism, and Burial to every 100 Marriages, at periods of Ten Years.

Counties	Ratio of Marriages in each of the 10 years to each every 1000 of the Population		Ratio of Baptisms in each of the 10 years to each every 100 of the Population		Ratio of Burials in each of the 10 years to each every 100 of the Population	
	1800	1820	1790	1820	1790	1820
NORFOLK	78	83	378	413	301	222
ESSEX	77	69	351	425	317	252
LINCOLN	85	74	348	426	291	224
CAMBRIDGE	83	81	334	391	320	218
HUNTINGDON	82	77	307	378	320	215
TOTAL	<u>82</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>343</u>	<u>407</u>	<u>310</u>	<u>226</u>
ENGLAND & WALES	81	76	346	380	271	227

The number of Marriages and Deaths, and increase in Births were not confined to these Counties, but extended throughout the Kingdom, as may be seen by a reference to the line at the bottom of the Table.

Are these most important results to be considered as calamities? If they should appear as such, to our fallible judgments, ample proof may be accumulated that these results are not to be ascribed to the operation of a Provision for the Relief of the Poor; but that they flow from that law of Providence, which determines that some of the consequences of improving the surface of the Planet on which we are placed, shall be, AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE GENERAL HEALTH OF ITS INHABITANTS, A CORRESPONDING INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF THEIR PROGENY, AND AN EXTENDED DURATION OF LIFE..

It is important to remember, that no proof has been adduced of any calamity arising from the increase in the Population of England and Wales. The Poor are better clothed, better lodged, and better fed, than at any former period; which proves that the means of subsistence and enjoyment have, hitherto, advanced even *more rapidly* than the Population. As far as the Poor Rate indicates the relative condition of the Labouring Classes, it should be steadily kept in view, that between 1821 and 1831, the Population increased

15 per Cent, and the Price of Wheat advanced 6 per Cent.; while the amount expended for the Relief of the Poor, was nearly £160,000. *less* in the latter year than in the former. Thus indubitably proving that, as far as the relative condition of the Poor can be inferred from these elements, that condition was improved more than 20 per Cent, in ten years.

It is not intended to proceed further with this part of the subject, it having been shewn, that Legislating for the Poor on the Malthusian hypothesis, cannot be justified by a reference to its elements, or by the apparent necessities of the case.

The general recklessness and improvidence charged upon the Labouring Poor, and ascribed to the existence of a Fund for their Relief, is a gross calumny on a vast majority of the Labouring Population. The probability of a poor but an industrious couple being enabled to bring up their issue without assistance, is, generally speaking, at least equal to the chance of a Philosopher's being able to bring up a shoal of fine ladies and gentlemen. The imprudences, and misfortunes of the Labouring Classes too frequently fall upon the Parish; while those of the other classes of society are balanced by bankruptcy, compositions, and most extensive frauds on creditors, perhaps annually doubling the amount expended for the Relief

of the Poor. There is however a distinction to be taken. The Labourer is relieved from a fund to which the class he belongs are the principal contributors, and his distresses are generally the result of causes over which he has little or no control. To the existence of this fund more evils are ascribed than are said to have issued from Pandora's box. My Lord Brougham thus particularizes some of them.

"If the fund is known to exist, however it be constituted, whether by voluntary or by compulsory subscription, the Poor *immediately* calculate upon it, and become less provident, forsaking every *habit* of frugality taking no care to provide against the ordinary calamities of life, or the inevitable infirmities of old age. They no *longer strive* for the means of maintaining their children, but *heedlessly, recklessly* count upon that fund, out of which, whether in sickness or in health, in youth or in age, in impotence or in vigour, they know that they may claim the means of support"

The foregoing pages abundantly prove that those injurious assertions are not only without foundation, but that they have not the slightest colouring of truth. Since this proscribed fund has been "known to exist," so far from the Poor "immediately calculating upon it," and "forsaking every habit of frugality" and industry, more examples have been afforded of persons improving their condition in life by a provident industry, than can be found in any other age or country. So far from their "taking no care to provide against the ordinary calamities of life, or the inevitable infirmities of old age," almost every village in the Kingdom will afford examples of cottages built, and gardens purchased, by the savings of the Poor; while hundreds of thousands of small accumulations, employed in Retail Trade, in Handicraft and Manufacture, in Savings Banks, and Friendly Societies, attest on an unexampled scale of provident forecast, the grossness of the libel.

At this point, I will divest myself of the impersonality of an Author, and speak in my own person, on my own experience; subject to that bitter contempt which must be the lot of every man, residing in a small community, and known to all its members, who deliberately hazards a rash assertion. I have laboured, in different parts of this Kingdom, with several hundred men, and have since had an extensive intercourse with the Labouring Classes; but I have never known one

instance of a man's having been induced to marry by the existence of a Parochial Fund for bringing up a family. So far from the Poor "heedlessly, recklessly counting upon that fund," nearly all the errors connected with early marriages are of an opposite description. They may be ascribed to a common principle of human nature, operating strongly in youth, which is, — a disposition to form a too sanguine estimate of what may be achieved by our own unaided abilities.

