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SIR EDWIN CHADWICK, K.C.B.,

"The Father of Sanitary Science."

—♦—*—♦—

JANUARY, 1891.

329
THE
PARISH AND THE UNION;

OR, THE

POOR AND THE POOR LAWS

UNDER THE

OLD SYSTEM AND THE NEW :

BEING

AN ANALYSIS

OF THE

EVIDENCE CONTAINED IN THE TWENTY-TWO REPORTS

OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

APPOINTED IN THE SESSION OF 1837, TO INQUIRE INTO THE ADMINIS-
TRATION OF THE RELIEF OF THE POOR, UNDER THE ORDERS
AND REGULATIONS ISSUED BY THE COMMISSIONERS
APPOINTED UNDER THE PROVISIONS

OF THE

POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT.

THE WHOLE

DIGESTED UNDER THE VARIOUS HEADS OF COMPLAINT
PREFERRED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE,

WITH

Illustrative Facts and Observations.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE;

AND A

SUMMARY OF PETITIONS AND ADDRESSES.

LONDON :

CHARLES KNIGHT AND CO., 22, LUDGATE-STREET.

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The Report of the Select Committee on the New Poor Law Amendment Act contains the following passage:—

“ Some statements having been made in Parliament of particular instances of severity and abuse, either in the law or in its administration, your Committee thought that they should best discharge their duty by proceeding at once to take those complaints into consideration. They were the more induced to do so from a persuasion, that though their attention might in the first instance be confined to some particular fact, yet that in the course of such an inquiry the whole state of things within the Union, and the general operation of the law, would be brought under their notice.”

The principle thus laid down has been worked out in the following Analysis of the Evidence. The “ *Complaint* ” has been given in the words of the complainant ; and “ the whole state of things within the Union,” as well as in neighbouring Unions, “ and the general operation of the law,” have been brought into “ notice ” in connexion with the alleged “ instances of severity or abuse, either in the law or in its administration,” whenever these instances have any relation with the general operations of the new system.

The decided opinions which the Editors entertain on the question of Poor Law Reform have not, they trust, led them into unfairness. They have suppressed no important point brought forward by the opponents of the present system, and they have

given no undue colouring to the contrary statements of its advocates. They have, with scarcely an exception, left the witnesses to tell their own story in their own words. Their object has been to gather, from the chaotic mass of twenty thousand questions and answers, a general view of the workings of "the old system and the new;"—and to exemplify the practice by constantly keeping in mind the principles upon which the reformed administration of the Poor Laws has been founded.

London, July 15, 1837.

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THE

PARISH AND THE UNION.

INTRODUCTION.

THE propriety of instituting an inquiry into the operation of the Poor-Law Amendment Act having been urged at an early period of the Session of 1837, by the opponents of the measure, it was ordered, on the motion of Lord John Russell, on the 27th of February,

"That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the Administration of the Relief of the Poor, under the Orders and Regulations issued by the Commissioners appointed under the Provisions of the Poor-Law Amendment Act."

The following members were nominated as a Committee in pursuance of this motion:—

Lord John Russell.	Mr. Cartwright.	Mr. Charles Villiers.
Mr. Walter.	Mr. Barneby.	Mr. Robert Gordon.
Mr. Fazakerley.	Mr. Estcourt (Devizes).	Mr. Miles (Somerset).
Sir James Graham.	Mr. John Ponsonby.	Mr. Harvey.
Mr. Poulett Scrope.	Mr. Loch.	Mr. Law Hodges.
Mr. Baines.	Mr. Wakley.	Mr. Chichester (Barn-
Mr. Hume.	Sir Oswald Mosley.	staple).
Sir Thomas Fremantle.		

