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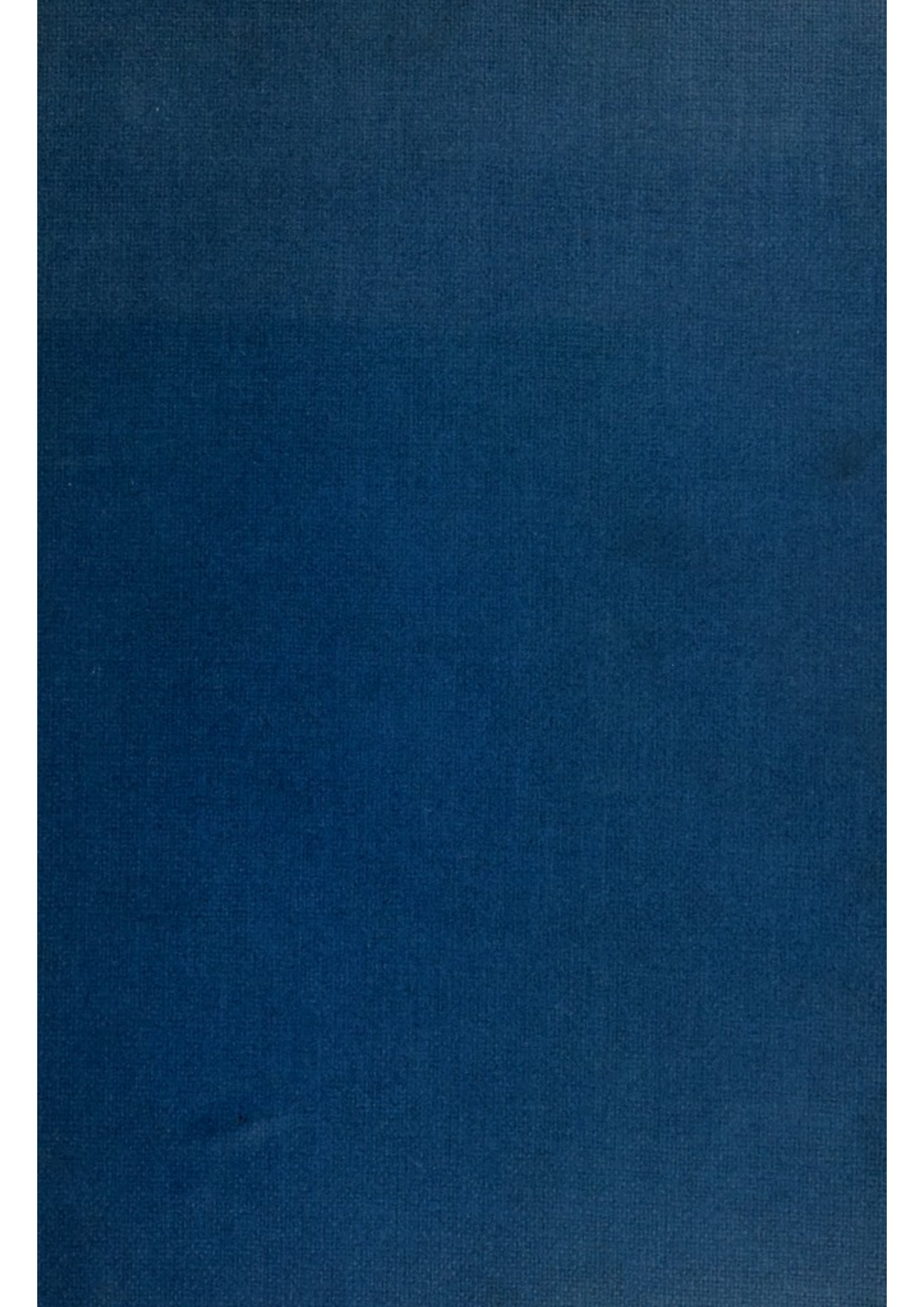
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SUGGESTIONS
FOR RESTORING
THE MORAL CHARACTER
AND THE
INDUSTRIOUS HABITS
OF THE POOR,

