

**Poorhouses in Scotland in reference to a proposal to establish one in Berwickshire : second letter / by David Milne Home.**

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P O O R H O U S E S  
IN SCOTLAND

IN REFERENCE TO A

PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH ONE

IN

BERWICKSHIRE

BY

DAVID MILNE HOME, Esq.

OF WEDDERBURN

SECOND LETTER

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## BERWICKSHIRE POORHOUSE.

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SECOND LETTER TO ROBERT SWAN ESQ., WRITER,  
KELSO, CHAIRMAN OF THE PAROCHIAL BOARD OF THE  
PARISH OF COLDSTREAM, FROM DAVID MILNE HOME,  
ESQ. OF WEDDERBURN.

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PAXTON HOUSE, *24th April* 1868.

DEAR SIR,—I have been perusing Mr Shaw's "few remarks," as he terms them, on the letter which I addressed to you regarding the proposal to establish a Poorhouse for Berwickshire.

I regret that my letter should have had the effect of stirring up so much wrath and bitterness in the breast of a gentleman whose "intelligence and sound judgment," as I said he possessed, would, if he had kept his temper, have been of great service in this discussion.

He writes, as if irritated at the opposition, which I have ventured to offer to the measure he recommended; and in his "few remarks" endeavours, in retaliation, perhaps, to give such a representation of my views, and also of their author, as may excite prejudice against both.

For the discourtesy to myself in the language and tone of



the "remarks," I do not care much—Mr Shaw says that I "seem to be neither hot nor cold," he will therefore not be surprised at my equanimity. But I should be sorry if it were believed that I am, as Mr Shaw alleges, "an accuser of the brethren;"—and this, both on my own account and also on account of the said brethren, who probably will not like to have it proclaimed to the world that their characters have been assailed, even by so humble an individual as myself. Mr Shaw states that I have thrown out "insinuations against the *candour and fairness* of the Committee;" that I have made "a *harsh and uncalled-for attack* on the late Inspector" of Coldstream; and that I have spoken of the Secretary of the Board of Supervision in such a way, that Mr Shaw has felt called on to vindicate the Secretary as "an *honest witness*." It cannot be agreeable to any of these respected gentlemen, to see it thus publicly announced, that there is a *fama* against them for want of fairness, candour, or honesty; nor is it altogether agreeable to me, to be told that I am their defamer. I therefore owe it both to these gentlemen and to myself to show, that no such insinuations or accusations have been made against them.

*First*, with regard to the Committee, whose candour and fairness I am alleged to have impugned, I observe that Mr Shaw points out no passage in my letter bearing, or alleged to bear, such a meaning. He refers vaguely to pages 9 and 11 of my letter. On the first of these pages, all that is said of the Committee is, that they "have apparently *overlooked*" a particular passage in Mr Walker's pamphlet, there specified by me. On the second of these pages all that is said is, that they should "have *extended their inquiries*" into the workings of more than one Poorhouse.

In neither of these remarks, do I perceive any insinuation against the Committee for want of fairness or candour. The only fault found is, that the duty undertaken by them had been somewhat hastily and superficially performed.

*Second*, With regard to the late Inspector of Coldstream, it is true I said that he did not execute all the duties incumbent on him; on account of which it was, as I thought and stated,



pauperism had got so much ahead in that parish. But it is not true, that I alluded to his neglect of duty in a way to injure this gentleman's feelings or character. The whole purport of my statement was to blame, not the Inspector, but the Parochial Board for having appointed a person who was engaged so much otherwise that he could not properly perform the onerous duties of inspection, in a parish so populous and extensive. My words were, "*It was injudicious to appoint to that office the Rector of an Academy, who was obliged to be all day long teaching in his school, and in the evening much occupied with his boarders.*" I therefore offered what seemed to me a good excuse for the Inspector, and stated that the fault lay with the Board; a view confirmed by what Mr Shaw himself says—viz., that the Rector "*was pressed into the office against his own inclination.*" He was afraid *from the first* that his office work might sometimes fall into arrear." It also confirms the *great respect* which, in my letter to you, I expressed for this gentleman, as "*being a most superior teacher, and a very excellent conscientious man.*"

In these circumstances, I do not see that, in explaining the causes of the enormous increase of pauperism in Coldstream parish, I made "*a harsh and uncalled-for attack on the late Inspector.*"

*Third,* With regard to the Secretary of the Board of Supervision, who is also said to have been attacked, Mr Shaw's words are these—

Mr Milne Home's "*pamphlet is very often disfigured by ungenerous insinuations, and by what is called special pleading.*" He says, '*Even Mr Walker of Bowland, the talented Secretary of the Board of Supervision, notwithstanding his official position, is obliged to admit that Poor-laws have a tendency to foster pauperism.*' Mr Walker is an honest witness and not a special pleader."

This remark of mine regarding Mr Walker, Mr Shaw refers to as an example of "*ungenerous insinuations.*" The insinuation in this instance, I suppose, is to be found in the words which Mr Shaw italicised—viz., that Mr Walker, notwithstanding his official position, was *obliged to admit* the evil tendency of Poor-laws: and then, in order to rebut this alleged insinua-



tion, Mr Shaw comes forward to affirm, that Mr Walker is an honest witness, and not a special pleader.

I presume, therefore, that my insinuation was, that Mr Walker is not an honest witness, and is a special pleader.

I have heard of sunbeams being extracted from cucumbers ; Mr Shaw's extraction of such an insinuation from my words is quite as marvellous.