"All prudent men of independent spirit," says my Lord Brougham, "will, in the vigor of their days, lay by sufficient to maintain them when age shall end their labour" Has this Noble Lord yet to learn, that the earnings of Labourers will depend, while this is a great Commercial Country, on the earnings of Foreign Labourers, whose products may be brought into competition with ours. If on this scale of earnings a man cannot obtain sufficient to smooth his path to a timely grave, is he to be left to rot by the road side? The worn out hunter has, not unfrequently, his paddock assigned him for past services. Is the worn out Labourer less deserving? When it is asserted that he *should* have laid by sufficient for the support of his age, the burthen of proof, that he *could* have done so, lies on those who make that assertion. This never can be asserted of any individual, married or unmarried, without an intimate knowledge of the accidents to which he has been subjected, the rivalry, foreign and domestic, to which he has been exposed, and the *steadiness* of demand for his only commodity, — his Labour. For be it remembered, that the Capital of the Labourer does not admit of being hoarded, like the accumulations of other Capitalists, for a more favorable market. Time, fleeting, evanescent TIME, is the only Capital of the Labourer, which, if lost for a day, is lost for ever.

Nothing can be more disheartening to a Labouring Man than the feeling, that whether he shall be starved in his old age or not, must depend upon whether he can, "in the vigor of his days, lay by sufficient to maintain him" "A contingency which is scarcely ever dependant upon his own disposition, but upon his health, his means of employment, and a host of minute circumstances which cannot be detailed. Are Funds, for the Relief of those who have not succeeded in realizing the

independence they have industriously laboured for, to be proscribed, on the assumption that these persons *should* have "laid by sufficient to maintain them?" I will endeavour to illustrate this question for those with whom I am most intimately connected. The wages of my own Father was generally 15s. per week, which, from want of employment in winter, from interruption occasioned by bad weather, and other unavoidable impediments, did not, in a series of years, exceed a weekly average of 12s. To make up this sum, he has frequently worked, in the summer, from four in the morning until eight at night, and sometimes from three until nine. But this exertion, with a correspondent degree of frugality, did not enable him "to lay by sufficient to maintain him," when age ended his labour. Should a fund be proscribed which, in the absence of other means, provided for the necessities of such men? Or should they be permitted to drop into a premature grave, if, unfortunately, there were no private means of averting such a catastrophe? And these means, be it remembered, are not a necessary consequence of a life of industry and frugality; they may, or they may not be created. But it is asked, by Lord Brougham, in the name of Mr. Malthus, after a characteristic allusion to keeping horses, why should such persons marry, "for the mere purpose of bringing into the world a number of miserable wretches?" I am precluded from answering this question personally, but not from bearing *my* humble testimony to the public worth and private virtues of many persons so descended. Some of the progeny of such marriages have improved their circumstances beyond all computation, even to the extent of being honored by the distinction of their Sovereign. Others, whom I have long known and loved, are distinguished by scientific acquirements, and honored by the unmeasured confidence of men whose names are identified with all the knowledge and science of Europe. Some of the persons, so coarsely denounced, are not only versed in the profundities of science, but distinguished by elevation of mind and honorable bearing; — distinguished by that sure test of innate nobleness, a disposition to reverence all and to mislead the Poor, would be infinitely humiliating above them, with a determination to respect the rights and the feelings of all below

them, To institute a comparison between such persons, and the male and female hirelings who are employed to calumniate, and altogether superfluous.

Lord Brougham complains, somewhat ludicrously, that persons apply for Relief "with an erect port and manly aspect" His Lordship seems burning with indignation at the idea of a Poor Man presuming to approach the Tomkineses and the Jenkineses with an erect aspect: while it is preposterously claimed for Messrs. Tomkins and Jenkins, insolently to level all distinctions above them, even to the extent of thrusting themselves on the privacy of their Sovereign. Thus it ever was, the base slaves, whose low pride cannot brook a superior, would haughtily trample in the dust any unfortunate whom adversity subjected to their sordid tyranny. If, under the circumstances already detailed, an application for Relief were necessary, why should it not be made with "an erect port and manly aspect?" If by a direful necessity it had in the case cited been inevitable, I should not have felt disgraced in taking that honored Parent by the hand and saying, — this old man wants a little bread after half a century of labour. He has been frugal, temperate, and industrious, but has not succeeded in securing the means of passing quietly to his rest. He solicits these means from you, in return for a life of honest industry, which, while it has assisted in procuring luxuries for others, has not supplied him with the means of awaiting patiently the summons of death. In this spirit I would have requested relief. In a corresponding spirit I have frequently administered it; most carefully refraining from any word, tone or gesture, likely to wound the feelings of the applicant: and have sometimes so administered it, to objects, who, to my own knowledge, were equally frugal, equally industrious, equally temperate, with the venerated relative referred to. Are such men to be left to perish because a Malthus has arisen "to enlighten mankind?" Or are they, at the last remnant of their days, to be torn from all intercourse with familiar things, at the stormy bidding of Lord Brougham, or the loquacious common place of my Lord John Russell?