Mr. Fazakerley having been appointed chairman, the committee commenced the examination of witnesses on the 9th of March. On the 14th of March, it was determined, with a view of giving the utmost publicity to their proceedings, that the minutes of evidence should be reported from time to time, instead of being published at the termination of the Inquiry. In consequence of this resolution, there were printed twenty-two Reports of the Minutes of Evidence between the 9th of March, when the committee commenced its sittings, and the 28th of June, when they

terminated. Upwards of twenty thousand queries were put to the various witnesses summoned before the committee. The parties adverse to the principles and details of the Amendment Act took the lead in the Inquiry, by bringing forward its operation in the Petworth and Droxford Unions. In the Petworth case, the principal witness whom they brought forward was the Rev. T. Sockett, rector of Petworth, a visitor of a work-house in his neighbourhood under the regulations of Gilbert's Act. Mr. James Foard, a member of the Board of Guardians for the Petworth Union; Mr. Napper, chairman of the Board; Mr. Daintrey, clerk to the Board; and Mr. Ellis, the Vice-chairman, mainly supported his views, though with some differences on various points. Several agricultural labourers, residing within the Petworth Union, were also examined for the purpose of ascertaining the manner in which they and others of the same class were affected by the application of the amended law. When Mr. Walter's evidence on the Petworth case had closed, it was objected that the administration of relief in the Petworth Union ought not to be cited as an illustration of the operations of the new principles of administration; because, by throwing the able-bodied labourers upon the highway-rates, the old system of mal-administration had still been maintained there, a surplus body of labourers kept up, and wages depressed; because the place was still pauperized by the excessive distribution of charity; and because the Board of Guardians, acting under adverse influence, and of farmers interested in maintaining the allowance system, had been against the New Law, and had not executed it efficiently. It was therefore proposed to examine the administration of relief in the Unions immediately adjacent—West Hampnett, Midhurst, and such others as the Committee chose to select indiscriminately, where none of those disturbing causes existed, or where they existed to a less degree. Mr. Walter resisted this course, and proposed to proceed with the selected Unions, and selected cases in each Union. The Committee so far assented to the course proposed, as to receive the evidence with relation to the Westhampnett Union; but did not hear the witnesses from Midhurst and other adjacent Unions, who were in attendance. Mr. Raper, the clerk of the Board of Guardians, being examined at great length, showed the manner in which the amended system had been productive of advantage. A larger number of witnesses was examined than in the Petworth case, consisting of individuals belonging to various classes: some of whom, as paupers, had experienced practically the working of the measure; and the cross-examinations

by various members may be regarded as having elicited evidence on nearly all the controverted points to which attention had been directed. The Droxford Union became the next subject for inquiry, and it was brought forward under the belief that the working of the Amendment Act in that district was productive of scarcely any of the benefits which had been ascribed to it. The inquiry in the above three rural Unions occupied nine-tenths of the labours of the committee, comprising 18,000 out of 20,000 questions. These agricultural cases were followed by a similar inquiry in reference to Unions comprising a manufacturing population; and Bradford (Wilts) and Nottingham, both suffering severely in their staple industry through the commercial pressure, were selected. In this department of the Inquiry, the evidence did not relate to so many points as in the case of the rural Unions, but the purposes of the examination were chiefly to ascertain the applicability of the new system to a manufacturing population during a period of inactivity and distress.

With the exceptions of the manufacturing and agricultural district of Bradford, and the manufacturing district of Nottingham, this protracted and most minute inquiry has therefore been confined to the agricultural districts comprised within two Unions in Sussex, and one Union in Hampshire; with the addition of an isolated case in the Fareham Union,* and of some incidental details having reference to the Chichester Local Union, under Gilbert's Act. The parishes contained in these Unions, with their amount of population, and their yearly expenditure on the poor previous to the operation of the new Laws, are shown in the following returns:—

* See Appendix B.

SUSSEX.