So far from impugning Mr Walker's honesty as a witness, when I said he was, notwithstanding his official position, obliged to admit the evil tendency of Poor-laws, I was paying the highest compliment to his honesty. It is not etiquette or usual for a public officer, at the head or in the service of a department, to speak disparagingly of it. When he does so, it can only be because his honest convictions are such as to oblige him to overstep the rule. This is what Mr Walker did ; and on that account I much appreciated his testimony to the evil tendencies of Poor-laws, and in quoting his evidence I drew attention to the fact, that when he gave it, he was Secretary to the Board of Supervision,—intending, by that remark, to point out his exceeding honesty and straightforwardness.

Therefore, when Mr Shaw alleges that I was guilty of an ungenerous insinuation against Mr Walker, he alleges what is alike incorrect, and repugnant to my feelings of friendship for Mr Walker.

There is only one other point of a somewhat personal character which Mr Shaw attempts to make against me, and which it is becoming in me to notice.

In my letter to you this passage occurs—

“ Mr Walker, it will be observed, speaks in no confident terms of the Poorhouse system, and he admits that there is no other which, with all his official experience, he can think of likely to stem the evils of pauperism.”

I had, just before making this observation, quoted from Mr Walker's pamphlet on Poorhouses, that part of it where he states his opinion, that a Poorhouse was the only check which he knew of, to counteract the evil tendencies of Poor-laws.

Mr Shaw denies my statement, that Mr Walker “ speaks in



no confident terms of the Poorhouse system ;” and with regard to the passage in Mr Walker’s pamphlet which I had quoted as showing this to be his opinion, Mr Shaw affirms that the actual words used by Mr Walker were, “*something in several important particulars different from Mr Milne Home’s quotation.*” He adds that I “*garbled*” that passage in the pamphlet.

What the “important particulars” are in which my quotation differs from Mr Walker’s pamphlet Mr Shaw does not explain or indicate. I have therefore printed the two passages in the Appendix \* in parallel columns, so that any one who cares to investigate this charge may try to discover in what “important particulars” they differ.

My sole object in slightly abbreviating this passage in Mr Walker’s pamphlet, was to avoid what appeared to me tautology—a tautology which obscured the author’s meaning.

I admit, however, it was a liberty I had no right to take ; and I am sorry for having done so. But it was not Mr Shaw’s privilege to find fault,—if the author’s meaning was, as I assert it was, correctly represented.

It is this passage which I said the Committee had “apparently overlooked,” when quoting so largely from the rest of the pamphlet. Is it in revenge for this faint inculcation, that Mr Shaw accuses me of having “garbled” the passage ?

And now, having disposed of as much of the merely personal matter in Mr Shaw’s “Remarks” as seem to require notice, I will advert to what he says on the merits of the measure itself.

Whatever effect my letter to you has had upon yourself or others, I observe that Mr Shaw is still in favour of Poorhouses. He says :—

“Parochial Boards must look at the Poorhouse as a stern necessity under the existing Poor-law. Let the cost be more or let the cost be less, if it will in some degree check imposture, and discourage indolence, intemperance, wastefulness, and vice, it cannot be the unmixed evil some would have us believe.”

But how different is the tone of these remarks from that of the Report. Mr Shaw says, *Now let the cost be more* or let the

\* See Appendix A.



cost be less, *if* it will in some degree check imposture, &c. What was the language of his Report?

“If the Poorhouse is well managed, and the test on imposture which it affords judiciously and firmly applied, there seems *no reason to doubt*, that the rates *will fall instead of rise*.”

This is not the language which he uses now. In the paragraph of his “Remarks” just quoted by me, he allows that a Poorhouse may cost more to the ratepayers; and in other passages he goes farther, for he says that it will. Thus, on page 8:—

“While the Poorhouse is a valuable test against imposture, that mode of relief *generally costs more to the Board, than the ordinary plan of out-door relief*.”

He even agrees with me in attributing the general increase of Poor-law expenditure in Scotland to this very cause; for he has the goodness to say,—

“He (Mr M. H.) is welcome to hold, if he likes, that *it is to the Poorhouse system*, that the increased expenditure is due.”

After these explicit, and, I will add, frank confessions, it is rather odd that Mr Shaw should have been at the trouble to endeavour to controvert some of the proofs which I offered in my letter that a Poorhouse would add to, and not diminish, expenditure; and it may seem almost superfluous for me to point out the fallacy of his criticisms on this point. But some persons may desire to judge for themselves in this matter by facts and figures, and not to rely on either opinions or admissions; I must therefore advert to the answer which Mr Shaw has attempted to give to my statement.

My statement was, that in fifteen out of the twenty-four cases of Poorhouses built before the year 1863, when Mr Walker's pamphlet was published, and the finances of which are specified by him, the parochial expenditure is shown by the figures to have been larger after the Poorhouse was established, than before; and that the number of unsuccessful cases would have been greater, had Mr Walker not kept out of his



statement of the expenditure, the cost of the building and of the site.

My inference from this was, that the same result would most probably follow the establishment of a Poorhouse for Berwickshire; and that the rates, instead of falling, as hoped for by the Committee, would rise.

What is Mr Shaw's answer? He says:—

“In fourteen out of these fifteen cases of increased expenditure, the total increase of expenditure in the years after the opening of the Poorhouse was, *at a rate* per cent, very much below that in the years before the Poorhouse was opened. Mr Walker reports them to be respectively as under.”

Mr Shaw then presents a table, constructed from Mr Walker's statistics, for fourteen cases of Poorhouses, showing that, though the expenditure had been greater for every year after they were opened, the expenditure had increased at a *slower rate*.

Now, I quite admit that if this were a fair test of one and the same system of Poor-laws, for the whole of the period embraced by Mr Walker's statistics and Mr Shaw's table, it would show that Poorhouses had promoted not only economy, but immense economy of administration. Indeed the economy, as exhibited on Mr Shaw's table, is so startling, as to suggest that there must be a fallacy somewhere. Nor is it difficult to discover where the fallacy lies. Mr Walker himself has hinted at it—in a passage probably also “overlooked” by Mr Shaw, if he will forgive me for saying so.