The necessities of this unfortunate body have been administered to, since the age of Elizabeth,

under the inspection and control of their natural protectors, — Gentry and Clergy of England. The legislative authority, under which that protecting power was exercised, is now withdrawn; and under what pretence? Not that these Guardians of the Poor neglected their duty. Not that they oppressed their humble fellow subjects. Not that they evaded the burthen, by shifting it on others. But, that they carried their sense of diffusive benevolence further than a cautious policy would warrant. And there is some truth in this charge. In their anxiety to relieve the necessities of their fellow creatures, they did take upon themselves, and upon their order, a larger measure of contribution and of responsibility than could be safely persevered in. This might have afforded a legitimate reason for subjecting their authority to Legislative revision, to regulation, to control; but it supplied no reason for depriving the Poor of the powerful protection of a high-minded body; who only offended by giving too literal a construction to the words of Him, who commanded them to do unto others as they would be done unto.

Thus, MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY, the object of this humble Address has been patiently pursued through a mass of detail, which, it is believed, is calculated to correct in a material degree the exaggerations and misstatements, with which the lower classes of YOUR MAJESTY'S Subjects and the long established Provision for their Relief, have been assailed. That the various enactments connected with this Provision did require revision and amendment, is unquestionable. But it is equally certain that no alteration in such Laws can be safely contemplated, as permanent amendments, which are not founded on the immutable basis of justice and truth. If subjected to this test, the late alteration in the Poor Laws will be seen to have no claim on that moral sanction, which is essential to the ultimate success of all important legislative measures. The materials, for influencing the Legislature on this subject, were collected, the Bill itself was prepared, advocated, and perfected into Law, in a repulsive spirit of shameless misrepresentation and injustice. It was asserted, in proof of the overwhelming necessity pleaded for its enactment, that the Poor had been converted into little better than a band of criminals, by the

operation of the Poor Laws; — that their condition had been otherwise deteriorated, and their general character degraded, by the existence of a Fund for their Relief; — that the other Classes of YOUR MAJESTY'S Subjects were reduced to the very brink of ruin, by the enormous amount of their contribution to this Fund, and that these evils were so rapidly progressing as to threaten, according to the solemn declaration of YOUR MAJESTY'S then Lord Chancellor, "the destruction of *all property* as the issue of the system that stares us, and at no great distance, in the face" It has, MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY, been shewn, that the above statements are either wild exaggerations or altogether unfounded. It is in proof that YOUR MAJESTY'S Labouring Subjects are not a band of criminals, and that the crime which is actually perpetrated cannot be ascribed to the operation of the Poor Laws. It is in proof, that the condition of the Labouring Classes, instead of having been deteriorated, by the existence of a Fund for their Relief, has been vastly improved, since the establishment of that Fund; while the enjoyments and the accumulations of the other Classes of Society, have been multiplied beyond all estimate and all example. It is in proof that, so far from there being even any apparent grounds for the alarming predictions of a late Lord Chancellor, the amount of individual contribution has actually been considerably reduced, while the total amount expended for the Relief of the Poor, is much less than the sum, estimated to be, expended in England and Wales on so trivial an indulgence as Tobacco and Snuff.

The above, with other most injurious misrepresentations, urged against the Poor, in proof of an over whelming necessity for the late enactment, having been examined and amply refuted, it is humbly submitted that on considerations of policy, as well as of justice and humanity, this measure should be subjected to such a revision and amendment as would adapt it, in principle, to the long recognised Rights of the Poor, and to the real circumstances of the case.

The provisions of this enactment have not been specifically examined, because objections in detail should not be permitted to divert attention from pernicious principles; the evils consequent on which, are not confined to those Spallanzani or

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Magendie twist their accursed ligatures round the organs of life and of sensation; lacerating the quivering nerve, and puncturing the palpitating heart, that they may impiously pry into the sanctuary of nature, and detect under how much torture and with how little of sustenance, existence may be sustained. The heart shrinks back sickened and appalled from such presumptuous exhibitions, and no adroitness in the details of the operator can reconcile humanity to the frightful experiment.

The Laws providing for the Relief of the Poor have not been treated, by these experimentalists, as a blessing to be improved, but as a gangrene to be extirpated. The hope of accelerating, in some degree, the period when these Laws may be re-examined, and perfected, on principles befitting a Christian Country, has led to the course of enquiry here pursued. That some persons may be induced to continue it, under more promising circumstances, of ability, information and leisure, and to pursue it to a conclusion, favorable to the permanent interests of the Labouring Classes, and to the general safety of YOUR MAJESTY'S Subjects, is the ardent wish of,

YOUR MAJESTY'S Most devoted,

Humble Servant,

JOHN BOWEN.

Bridgwater, June 18, 1835.

Geo. Awbrey, Printer, Fore Street, Bridgwater.