Parishes United.	Population in 1831.	Expenditure on Poor. Average for the Years 1831 to 1834.	Parishes United.	Population in 1831.	Expenditure on Poor. Average for the Years 1831 to 1834.
WEST HAMPSHIRE UNION.			PETWORTH UNION.		
1 West Hampnett . . .	500	362	1 Petworth . . .	3,114	2,946
2 East-Lavant . . .	407	415	2 Kirdford . . .	1,633	2,860
3 Mid-Lavant . . .	669	166	3 Wisborough Green . . .	1,785	2,375
4 Binderton . . .	89	92	4 Billingshurst . . .	1,510	2,302
5 West Stoke . . .	102	47	5 Rudgwick . . .	950	1,741
6 Singleton . . .	583	512			
7 East Dean . . .	409	310			
8 Graffham . . .	316	310			
9 Eartham . . .	112	179			
10 Boxgrove . . .	778	933			
11 Barnham . . .	143	161			
12 West Wittering . . .	562	744			
13 East Wittering . . .	241	190			
14 West Itchenor . . .	300	201			
15 Birdham . . .	800	516			
16 Earnley . . .	153	218			
17 New Fishbourn . . .	291	157			
18 Appledram . . .	142	285			
19 Donnington . . .	228	581			
20 Hunston . . .	153	276			
21 Sidlesham . . .	1,002	1,155			
22 Selsey . . .	821	1,054			
23 Pagham . . .	985	1,392			
24 North Mundham . . .	567	893			
25 Merston . . .	129	108			
26 Rumbold's Wyke . . .	319	262			
27 Tangmere . . .	192	144			
28 Oving . . .	789	1,008			
29 Aldingburn . . .	833	909			
30 Eastergate . . .	203	241			
31 Walburton . . .	616	537			
32 Yapton . . .	578	883			
33 Felpham . . .	558	854			
34 Madehurst . . .	154	71			
35 Biusted . . .	102	132			
36 Middleton . . .	135	19			
37 Upwaltham . . .	95	100			
Totals . . .	15,017	16,457			
			HANTS.		
			PROXFORD UNION.		
			1 Proxford . . .	1,620	1,408
			2 Durley . . .	361	320
			3 Hambledon . . .	2,026	2,709
			4 Bishop's Waltham . . .	2,181	1,672
			5 Solerton . . .	931	1,076
			6 Corhampton . . .	125	227
			7 Meon-Stoke . . .	382	413
			8 Exton . . .	283	336
			9 Warnford . . .	418	504
			10 West-Meon . . .	711	610
			11 Upham . . .	511	442
			Totals . . .	9,549	9,717

In reference to the local position of these Unions it is to be observed that those of Westhampnett and Petworth come immediately into contact; and that the parishes of the Droxford Union are separated from the parishes comprised in the two Sussex Unions by a very slight amount of population. There are no essential local differences which would require to be observed in pursuing the inquiry. The whole district is purely agricultural;

the modes of cultivation the same; and the characters and habits of the labourers identical.

It will be desirable, before we proceed to the great object of the inquiry, "The Administration of the Relief of the Poor, under the Orders and Regulations issued by the Commissioners appointed under the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act," to look back a few years, for the purpose of ascertaining what was the condition of the agricultural labourers and their employers, in these particular districts, before the Poor Law Amendment Act came into operation. The materials for this retrospect are principally to be found in the Report (with its Evidence) of the Commissioners for *Inquiring* into the operation of the old Poor Laws; and in the First and Second Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales. The Reports of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, however, contain many details of the former state of things, as compared with the present; and we shall avail ourselves of a few detached passages of this evidence to complete such a retrospective introduction.

The present inquiry arose out of allegations that the administration of the relief of the poor, under the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act, was conducted in a spirit of cruelty and oppression, which had reduced the agricultural labourers, especially those with large families, to the lowest point of destitution and wretchedness. The particular instances of that oppression, whether in the withholding of allowances to the able-bodied, the neglect of the aged and infirm, the disregard of the destitute in cases of emergency, the insufficient medical relief, the hard fare and severe discipline of workhouses, all arising out of the intractable nature of the orders and regulations of the Poor Law Commissioners, will be examined as we proceed in our analysis of the inquiry. But in the mean time we desire to show, by a few general facts, that the condition of the agricultural labourers of Sussex and Hampshire, and of this particular district of these counties, in and previous to the year 1834, was not one which a philanthropist would seek to exhibit as an example of happiness and content, and of those peaceful and orderly virtues which belong to a state of society in which industry obtains its fair remuneration, and the rights of the labourer and the capitalist are equally upheld. We think also, that the "Administration of the Relief of the Poor, under the Orders and Regulations" of overseers and waywardens, and vestries and magistrates, as it existed, during the former system of Poor Laws in this district of Sussex and Hampshire, was not one which a conscientious dispenser of the public money would desire to hold up as a model of humane and judicious management, relieving the pressure of

poverty, but not creating evils greater than the want which it sought to remove or mitigate. It is necessary to refer to this state of things; for there is nothing more true than this,—that we are all too apt to forget any evils, whether public or private, which have been removed from us, and to ground our complaints of existing annoyances, not by comparison with the many we have got rid of, but by brooding over the few which stand between us and perfect satisfaction:—

“The apprehension of the good
Gives but the greater feeling of the worse.”