I shall reprint Mr Shaw's table in the Appendix—from which it will be seen that, in reckoning the rate of increasing expenditure, he goes back to the year 1846, at which date the *existing Poor-law can scarcely be said to have come into operation*. (See Appendix B.)

But Mr Walker observes that it is very questionable whether proper data for comparison are obtained by going back so far. These are his words:—

“The comparison which has been instituted between the years immediately succeeding the passing of the Scottish Poor-law Act in



1845 and a more recent period, *may be objected to with some show of plausibility*, on the ground that the provision for the poor in Scotland previous to 1845 was so very defective, that a *sudden and enormous increase of pauperism and expenditure* was the natural and inevitable result of that measure. It is unquestionably true, that the change of system introduced by the Act of 1845 gave an impulse both to the number of applications for relief and to the rates of allowance, *more sudden and rapid than would have occurred under ordinary circumstances*. But it is obvious that no comparison could be instituted at all, unless the years during which parochial relief was administered without the Poorhouse test are taken as one of the periods to be compared."

If the statistics of expenditure given in Mr Walker's pamphlet be looked at from the year 1846 downwards, it will be seen that for the first few years the leaps in the yearly expenditure were, as Mr Walker says, both "sudden and rapid." These leaps mark a period of transition from the old system of administration by kirk-sessions and heritors, to the new system by Parochial Boards. Therefore, the expenditure during that period cannot be said to be illustrative of the existing system, or suitable to be compared with the expenditure under that system in recent years.

In order to afford more correct data for comparison, *the expenditure of the first two or three years after the passing of the Poor-law Act of 1845 ought to be excluded*.

I have, therefore, added a column to Mr Shaw's table, showing the rate of increasing expenditure after that transition period, and before the opening of the Poorhouse, in the fifteen cases referred to. (Appendix B.)

On turning to this table it will be at once seen how different are the facts from those which Mr Shaw has represented. In all the fifteen cases except two, the *rate of increased expenditure was more rapid after the opening of the Poorhouse than before the opening*, as shown in the column which I have added; and these two exceptions (Barony and New Monkland) are clearly accounted for by the early date at which the Poorhouses opened, being close on the transition period.

It is to be regretted that no official report exists to show,



whether since the year 1863 the expenditure has increased or diminished in the twenty-four parishes which then possessed Poorhouses; and what has been the result in this respect as regards the other thirty-six Poorhouses which have been erected since the year 1863. Mr Walker would render good service were he to publish a new edition of his pamphlet containing that information. The only recent cases known to me are those of Kelso, mentioned in the Coldstream Report, which Mr Shaw now admits was not "successful" (page 6), and Linton, where, as I stated in my last letter, the parochial expenditure largely increased, subsequent to the establishment of the Poorhouse.

After these expositions, I think I may venture to hold it as indisputable, that the establishment of a Poorhouse causes no economy, but, on the contrary, increased expenditure, and at a more rapid rate than before.

Therefore, the advantage which in the Report of the Committee was put first, and pressed most strongly, "for the purpose of inducing the ratepayers to sanction" this measure—viz., "*that the rates will fall instead of rise*"—will, I presume, no longer be asserted.

Indeed, all that Mr Shaw now seems to insist on is, that "*it will in some degree check imposture, and discourage indolence, intemperance, wastefulness, and vice;*" and in this way, as remarked in the Report of the Committee, "the Poor-law will be more easily administered."

How the Poorhouse is to be worked so as to produce these good effects, Mr Shaw does not explain; and even in the Report of the Committee, there is rather a remarkable reticence on this point. All that is said is, that the indoor relief will be made "*less palatable* than the present system," and that "to persons of migratory habits the Poorhouse will have *no great attractions*." It is also to be so worked, that it will afford protection to Border parishes, "both against stranger mendicants, and against those who have spent their strength in the south, and only return to the parish of their birth to avoid the hated workhouse."

All Poorhouses in Scotland must be made in conformity



with the rules and principles laid down by the Board of Supervision. Therefore it is right to see what this Board has declared to be the object and character of a Scotch Poorhouse. In the circular issued to Parochial Boards in 1850 this statement is given :—

“The altered feelings of the poor in regard to parochial relief, their more perfect knowledge of their rights, and the facilities which the law now affords for enforcing these rights, have caused a strong pressure on Parochial Boards, from a class whose claims it would be unsafe to admit, without testing the truth of the allegations on which these claims are founded. For this purpose a well-regulated Poors-house is the best of all tests. While it furnishes sufficient and even ample relief to the really necessitous, it affords the only available security that the funds raised for the relief of the poor are not perverted to the maintenance of idleness and vice. But a Poorhouse will be useless as a test, or rather it will not be a test at all, unless it is conducted under rules and regulations, as to discipline and restraint, so strict as to render it more irksome than labour (without such discipline and restraint) to those who are not truly fit objects of parochial relief.”

The mode in which “the *discipline and restraint*” is made “*irksome*” consists in treatment of the inmates, as regards food, clothing, confinement, and exclusion of friends to see them, which savours extremely of the treatment of criminals in a prison. Now, I do not deny the necessity of making a Poorhouse irksome and unpalatable, if, as the Board of Supervision and also the Committee say, it is to be available for “*testing the truth of the allegations* on which claims for parochial relief are founded.”