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SUGGESTIONS

FOR RESTORING

THE MORAL CHARACTER

AND THE

INDUSTRIOUS HABITS OF THE POOR :

ALSO FOR ESTABLISHING

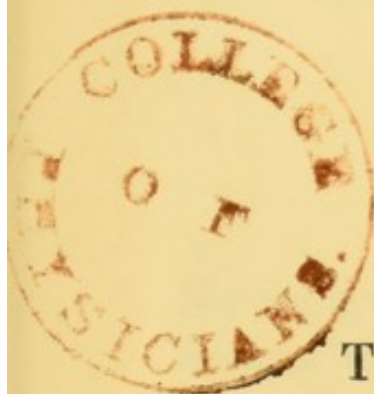
DISTRICT WORK-FARMS

IN PLACE OF

PARISH WORK-HOUSES,

AND FOR REDUCING

THE POOR-RATES.



BY

GEORGE PINCKARD, M.D.

OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, PHYSICIAN TO THE BLOOMSBURY
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LONDON :

ROAKE AND VARTY, 31, STRAND.

1835.

SUGGESTIONS

FOR

THE MORAL CHARACTER

OF

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INDUSTRIOUS HABITS OF THE POOR

IN

DISTRICT WORKSHOPS

IN

PARISH WORKSHOPS

AND

THE POOR-HOUSES

BY

GEORGE PINGREAU, M.P.

WITH AN APPENDIX ON THE SUBJECT OF THE POOR-HOUSES, AND ON THE
MORAL CHARACTER OF THE POOR, AND ON THE
MORAL CHARACTER OF THE POOR-HOUSES.

LONDON:

HOARE AND VARTY, 31, STRAND.

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SUGGESTIONS,

&c.

No suggestion of the human mind was ever fraught with greater wisdom, or more genuine benevolence, than was displayed in the long established system of English Poor-Laws, as designed for the relief of the sick, the aged, and the helpless; and for the occupation of the unemployed. But the abuses, which have been allowed to creep into the administration of this admirable system, have grown into an evil of fearful magnitude, threatening the general demoralization of the poor, the overthrow of property, and even the safety of society.

The baneful measure of granting out-door relief to able-bodied applicants, as practised, of late years, in almost every parish of the king-

dom, and the short-sighted expedient of causing part of the wages of the industrious labourer to be defrayed out of the parish-rates, have deteriorated the character of the poor, broken down their independent spirit, destroyed their habits of industry, and become a premium upon idleness and vice. But, degraded and profligate as great numbers of the poor are found to be, at the present day, the fault does not rest with them : their altered condition has been forced upon them. Viewing the general body of the English peasantry, they cannot be regarded as indolent and worthless : they are willing to work, and desire only fair wages—such as may enable them to provide due support for their families.

To remedy the existing evil, and rescue the poor from the degraded state into which they have fallen, has been deemed a task so vast, and of such difficult execution, that all who have hitherto approached it, have turned from it with despondency. But the late appalling report of the commissioners for “inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor-Laws,” has fully exposed the peril of persisting in the erroneous course, already too long pursued, while it has forced upon the Parliament, and upon every intelligent individual, the conviction, that the time is arrived, when the sup-

pression of the evil can no longer, with safety, be delayed, and when, at all hazards, some new system must be tried.

The Bill for the Amendment of the Poor Laws, passed during the last session, is the result. What may be its practical effect cannot yet be known; but great prudence and caution will be required in bringing it into action.

The alarming increase of pauperism, in England, may be considered to have arisen, in great measure, from the combined operation of the following causes—

1. The abolition of small farms.
2. The great influx of Irish paupers.
3. The encouragement given to early marriages among the poor.

1. Those whose lives have been spared through somewhat less than half a century, will recollect a time when our villages were peopled with a race of robust and hardy yeomen, who, with their ruddy sons and blooming daughters, assisted only by one or two domestic labourers, did all the work of their little farms, in peace and contentment, living in frugal plainness, and diffusing an air of comfort and independence around them. These were men of honest, upright character, who, being attached to the soil, felt an interest in their country's welfare, and were always ready to defend her laws and constitution.