Previous to the year 1834 or 1835, the labourers of Hampshire and Sussex were, in the eyes of those who regard large allowances out of the poor's rate as the perfection of a system for keeping away want, in a state of almost paradisaical happiness. That the labourers were better off under the allowance system, as compared with the present system, which pays them the wages of their labour directly, instead of stopping part of their wages and calling it an allowance, these observers have no doubt. The Rev. Mr. Sockett, of Petworth, says, “of course they were better off than now—they had the allowance.” The greater the allowance, *of course*, the greater the diffusion of general happiness! The allowance had no reference to the amount of wages received; it came from a fund as inexhaustible as the atmospheric air, as constant as the sun, and as the sun, it shone upon the good and bad alike. Mr. William Harrison of Bishop's Waltham (Droxford Union), who was examined before the Committee, testified to the large and liberal provision for all the shepherds in the Hampshire and Sussex Arcadia:—

“You have said that it was your custom to give the allowance to the children without any reference to the wages that the labourer received; and some one instance you remember of a man who had a guinea a week, having received an allowance for his children?—Yes.

“Do you remember an instance of a well-digger whose wages amounted to two guineas a week, to whom you were in the habit of giving an allowance for his children?—Yes, he had the same as if he had earned only 10s.

“And you, knowing that he got two guineas a week, continued to pay to him for his children above 4s. 5d. a head*?—My plan was, I kept the allowance book, and I said, ‘Now, gentlemen, here is this case, so and so;’ and they said, ‘It is not worth while to take notice of it.’

“And you paid him the same as the others?—Yes.”

* This is so printed in the evidence, but we think it must be a mistake. The same witness subsequently states, “for every child we allowed 15d. per week.”

But the allowance not only held out its advantages to the labourers who deserved well of their country, by being unable to maintain a family upon two guineas a week, but it encouraged the single labourers to leap over the ordinary barriers of prudence which determine whether or not a man shall marry, by opening a ‘Pisgah’ view of “a land flowing with milk and honey,” to those who brought mouths enough to consume the good things spread forth to all who needed them. With reference to the single labourers, the sons of allowance men, who had been allowed all their lives, and who were ready to qualify for larger allowances as *independent* labourers, the same witness was asked and replied as follows:—

“You gave this concluding answer to one question, ‘They remained under the charge of the parish till they went to church and brought home a wife;’ did they come to the workhouse with a wife?—No, we received them into parish employ the next day; previous to that we used to give the man 4s.; he said, ‘I MUST DO SOMETHING FOR YOU, I must marry a wife; this will never do to have only 4s.’

“Were you in the practice of giving every man that married 4s. to keep his wife?—That is before he married; then he was dissatisfied because he had not so much from parish pay as the other men had, and he said, ‘I shall cut this short, and I will marry a wife.’

“How much had he when he was married?—Six shillings, and then for every child we allowed him 15d. a week.

“Was that the rule?—Yes.

“So that the practice you followed was an encouragement to every man to marry?—Most assuredly.”

It is difficult to imagine a greater state of allowance felicity!

But it happened, no doubt from some very mysterious circumstance connected with the allowance system, that the larger the allowance became, the more the people were out of employ. There certainly does seem some connexion between the allowance system and the amount of capital paid in the shape of wages instead of allowances; for previous to the formation of Poor Law Unions in West Sussex, there were 4729 labourers out of employ in the parishes constituting these Unions; whereas after the completion of the Unions, and the discontinuance of the allowances, there were only 327 labourers out of employ*. In the Union of Westhampnett there were 216 out of employ with the allowance, and 18 without it. In the Union of Petworth, there were 382 out of employ with the allowance, and 71 without it. However, the parishes were resolved not to endure such an evil as people out of employ, for such a circumstance took away

* Mr. Hawley's Report—Second Annual Report.

much of the charm of the allowances. The parishes therefore set the people to work. The mode in which they set the people to work was not very advantageous to the parishes, but it was not disagreeable to the labourers, and the labour was rendered as light as possible not to disturb the felicity which prevailed amidst so much care to make the poor happy. Work was provided for three or four days in the week, and for five or six hours of each day. Mr. Hawley says (Report 1836)—

"When I visited the parishes of Yapton and Felpham, in the West Hampnett Union, last year, I saw daily near a score of able-bodied labourers going to their parish work in the gravel-hole, between eight and nine in the morning, and returning from it at three in the afternoon."