Let us see, then, how the test is to be worked. Take the ordinary case of a person coming to the inspector and alleging that he is totally destitute and unable to work, and therefore craves relief. The applicant being unknown to the inspector, the latter cannot say whether he is entitled to relief or not, either in respect of his legally belonging to the parish, or in respect of actual destitution, or in respect of inability to work. It would be attended with trouble to make inquiries into all these matters. But the inspector has a Poorhouse at his com-



mand,—if not in his own parish, at all events in one ten miles off,—and as one of the objects for which the Poorhouse was established was to make things more easy for the Poor-law administrators, the Inspector says to this applicant, “I will give you a line to the Poorhouse—you must go there, if you are to get any relief from this parish.” If the applicant is an impostor, he will slink away, disliking “the discipline and restraint” to which he will be subjected. If the applicant has told the truth, he goes at once into the Poorhouse, rather than starve. Now, if this is to be the way in which the “test” is to work, the consequence will be, that *all the inmates of the Poorhouse will be only of one class, and that class the deserving poor.*

Will the ratepayers agree to introduce into the County an institution which is calculated to produce such a result?

It seems to me that the Poorhouse system, as allowed by the Scotch Poor-law Act, and recognised by the Board of Supervision, rests on a great fallacy. It is impossible to afford in one building and one establishment the treatment which is fitting and proper for two different classes of poor. The treatment of the deserving poor should not be, that of “discipline and restraint” so as to make their miserable fate more miserable. The treatment of the undeserving poor should certainly be on the principle of making things “irksome” and “unpalatable” to them. But in the Poorhouse, both the deserving and the undeserving undergo the same treatment of “discipline and restraint,” and are made to associate together, whatever may be their characters or habits. It is maintenance—not punishment—that the deserving poor ought to receive, and are indeed entitled to.

On this point we ought to take a lesson from our old Scotch legislation. Our present Poor-law Act recognises the Act of 1579, ch. 74, and ratifies its penalties against persons deserting their wives and children. What says the preamble of that Act? “And seeing charitie wold, that the pure, aged, and impotent suld be als necessarilie *provided*, as the vagabondes and strang beggars *repressed*.” The Act then proceeds to arrange separately for these two classes, establishing “Parochial Hospitals” for the former, and “Correction Houses” for the latter.



It also describes who are to be inmates of the two institutions. The Hospitals are for "*cruiked folk, seik folk, impotent folk, and weik folk.*" The Correction-houses are for "persons living idle, and fleeing labour, but haill and stark in bodie," "*alleging them to have been herried or burnt in some far pairt of the realme,*" "and uthers having no lauchful calling, craft, or occupation, quhairby they may win their livings, *and can give no reckoning how they lauchfully got their living.*" This last class of persons—the vagabond or vagrant poor—were to be apprehended by parish constables, and taken before the sheriff or other magistrate, on whose warrant, if he saw fit to give it, they were sent to the correction-house, receiving there for food, "ilk person daily, ane pund of ait bread, and water to drink."

Such was the principle of ancient Scottish legislation. It recognised clearly a distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor, giving to each a separate institution and different treatment.

It appeared to me that the Committee, when they proposed the establishment of a Poorhouse, intended that one and the same building was to be used for both classes of poor. I saw nothing in the Report to show anything else.

I am, however, told by Mr Shaw, in his "Few Remarks," that this is an entire mistake. The information is not more surprising to me than gratifying.

At page 10 of his "Remarks" he says:—

"Mr Milne Home grants the very thing the Committee desire—an abode for the undeserving poor (*viz., those who, from possessing vicious habits, misspend the parish allowances, or those who, having relatives able to support them, receive from them no assistance*), with all the discipline, irksomeness, and poverty of diet which is fitted for vagabonds. But he objects to the *deserving poor being consigned to the Poorhouse. So do the Committee.*" "He says the deserving poor form nine-tenths of our Berwickshire paupers. If he turns to the Report, he will see that the Committee recommend Poorhouse accommodation for only *the remaining one-tenth* of the registered poor. Then why all his long and ungracious harangue?"

From this passage it appears that the institution which the Committee "desire" is one which shall be "an abode for the



undeserving poor" only, and that they actually *object* as much as I do, "to the deserving poor being consigned to the Poorhouse."

I am even mildly rebuked for not observing and for not allowing, that the Committee had made this clear in their Report. I am told that if I turn to that document, I will see this announcement made in the fact, that the Poorhouse, as recommended in it, was to contain accommodation for only one-tenth of the registered poor, that being the proportion which I myself allowed to represent the undeserving poor.

If I deserved rebuke for not seeing what, I am told, was the clear meaning of the Committee, I am afraid I must remain still under censure. I really cannot see, in the fact stated by Mr Shaw, any proof or any indication that the Committee intended the accommodation of their Poorhouse to be for the undeserving poor alone; and, in my own vindication, I fear I must be so "*ungracious*" as to explain what prevents me seeing it.

In the first place, though it is true that the Poorhouse was to accommodate only 104 persons—or a little more than one-tenth of the whole Berwickshire paupers—the Committee also made the significant remark "that accommodation for 100 to 120 inmates would be sufficient, *in the mean time*." They indicate, therefore, that the Poorhouse might by-and-by be enlarged.

In the second place, let me ask how it appears that though 104 should be the number of all the undeserving poor of Berwickshire, Parochial Boards would send to the Poorhouse only the undeserving, even supposing they could *a priori* discover them. Take any of the Berwickshire parishes mentioned in the Report. The Parish of Ayton, having 61 paupers on its roll, is to be entitled to send 7 inmates to the Poorhouse; Eyemouth, having 37 paupers on its roll, is to be entitled to send 7—how can Mr Shaw say that this fact shows, that the Committee intended that power to be exercised only against the *undeserving* paupers? Where is there any such restriction intimated in the Report?

But in the third place, supposing, as I must now hold after Mr Shaw's declaration, that the Committee intended to recom-



mend an institution for the reception of the undeserving poor alone, and that they would object as much as I do to a Poorhouse for the reception of the deserving poor,—how do they propose to prevent Parochial Boards after the Poorhouse is once erected, to use their powers in that objectionable way? If it be impossible to do so—if the Committee see that a Poorhouse may be applied to a purpose which they agree with me is wrong, and is different altogether from what they desire—will they persist in allowing and even recommending a Poorhouse to be built?