But the trading principle of calculating every thing into a pound, shilling, and pence value, has driven this respectable and important race from their station. Their little farms have been swallowed up by giant estates of extravagant growth, and these valuable possessors of our villages, deprived of the fields which gave them support, have been reduced to the condition of labourers, and compelled to swell the amount of pauperism.

Whether this debasing change ought to be regarded as a real benefit to the country is extremely doubtful. The total amount of produce may, perhaps, be augmented, by cultivating the land in large farms; but, in how far this trading advantage may compensate the physical and moral deterioration, which it has caused in our provincial population, becomes a matter of serious consideration, and leaves open the question whether it might not be better for the nation that the system of letting the land in smaller allotments, and replacing the race of healthy labouring agriculturists, were restored.

In the days when this manly and contented body of cultivators possessed our villages, the labourers received the fair wages of their toil, lived in tranquil sobriety with their families, enjoyed their daily meal of animal food, and would have felt degraded and ashamed to have

sought, or even to have accepted, parish relief. Gin-shops, out-door parochial allowance to able-bodied workmen, and the payment of half-wages, from the parish rates, to the industrious labourer, for work done at the great land-owner's, or the farmer's, did not then, as they have more recently done, unite to undermine the health, the industry, and the moral character of the poor.

2. If the migration of Irish labourers into the southern part of the Union has increased the amount of pauperism to such an extent as to require that their influx be checked, a remedy may be found in preparing a wise system of Poor Laws for Ireland, and forming *district agricultural establishments*, where food and labour may, at all times, be procured by the indigent and unemployed paupers. With such a provision for the Irish poor, *at home*, the necessity for their emigration, in search of labour, would be removed.

3. The third and most fruitful cause of pauperism (by means of early marriages among the poor) has proceeded, in great part, from the erroneous practice of granting out-door allowance to able-bodied labourers, and increasing that allowance, not in proportion to the degree of industry thereby induced, but according to the number of children constituting the families of the applicants. Parochial allowance has not

been awarded to the labourer as the fair compensation for the labour done ; but the single man has received less, for the same amount of labour, than the married man ; and the married man has received more and more according to the greater number of his children. Under the same erroneous calculation, the farmers have given a preference to married men as labourers ; and the single men, being thus left without employment, have been degraded into paupers, and compelled to have recourse to parochial relief ; and, where this has been denied them, they have been driven to contract early marriages, as the surest means of procuring daily labour, or parish allowance. Humane and considerate as the preference given to the married labourer may appear to be, it is both unjust and impolitic, and it might have been difficult to suggest a more effectual method of multiplying pauperism.

To cut off, all at once, the relief which has been so long and so injudiciously administered to the able-bodied paupers might create discontent and turbulence, and be attended with peril ; but if, by a more gradual process, the commissioners could do away the habit of granting outdoor relief to able-bodied paupers ; and if the willing labourers should be permitted to receive from their employers an equitable rate of wages for their labour, the young men would be

more cautious in contracting marriage, and this mode of increasing pauperism would rapidly decline.

But, amidst the evils to which the poor have been exposed, perhaps the most formidable has been the humiliating practice which, of late years, has obtained, of paying the labourer only one half of his wages, and driving him to the parish for the other half. This unwise expedient has mainly contributed to the demoralization of the poor, while it has demeaned them in their own estimation, and reduced them to a state of cold and slavish indifference.

The short-sighted employer might have seen that such an arrangement must be injurious to all parties. It appears to have arisen from a mistaken attempt to shift the burden of the poor-rates from the backs of one class of persons to the shoulders of another class. The agriculturists have unwisely expected to gain a saving, by throwing their labourers upon the parish for a part of their wages, and thereby compelling the shopkeepers and trading inhabitants of the towns to bear a larger share of the rates: but, as the amount of poor-rates would necessarily be increased, in proportion as the amount of payment, in the form of wages, should be diminished; and, as the occupiers of the land would still have to pay the greater part of these rates, the

anticipated saving could never be realized. Indeed the farmer would be a loser, instead of a gainer, by this abortive contrivance, for the injured and degraded labourer, knowing that his employer would pay him only one half of the wages, would, of course, contract his labour in the same proportion, and, becoming idle and careless, would give only half the work of a well-paid labourer: nor could his employer, with any consistency, complain of this, since, by his own folly, he compelled the man to receive as a pauper, from the parish, half the earnings of his honest industry. This measure has been most effective in reducing the poor to their present state of degradation and pauperism. Nor was it ill devised only with regard to its effect upon the labourers; it was not less deceptive as respects the pecuniary calculation involved in it, as may be seen by the following statement.