Now, that the Parochial Boards have by law the power to send any class of paupers to a Poorhouse, when once a Poorhouse is established, cannot be denied. I gave an example of a case in the county of Nairn where that power had been exercised—that being a case reported in the law reports, to which Mr Shaw had access as well as myself. He has chosen to say that he has “reason to believe Mr Milne Home does not *state fairly*, the case of the Burghhead postmaster” (page 8). This is a random assertion which Mr Shaw had no right to make. If he meant to challenge my statement as unfair, he should have explained how. But there are hundreds of other cases quite similar to that Burghhead case, as I have reason to know from communications made to me, and which do not come before the public eye. At all events Mr Shaw cannot dispute, that such cases *may* occur, in consequence of the powers which the law gives to Parochial Boards. In order that there may be no mistake on this point let me again refer to the proofs of it.

The judgment of the Supreme Court, in the case of the Burghhead postmaster was, that there is nothing “to restrain a Parochial Board *collecting in one house, the poor scattered through the parish.*” “It is in *all* cases a legal tender of relief to offer admission to the Poorhouse.”

Referring to the judgment in that case, Mr Guthrie Smith, our latest writer on Parochial Law, says,

“When a parish has either a Poorhouse of its own, or an arrangement with another Board for the boarding of its paupers in



a Poorhouse, the offer of admission therein is all that the pauper can legally require."

"The Poorhouse is intended for *every person, who requires parochial relief*" (page 145).

"*As regards all descriptions of persons*, the offer of admission to the Poorhouse is a legal tender of relief" (page 30).

Such being the law, I say it is a dangerous power to give to Parochial Boards to establish a Poorhouse, to which any or all of the parochial poor, deserving and undeserving, may be sent; and if the Committee agree with me, and I hope the Parochial Boards of Berwickshire and the ratepayers also agree, that it is a power which ought not to be possessed—*then the only security against the exercise of it*, is not to establish a Poorhouse.

Perhaps I may be told that no Parochial Board in Berwickshire would dare to abuse the power which the establishment of a Poorhouse would give to them. Parochial Boards would not be so hard-hearted as to insist on adopting a general and wholesale system of indoor relief. That is matter of opinion: who can tell? There are persons in this country, who do not hesitate publicly to maintain, that the only way to check pauperism is to treat it, if not as a crime, at all events as an offence; and the more so, as it is generally owing to vicious habits or gross neglect of social or domestic obligations, that it arises. There are some who absolutely deny the propriety of giving a legal right of maintenance, pointing to other countries where no such right exists, and where there is, notwithstanding, less pauperism; and their plan is to annul the right, by conceding it only on such terms that no one will claim it. There are others, again, who say that the increasing yearly expenditure is imposing intolerable burdens on the ratepayers; and that, in self-defence, they must resort to any method of diminishing pauperism;—and they reconcile themselves to this course, by seeing the many moral evils resulting among the working classes. There are some who, fired with patriotic feelings, say it is a national disgrace that, whilst the population of Scotland to that of Ireland is in the proportion of 3 to 5, the expenditure on pauperism in Scotland is greater



than in Ireland. Mr Shaw (page 4) alludes to this ; and what is the remedy suggested to wipe off this disgrace ? I leave it to Mr Shaw to answer. " Quite true," he says ; " but then in Ireland, *relief is given almost exclusively in the Workhouse*, while in Scotland, *indoor relief is the exception !*" The remark is significant. Verily, I am not sure that I would answer for the consequences to the deserving poor in a parish, if Mr Shaw were chairman of the Parochial Board, and a Poorhouse at its command !

My objections, therefore, to a Poorhouse are, *First*, that it would be disadvantageous as regards the ratepayers, whose burdens would thereby be increased ; — unless, indeed, all classes of paupers were sent to it ; and, *Secondly*, that gross injustice would be done to the deserving poor—forming, as allowed by the Committee, nine-tenths of the whole.

What is the advantage dwelt on by the Committee, and, indeed, the only one now insisted on, which is to counter-balance these evils ? It may be that the vagabond poor who sham destitution, or falsely pretend they belong to a parish, when offered the Poorhouse, would slink away, and thus the parish would so far benefit. But is there no other way of ascertaining the truth in such cases ? How is the truth now ascertained in parishes where there are no Poorhouses ? What is the chief purpose for which an Inspector of Poor is appointed ? I take leave to say that, if the Inspector is a person having the necessary qualifications as regards knowledge, energy, and conscientiousness, the truth can almost always be ascertained.

In regard to one of our own populous parishes in Berwickshire, this statement has been made to me, and on the correctness of which I know I can rely :—

" The Inspector has only three times, so far as he can remember, been imposed upon, during 30 years' experience. He frequently resists payments to *tramps* and regular *roadsters*. Such pretenders to a claim on the parochial funds are easily detected, with assistance from the parochial medical officer. But it would be difficult to do so, in many instances, without his assistance."

I cannot, however, avoid remarking, that Inspectors of the



Poor are too often unsuited to the duties, often difficult and embarrassing, which they have to perform. Persons are sometimes selected for the office with a view to cheapness, quite as much as from a consideration of qualification. Every Inspector now must be a person of intelligence, energy, judgment, and possessing no small knowledge of law. When one sees the number of cash-books and registers required to be kept, the fearful amount of correspondence with the Edinburgh Board and Inspectors of other parishes, and the necessity of frequent personal investigations to trace the history and condition of individuals, it is evident that, in a populous parish, the whole time of an Inspector is required for his duties. But what do we too often find? The person appointed is a tradesman in the village or town, or a schoolmaster in the parish, or one who follows some other profitable occupation, and who on that account consents to become Inspector at a small salary, not supposing that his whole time will be required for the work. I believe that the reason why pauperism has got so much ahead in many parishes is, that the Inspector is either unfit for his office, or, if fit, neglects its duties, finding it more easy as well as more pleasant to give than to investigate.

One of the most fertile sources of expense to parishes is now, unhappily, the support of illegitimate children, and of their mothers till again able for work. The evil is increasing frightfully in every district of Scotland; and I attribute it, in no small degree, among several causes, to the neglect of the Inspectors of the Poor in not punishing the father when he deserts the unfortunate mother and child. The Poor-law Act of 1865 declares,—

“That every husband or father who shall desert or neglect to maintain his wife and children, being able to do so; and every mother and every putative father of an illegitimate child, after the paternity has been admitted or otherwise established, who shall refuse or neglect to maintain such child, being able to do so, whereby such wife or children or child shall become chargeable to any parish, shall be deemed to be a vagabond, under the provisions of the Act 1579, cap. 74, and may be prosecuted criminally before the Sheriff at the



instance of the Inspector of the Poor, and shall on conviction be punished by fine or imprisonment."

\* I observe, from the Poor-law returns, that the number of such prosecutions for all Scotland, on an average annually of the last ten years, has been only 106, and during the last two years 99, though (as the Registrar-General's returns show) the evil has every year been increasing. Who can deny that the duty of prosecuting such persons, which the Poor-law Act expressly lays on Inspectors, is very seldom attended to—the reason, no doubt, being the difficulty felt by them from not knowing how to perform it?

In further illustration of my remark about the frequent unfitness of Inspectors, I might refer to the cases recorded in the law reports of Inspectors who have been tried for fraudulent appropriation of parochial funds, and of culpable neglect of duty, occasioning in several cases the death of paupers; and to the published Reports of the Board of Supervision censuring Inspectors. I observe from these Reports that during the last two years, the complaints against Inspectors are threefold more numerous than they used to be.

But, on the other hand, let qualified Inspectors be appointed, devoting their whole time to the work, and if one parish would not occupy their whole time, undertaking the charge of several parishes; and at the same time let Parochial Boards see that the Inspectors are attentive to their duties—both the out-of-door work of visitation and inquiry, and the indoor work of books, registers, and correspondence—and there will be little difficulty in detecting attempts at imposition, or misapplication of parochial funds.

But allow me to add that, although opposed to a Poorhouse, in which all classes of poor may be housed and maintained, or rather, with which they may be threatened, there is one kind of institution to which I would not be averse, especially where the parish is populous—and that is a Lodging-house, to which certain classes of paupers may go, with their own free will.

In many parishes there are frail and helpless paupers, who



require to be looked after by a nurse or other attendant, at a cost to the parish of from 6s. to 8s. a week or more; whilst it too often happens that a great part of this allowance is misapplied, and the pauper remains in a comfortless plight. In a parochial lodging-house, when there are above twenty such paupers, it is found that the average cost of maintenance need not be half of the above sum; so that the institution is economically advantageous to the ratepayers, and a great boon to the paupers.

There is another class of paupers for whom such an institution is even more serviceable. I allude to orphan or deserted children who are on the poor's roll. They are, when there is no Lodging-house, boarded out with any family who will take them, on receiving the weekly allowance given by the Parochial Board; but with what risk of neglected morals and education, I need not say; whereas in a Parochial Lodging-house, every care can be taken of them.

Then, when cholera, fever, or any other infectious epidemic breaks out in a town or village among the working classes, there is the greatest risk that it will spread by the patient who occupies a small cottage. But where there is a Parochial Lodging-house, to which the patient can be removed, this risk is avoided, and the patient has a better chance of recovering.

There are several examples in our own district of these Lodging-houses, and I wish there were more. There is an excellent one at Dunse, which has existed about twenty-five years. It accommodates about twenty persons. There are in it at present—at least lately—nine aged paupers and eleven children. The youngest of these are at the infant school, the older at the parish school. They are all well looked after by a matron, aged about 50, who has been in the institution for nearly twenty years. When the children are able for work or service, they leave the Lodging-house; and with only two or three exceptions have turned out well. I learn from the inspector that the average cost of maintenance in this Lodging-house is 3s. 10d. per week.

A similar Institution exists in Haddington parish. There are in it at present twelve aged paupers, the oldest being 90



years; and some orphan children under 14 years. Having written to the Inspector of the Poor a few weeks ago to obtain information regarding this institution, I put two queries to him.

“What is the advantage of it: 1st, To the paupers; 2d, To the ratepayers?”

The first query he answered thus:—

“The aged and infirm could not have the same amount of comfort elsewhere. Those who can do anything are expected to work. The entire work of the house is done by the inmates.”

The second query was answered thus:—

“No part of the money expended on their keep is misapplied; and any tendency to indulge in bad habits is at once seen and corrected. The security of the general public, in the immediate removal of poor persons afflicted with epidemic or contagious diseases to ‘wards’ suitably furnished and set apart for their reception.”

To ascertain clearly whether this institution was an ordinary Poorhouse, I put this farther query,—

“Is it intended to be used as a test of indolence or improvidence?”