Suppose the fair wages of the labourer to be two shillings per day, the account will stand thus:—

		<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
		1	0
	By wages paid by the farmer .		
	By poor-rates paid by the far-	0	8
To wages due to the labourer. }	mer, say		
	By poor-rates paid by the trades-	0	4
	men, say		
		—	
		2	0
		—	

	s.	d.		s.	d.
To half-days labour lost by the farmer.	}	0	By half-day's wages saved by the farmer.	}	0
To poor-rate paid by the farmer.		8	By balance, or daily loss sustained by the farmer		8
		1			8

It is evident, therefore, that the farmer, by his mistaken economy, will lose eightpence, instead of saving one shilling per day; and that he can only gain the sad consolation of having imposed a tax of fourpence per day upon his neighbours, the tradesmen, by debasing the character and subverting the industry of the labourer.

By such means has pauperism been increased, and the moral character of the poor impaired. But dangerous and extensive as the evil now appears, the remedy is yet within reach, provided it be properly and resolutely applied. The great desideratum is—to restore the moral character of the poor, and to bring back the able-bodied paupers to the independent feeling of providing for themselves and their families by their own industry. To this end, *two things are needful*.

1. That every independent labourer should have a *cottage-dwelling*, with a piece of garden-ground attached to it.

2. That every indigent pauper should be provided with food and labour, at a district establishment of industry, or *pauper work-farm*.

The first of these requisites, although of high importance, not being within the control of the Commissioners, can only be attained by the general concurrence of the landed proprietors, who, in effecting it, would have the satisfaction of feeling that they were conferring a signal benefit upon themselves and their country, whilst they were promoting the comfort and well-being of the poor.

Let noblemen and gentlemen, possessing land, cause cottages to be built on every farm, for the labourers employed thereon, allotting to each cottage a piece of ground as a garden. Let these dwellings be occupied by the workmen, at a moderate rent, and let them receive, from their employers, a rate of wages, for their daily labour, sufficient to protect them from sinking into pauperism and destitution.

In the villages, equally as on the farms, let a similar accommodation be provided. Let no cottage be erected, whether in a small town, upon a farm, or on a gentleman's estate, without having a piece of ground attached to it, for the purpose of a garden; and where the buildings, in villages already formed, are placed too near each other to admit of this, or, where from a deficiency of common, or of waste land, the requisite ground cannot be had, let the neighbouring farmers or land-owners accomplish the desired

object, by letting to each labourer, at a moderate rent, a small piece of land, to serve as a garden.

But care should be taken not to allot to the cottages a portion of ground exceeding one-sixth part of an acre, lest the occupier should be induced to believe, like the Irish cottier, that he could provide for his family without the earnings of his daily labour. He should not look to the garden as his support:—it should be only a spot of recreation, the produce of which might increase the labourer's comforts, without interrupting his useful round of toil.

If such-like dwellings were provided for the poor, in every village, and upon every estate, the industrious labourer, possessing his independent home, would occupy his leisure hours, assisted by his wife and family, in the cultivation of his valued little plot—the produce of which, planted and gathered by his own hand, would improve his pottage, and add sweetness to his frugal meal; and if in addition, he were to receive due encouragement from his more affluent neighbours, especially from his employer and the clergy, his moral and religious character would be improved—his sabbath duties would be regularly observed—his habits would be industrious, his manner and conduct respectful, and he would pass his time in peace and contentment, with

his family, unheeding the baneful allurements of the ale-house and the gin-shop.

Another highly important advantage would also accrue from placing the virtuous and independent labourers in this respectable station: their happy condition would hold out an example, which might excite the emulation of the indigent and less industrious paupers, and be among the best means of reclaiming them from the lamentable state of degradation and depravity, into which they have been depressed, by the mal-administration of the humane and magnificent system of Poor Laws, which had been devised for the relief of the sick, the aged, and the impotent; and for the employment of those who could not obtain labour for themselves.