The answer was,—

“It is not so used. Applicants for admission are considered fortunate when they succeed in approving themselves to the Parochial Board. The admission of certain other urgent cases is left to the surgeon and inspector.”\*

These Lodging-houses are evidently the same sort of institutions as were authorised by the old statute of 1579, chap. 74,

\* I understand that this Lodging-house originated thus:—A few years ago, the Board of Supervision urged the establishment of a Poorhouse at Haddington. The proposal was, I believe, favoured by some members of the Parochial Board and the Inspector. Some of the ratepayers having heard of it, a general meeting was called by those who disapproved of the project. A letter from Sir Thomas Hepburn, a considerable heritor in the parish, was read, expressing strong disapproval of the measure. The Chairman of the Parochial Board, the Rev. Dr Cook, concurred in his views. The result was, a condemnation of the projected Poorhouse, and an approval of the proposal to have a Lodging-house instead.



before referred to, under the name of Parochial Hospital; so that they are in harmony with the practice of former times.

It may not be thought irrelevant for me to mention that similar institutions exist now, and have existed long, in France—a country where, I take leave to say, after some study of their system, that the management of the poor is conducted on sounder maxims of expediency, on more Christian principles, and with far more advantage economically, than in this country. Their Bureaux de Bienfaisance are in all these respects infinitely superior to our Parochial Boards. They have no assessments, no Poorhouses or Workhouses, and no legal right of maintenance to any class of destitute persons except the insane. But they have “Hopitaux” and “Hospices” in almost every commune or parish—the former being hospitals for the poor who are sick or temporarily maimed or injured; the latter being asylums for the aged or incurably diseased paupers, as well as for orphan and foundling poor. But outdoor relief is chiefly given; and it is given, not by paid officials, but by voluntary almoners, male and female.

Nor, perhaps, is it out of place, in mentioning the French system, that a few months ago, when in Edinburgh, I visited, at the suggestion of and in company with a friend, that excellent institution conducted by the Little Sisters of Mercy. To my astonishment, I found that there were sixty-five aged and destitute persons in this institution, supported entirely by these Little Sisters—of whom there are nine, all French—themselves apparently from forty to sixty years of age. It was an example of a French Hospice in the heart of Edinburgh, and managed entirely by kind-hearted French women. On asking how they supported the institution, and in particular whether they obtained funds from abroad, or had means of their own, they informed me that they obtained almost all their supplies from charitable families in Edinburgh—these supplies consisting chiefly of kitchen refuse, which, however, by simple cookery, they are able to reconvert into palatable food. They added that several fishwives from Newhaven and Musselburgh, having found out the institution, called almost every week and gave them supplies of fresh fish—of course



gratuitously. The incident was touching,—and reminded me of a remark by Dr Chalmers, that none are so kind to the poor as the poor.

Now, I do not know whether there are in Berwickshire, except in Dunse, any Parochial Lodging-houses similar to those I have been describing. But sure I am, that such an institution would be most useful in so populous a parish as Coldstream. Some years ago, when cholera prevailed, one was established in Eyemouth and also at Swinton;—whether they have been continued or not, I cannot say.

There is only one other remark I wish to make, and which is necessary in consequence of the allusion made by Mr Shaw to the recent patriotic movement in Edinburgh for ameliorating the condition of the poorer classes there. He says,—

“I would caution Parochial Boards against being led away by specious disquisitions on the evil results of our Poor-law system. It is easy to descant on these, but not so easy to provide a remedy. The poor we have always with us, and they must be fed, housed, and clad. The voluntary system of relieving their wants was long tried, and has been found wanting. The miserable pittance doled out by Kirk-Sessions in the olden times will not do now. Even in the great experiment in St John’s parish, Glasgow, when the guiding hand was withdrawn, down it fell like a house of cards. Besides, as has been well said, we have not a Dr Chalmers in every parish.”

The experiment here alluded to, which was commenced by Dr Chalmers in St John’s in the year 1819, was continued till the year 1837. Mr Shaw is incorrect in saying that the experiment came to an end in consequence of Dr Chalmers leaving Glasgow. It was continued under the ministry of both of his successors, Dr Macfarlane and Dr Brown, with unimpaired efficiency. Its relinquishment was due to special causes, which I shall immediately explain.

I should like, however, first to refer to a Report on this experiment made by Mr Tuffnell, an English Poor-law Commissioner, who visited Glasgow, and who saw it in operation in the year 1833, after Dr Chalmers had left. I make the following quotation from his Report:—



“When this system was begun, it was declared by its opponents that it could not last; but it has lasted for thirteen years. That it could only exist under Dr Chalmers; but it has existed equally well under his two successors. That in no other Church so large offerings could be collected, as an undue proportion of the rich attended St John’s church. This, I am assured by residents, is not correct, and that the congregation is not richer than an average one.

“In the first three years of the existence of the reformed plan, twice as many paupers came into St John’s parish as went out; and one of the managers assures me, that a constant preference seems given by the poor to St John’s above other parishes, on account of the different way of treating them.

“The essence of St John’s management consists in the superior system of inspection which it establishes. This is brought about by causing the applicants for aid to address themselves, in the first instance, to persons of station and character, whose sole parochial duty consists in examining into their condition, and who are always ready to pay a kind attention to their complaints. This personal attention of the rich to the poor, seems to be one of the most efficient modes of preventing pauperism.”

What then were the circumstances which led to the abandonment of the experiment? They were these—

1st, Dr Chalmers, foreseeing that there might be, from different causes, a great influx of paupers from other parishes, had asked the magistrates of Glasgow to authorise an arrangement by which persons belonging to other parishes, who migrated into St John’s, and became destitute there, should be supported out of the funds of these parishes. This, though a reasonable arrangement, the magistrates refused to sanction.

Another arrangement, also reasonable in itself, Dr Chalmers asked—viz., that St John’s parish, if it took care of its own poor, should not be assessed for the other nine parishes of the city. This arrangement also was refused.

In the face, however, of these discouragements, the system went on, under three successive ministers. St John’s parish, besides its own paupers, maintained a number of others who did not properly belong to it, and entirely by voluntary collec-



tions and voluntary inspection; and all the time was paying a heavy assessment, to be spent in the rest of the city.

At length there occurred an event, which caused an overthrow of the system. It was the establishing of a chapel of ease within the parish of St John's, to which a territory was assigned, equal to nearly half of the whole parish of St John's, but without sufficient funds wherewith either to build or endow the chapel. The consequence was, that the church collections, instead of being employed in the support of the poor, were applied to provide the stipend and pay off the debt. This event entirely paralysed the administrators of the poor, who had hitherto been able to avoid any assessment. Confusion in the machinery ensued, and the system had to be given up. But it was given up, not because of its inherent defects;—it yielded to the influence of external and unjust interferences, and also of opposition arising from the jealousy of managers in other parishes.

Mr Buchanan, M.P. for Glasgow, when called before the Poor-law Commissioners to give his opinion regarding the experiment, stated—

“I have never ceased to say, that if an agency was organised in each parish, even in Glasgow, for the effective management and oversight of the poor, in a very short time, there would be no necessity for a Poorhouse or an assessment. Collections would be made at church doors, quite adequate to all the wants of the deserving poor.”

I have thought it right to give these explanations, in consequence of Mr Shaw's remark in disparagement of Dr Chalmers's system of maintaining the poor (even of such a city as Glasgow) on the voluntary system. A great experiment, of a somewhat similar character, is about to be made in Edinburgh, to which I adverted in my last letter; and it is an experiment which I earnestly hope may succeed. The agency of visitation by voluntary almoners will afford the means of testing imposition, and of discouraging indolence and vice, quite as well as the Poorhouse system, besides possessing attributes of humanity and Christian sympathy of which that system is

destitute. I do not, of course, now advocate the trial of the voluntary system in Berwickshire. Public opinion is not yet ripe for so great a change; though the Edinburgh experiment, if successful, will do much to open men's minds to the practicability of it. All that I hope to do at present is to prevent the existing system of relieving the poor being made worse. It is bad enough already, in consequence of the poor being left to be looked after by paid inspectors, who are often unsuited to the work, or so much occupied with other matters, that they cannot attend to their parochial duties; whereby, not only the poor, but the ratepayers suffer. It would, however, be greatly worse for both parties, if the Poorhouse system were added, as the parochial expenditure would certainly be increased, and the deserving poor would probably be cruelly treated.

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

DAVID MILNE HOME.

ROBERT SWAN, Esq.,

Writer,

KELSO.



## APPENDIX A.

PAGE 7 OF PRECEDING LETTER.

*Passage as printed in Mr  
Walker's pamphlet.*

"The only known beneficial check, is the system of work-houses, as they are termed in England and Ireland—of poor-houses, as they are called in Scotland. This system is differently administered in each of the three kingdoms; but it must be admitted that, in none of them, has it proved a *perfect* contrivance. Nevertheless, being the only method yet devised capable in any degree of stemming the current of deterioration which flows from the operation of an unrestricted poor-law, it concerns us more to ascertain whether we are better with it than we should have been without it, than to censure its imperfections. If it has caused any considerable improvement, we must be content to maintain it until some better expedient is discovered."

*Passage as printed in Mr Milne  
Home's letter.*

"The only known check is the system of *Workhouses*, as they are termed in England and Ireland, *Poorhouses* as they are called in Scotland. It must be admitted it is not a perfect contrivance; nevertheless, being the only method yet devised capable in any degree of *stemming the current of deterioration*, it concerns us to ascertain whether we are better with it than without it. If it has caused any considerable improvement, we must be content to maintain it till some better expedient is discovered."

## APPENDIX B.

TABLE REFERRED TO ON PAGES 9 AND 10 OF PRECEDING LETTER.

	Rate of increasing Expenditure between opening of Poorhouse and Year 1863.	Rate of increasing Expenditure between Year 1846 and opening of Poorhouse.	Rate of increasing Expenditure in Years specified before opening of Poorhouse.
Barony, . . . . .	8.5 per cent	164.3 per cent	11 per cent in 2 years before 1850
Govan, . . . . .	42.3 „	140.2 „	19 „ in 5 „ 1854
Kirkcaldy, . . . . .	18.4 „	53.7 „	11 „ in 2 „ 1850
Kirkcudbright, . . . . .	15.7 „	103.8 „	10 „ in 2 „ 1850
... „	10.8 „	61.0 „	3 „ in 5 „ 1853
Easter Ross, . . . . .	18.8 „	133.4 „	14 „ in 2 „ 1850
Dundee, . . . . .	7.6 „	125.2 „	8 „ in 5 „ 1857
... „	... „	... „	7.1 „ in 2 „ 1857
Falkirk, . . . . .	14.2 „	223.0 „	Decr. of £68 in 3 „ 1851
Hawick, . . . . .	28.7 „	38.4 „	„ £16 in 7 „ 1858
Linlithgow, . . . . .	9.6 „	167.0 „	21 per cent in 7 „ 1857
New Monkland, . . . . .	7.0 „	177.1 „	50 „ in 2 „ 1850
Rhinns of Galloway, . . . . .	11.3 „	119.4 „	2 „ in 4 „ 1853
Stirling, . . . . .	6.0 „	262.3 „	Decr. of £28 in 8 „ 1858
Upper Nithsdale, . . . . .	29.0 „	96.1 „	7 per cent in 7 „ 1856
Kirkpatrick,* . . . . .	28.7 „	38.4 „	Decr. of £128 in 6 „ 1854

\* This Poorhouse was omitted from Mr Shaw's Table, though one of the fifteen cases referred to by me. It affords a more striking contradiction of his statement than any of the others. In the six years preceding the opening of the Poorhouse, there was not only no increasing expenditure, but a considerable decrease; whilst in the nine years following the opening of the Poorhouse, the expenditure increased at the rate of 28.7 per cent.