The second remedial measure appears to be within the control of the Commissioners; or, if the recent bill for the amendment of the Poor-Laws do not fully invest them with such authority, they should, without delay, be empowered to enforce it, whenever they may deem it expedient.

Notwithstanding the general outcry respecting an excessive population, and the necessity for emigration, it may be questioned, whether there be one labourer in the country more than might find profitable employment, if duly en-

gaged in the cultivation and improvement of the soil.

If the surplus labour, which is said to abound throughout the kingdom, were employed upon the land, with a view to improve it to the utmost extent, might not our fields be made to yield twice, or even thrice, their present produce? Not only are extensive tracts allowed to lie waste, but much that is brought under tillage is very imperfectly cultivated; especially at the present period, in consequence of the depreciation of agriculture, and the farmers not possessing capital sufficient to enable them to bestow an adequate supply of labour and manure for keeping the ground in a profitable condition.

If our opulent capitalists were to form companies for the employment of the poor, and the improvement of the land, as they do for constructing railways, digging canals, and executing other great public works, the able-bodied labourers might all find occupation; or, if the law of partnership were altered, as regards agriculturists, so as to limit the risk of loss to the actual sum advanced, capitalists might engage profitably with farmers, and the latter be provided with such an amount of capital, as would enable them to employ sufficient labour for obtaining the utmost produce from the land; or, if the general body of rate-payers, acting cordially together,

would resolutely combine to do what was best for the poor, and to provide useful labour at equitable wages, for the able-bodied—in either of these cases, full occupation might be found for every individual, and there might be no occasion for public establishments for the employment of the population.

But, as these measures are not likely to appear among the reforms of the present day, and as the poor have been degraded into a fearful state of indolence and pauperism, such establishments are become requisite, for the purpose of providing useful labour, for the indigent and unemployed paupers. This object, it is believed, may be accomplished, by instituting *District Houses of Industry, and Work-Farms*, where the poor may be engaged in agricultural and other useful pursuits, equally to the benefit of themselves and the public.

The system of providing for them in parish workhouses having been long tried, and having grievously failed, it can scarcely be expected, that the plan of enlarging these buildings, and admitting into them all descriptions of paupers, intermixing hordes of obdurate beggars, drunkards, profligate vagrants, and worthless impostors, with the youthful, and the more virtuous poor, can have any other effect, than to convert these receptacles into hotbeds of immorality and corruption.

The whole host of paupers being confined to these dwellings, it would be difficult, if not altogether impossible, to provide for them useful employment; or at least, employment that might not tend to impoverish and reduce to pauperism the lower class of tradesmen, residing within the influence of these establishments; whereas, if they were placed on a district farm, their labour might be turned to a profitable account, without being injurious to any class, or any individual, while their conduct and habits being carefully watched and guided, their characters might be improved, and many, if not all of them, might be restored to the respectable station of independent labourers.

Instead of enlarging the parish work-houses, or increasing their numbers, might it not be advisable to incorporate four, six, eight, or any convenient number of adjoining parishes into *one district*, and there to establish a *work institution*, at which the indigent and unemployed poor might be occupied in agriculture, and their occupation be made available for the improvement of their industry and moral character, and for the speedy reduction of the poor rates?

A farm of extent, proportioned to the number of parishes united, might be rented in a central part of the district, to be held as a "Pauper Work-Farm." It might be cultivated *by spade-*

labour, and almost every pauper, from seven to seventy years of age, might be made useful at such an establishment: the weakest might be able to pick weeds, plant potatoes, or do some kind of work to assist in the culture and improvement of the land.

If, from present arrangements, the Commissioners should not deem it expedient to make trial of this plan as a government measure, *any opulent land-owner*, possessing property and influence in several adjoining parishes, might set the example of instituting a district or central work-farm, where all the indigent paupers of the said several parishes might be employed in agricultural labour, instead of being placed, in comparative idleness, in the separate parochial work-houses.

To provide for the expense of forming such an institution, each of the parishes, united, might be required to contribute according to an average amount of the poor-rates, during the three or four last years; or in a due proportion, according to the number of paupers sent to be fed and employed at the district farm. But this expenditure would, it is presumed, be repaid, by a rapid diminution of the poor-rates, as soon as the work establishment should be brought into operation.

These district institutions might supersede

the parish work-houses, and be so contrived as to afford food, shelter and employment *to all descriptions of destitute unprovided paupers*. The sick, the aged and the helpless, should there find a home, and receive all the comfort and consolation intended by the humane and excellent system of Poor-laws, long since enacted. The indigent and able-bodied should also find there a dwelling-place, with a due supply of food and labour; but to these, it should likewise be made a school for reclaiming their industry and moral character.

It being the object to deter this class of paupers from seeking parish relief, and to bring them back to habits of industry, they should be re-assured, that they can gain a higher scale of comforts by their own free labour, than by resorting to parochial assistance. No allowance should be granted them, unless they earned it by their labour; and no parochial relief should be administered, except at the District Work-farm; and farther, in order to effect their reform, their labour, at this establishment, should be rendered in some degree *more toilsome, or more protracted*, than is required, for obtaining the same scale of comforts, by the independent labourer, who works voluntarily for the support of himself and his family.

It should be a regulation also at the District

Place of Industry, that the healthy, able-bodied paupers be strictly confined to a diet of *salt-fish and potatoes*, no better scale of provisions being allowed to any of the pauper inhabitants of the establishment, except (by direction of the medical attendant) to the sick, the aged, and the helpless.

If the scale of comforts, allowed to the able-bodied-paupers, at the Central Farm, were to be equal to that which the industrious cottager can procure by his own willing labour, there would be no inducement to quit the institution, and seek for independent employment, which is the desideratum to be held in view, in all the arrangements for the able-bodied poor.

A supply of potatoes, adequate to the consumption, might be grown upon the estate; and an ample store of salt fish should be always in readiness to meet the demand of any number of paupers that might be admitted to the institution. By this arrangement, the really necessitous might, at all times, find food and labour at this station. The dread of starvation could no longer exist; and no poor person, in England, could in future have to complain of the want of food, or the want of employment.

The plan would, likewise, do away all pretence *for begging and thieving*. Every individual being supplied with healthy labour, and

having wherewith to satisfy his hunger, if any one should be found begging he should be instantly taken up, and sent to the district work-farm; and if he should a second time commit a similar delinquency, he should be treated as a vagrant; and if any pauper were detected pilfering or thieving, a degree of punishment, proportioned to the guilt, should immediately follow—the infliction of the punishment being as certain as the commission of the crime. Regarding with humane consideration the unfortunate and virtuous poor, who may be willing but unable to procure independent labour, it would be imperative to exercise a firm and resolute system of management over the sturdy vagrant, and the worthless, hardened impostor, who strive to live in idleness upon the parish allowance. In order to compel the profligate and wantonly indolent to better habits they should be apprized that when once admitted at the district farm, no parochial relief could, on any pretence, be granted them elsewhere; and that, even there, they would not be supplied with food unless they earned it by their daily labour.

It will be said by many that this class of idle, dissolute profligates cannot be made to work; and, it must be confessed, that it will require the strict observance of firm and rigid regulations, in order to subdue them into habits of obe-

dience and regularity ; but, let them feel that they can obtain no other relief, and that unless they contribute their labour, they will not receive any food—let them distinctly understand that if they should be found begging or stealing their misdeeds will be rigorously visited ; and they will soon comprehend that there is no escape from the labour and discipline of the work-farm, except by seeking, elsewhere, for independent employment, like the virtuous cottager, whose habits of industry they should be taught to emulate.

In the American houses of correction the most indolent and abandoned are compelled to labour : in the West Indies the torpid, unwilling Africans have been made to work : in a regiment of soldiers the awkward squad are drilled to carry themselves with a martial step and air : and even maniacs are rendered obedient under a steady system of discipline. Why, then, should it be considered impracticable to reclaim the hardened, erring vagrants, by placing them within a well-regulated and undeviating circle of control, aided by considerate kindness and encouragement ?

By strictly enforcing these regulations, and placing before them the example of the independent cottager above suggested, the able-bodied paupers might be taught the advantage

of resuming the respectable character of free and industrious labourers—in which event they would be desirous of quitting the district establishment, to seek for more independent employment—the result toward which all our endeavours should be directed.

The present state of agriculture is particularly favourable for establishing district work-farms. The majority of farmers (not possessing capital sufficient for enabling them to appropriate a due supply of labour and manure for the profitable cultivation of the land) would be willing to surrender their farms, and to forego the risk of incurring an annual loss, for the certainty of receiving a fixed amount of salary, as agents or managers of the estates for the united parishes.

A farm, sufficient for employing all the surplus labour of the several parishes united, being rented, as near as convenient to the centre of the district, provided the house and out-buildings were not sufficiently spacious for accommodating the numbers admitted, additional buildings should be erected for the purpose, care being taken to keep the able-bodied and the dissolute from intermixing with the other classes of paupers. The farmer, if competent, might be engaged as the manager or conductor of the establishment, aided by such assistants as might be required, and acting under the superintendence of a committee of overseers or guardians from the several pa-

rishes united, the whole being subject to the control and general regulations of the Board of Commissioners.

It should be a rule of the institution that all the paupers, not prevented by sickness or infirmity, should attend divine service at the nearest places of public worship, according to their respective creeds, on the Sabbath day; or a chaplain should be appointed to officiate at the establishment every Sunday, and to assist, on all occasions, in leading the paupers to the fulfilment of their moral and religious duties.

The principal articles cultivated, at the district farm, should be corn, flax, and potatoes. The potatoes being eaten upon the spot where grown, a great saving would be gained by their not requiring to be carted away, as at present, in order to be consumed at a distance from the fields which produce them. The flax might be dressed, spun, and woven at the establishment, and manufactured into clothing for the use of the aged and infirm pauper-residents. The corn would, in most part, remain to be sold for payment of the rent and expenses, and for the reduction of the poor-rates.

In the event of the number of paupers being, at any time, greater than could be occupied, by spade-labour, in the regular cultivation of the farm, employment might be found, for the surplus portion, by filling up pits, digging down

eminences, levelling inequalities, draining the land, digging for limestone, gravel, marle, &c., making of lime, macadamizing all the roads and lanes, and facilitating the communication to every point of the estate, cleaning out the ditches and ponds, and, in every possible manner improving the land, so as to increase the amount of produce, and bring the fields into the state of a rich and well-cultivated garden; and, until this shall be accomplished, and the sea shall refuse her copious supplies, it were premature to complain of excess in the population of the country.

If by a due appropriation of labour and capital the soil could be so improved as to yield twice its present produce, it might be capable of maintaining more than twofold the present population, especially if, in addition to the augmented produce of the land, due attention were paid to rendering the fruitfulness of the sea available. We live in an island; and, by the bounty of an all-wise Providence, the ocean, which surrounds us, is stored with abundance of food for man: might not a portion of the unemployed labour be usefully occupied in the taking and preserving of fish? and if the parties so engaged should be incompetent for providing the necessary supply, might not divisions of the more active and healthy pensioners of Greenwich Hospital be stationed at different sea-ports round the island, provided

with boats and nets, for the purpose of aiding the present race of fishermen in taking and salting fish, both for general sale, and for the supply of the district work establishments; and, in the event of more fish being caught than could be consumed as food, the excess might be beneficially appropriated as manure for enriching the land.

If the millions of money thrown away by our opulent capitalists, in wild and ruinous speculations, had been expended on the *earth's surface in England*, instead of being buried in the *bowels of the earth in South America*, not only might employment have been given to the poor, but a *gold mine* would have been found of far greater value than the richest mines of Mexico and Peru. Give encouragement to the independent labourers: establish district work-farms for the indigent and unemployed: let the surplus labour be constantly directed to the improvement of the land: guard well the habits and conduct of the poor, and teach them to know the comforts which may be ensured by a steady course of industry and morality—then will the property of the nation cease to be endangered by excessive pauperism, and a redundant population.

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