The people, of course, were not paid according to the work which they performed, but according to their claims upon the allowance. Mr. Maclean, one of the Assistant Commissioners of Inquiry, reporting, in 1832, as to the parish of Kirdford (Petworth Union), says,—

"Those who work a limited number of days are under no control, and no inquiry is made into their occupations, pursuits, or earnings during the other days of the week."

With all this anxiety of the parish to provide *agreeable* work for the labourers in the parish of Kirdford, it is not surprising that the *disagreeable* work—the real cultivation of the land—went unperformed. Mr. Maclean says,—

"The number of able-bodied agricultural labourers in the parish, as near as I could ascertain, is 190, exclusive of about 15 mechanics, most of whom apply to the parish for work during the winter months. During last winter (1831-2), there were 118 able-bodied men, married and single, upon the parish; this leaves 72 labourers to do the work upon 9000 acres of cultivated land, and 3000 acres of woodland. The general opinion, as far as I was able to collect it, seemed to be, that there is not more than sufficient labour in the whole parish for the cultivation of the land, but that the want of capital among the farmers *prevents the employment of it on the land.*"

This large payment for parish work in the Petworth Union was precisely of the same nature as the large payment for parish work in the Droxford Union.

"You say that the winter before the Act came into force there were from 50 to 75 out of work in the parish (Bishop's Waltham); did you employ those?—Yes.

"In what way?—When the weather was seasonable, we employed them in digging the land, and the rest were sent on to the roads.

"Have you a parish farm?—Yes, about 50 acres.

"Did those that you set upon the roads do a fair day's work, and

was their employment remunerative?—No, it was quite unprofitable the land we had; and therefore out of 700*l.* a year, we made a return perhaps of 90*l.*; it averaged 700*l.* a year, which we paid for labourers out of employ. I have paid 18*l.* a week for labourers out of employ.

"Had you also the rent to pay for the parish farm?—Yes.

"Over and above the 700*l.*?—Yes, we paid 1*l.* an acre for the land.

"And, in addition, you paid 700*l.* for labourers?—Yes.

"To what extent have you any return for that?—I never set the labour at anything, but after balancing the rent and the crop, it used to leave a surplus of about 90*l.*

"Which had to be set against the loss of 700*l.*?—Yes.

"Was the employment upon the parish roads profitable or unprofitable?—Not of the least benefit.

"Their labour was utterly thrown away?—Entirely."—Harrison, 4198—4208.

The labourers, no doubt, found all this agreeable enough while the system continued in full vigour; that is, until the fund was well nigh exhausted which was the mainspring both of the labour in the parish gravel-hole and the labour in the farmers' field. In Petworth, where everything that public and private benevolence could effect for making labourers happy, by allowances and easy parish employment, was called into action—where the endowed charities were most numerous—and where the good rich man and his almoners presided with unrelaxing vigilance over the distribution of the funds, "that make men *paupers* and keep them so,"—in Petworth, while the *want-fund* was constantly increasing, the *labour-fund* was as constantly diminishing. The Rev. Mr. Sockett, in his examination before the Committee, says, the parish employed the labourers "at unproductive labour; at labour they did not want to have performed; but they employed the man that he might not starve." Is it a possible contingency that this very employment was the cause that the labourers, *one and all*, were brought to the verge of starvation—that in five years, 1456 labourers, their wives and children, emigrated, principally at the expense of Lord Egremont, from Petworth and its neighbourhood—and that altogether (we will not say, *in spite* of the benevolent attempts of the parish officers, clergymen, and their patrons, but *in consequence* of them), Petworth and its neighbourhood had become the most pauperized district of the whole kingdom? The Rev. Mr. Sockett is asked, "Do you recollect what number of able-bodied poor you had upon the parish previous to the introduction of the new poor-law?" His answer is remarkable:—

"I can state what number of labourers we had upon the parish upon the 24th of December, 1831. On the 24th of December, 1831, I got

this return from a guardian of the poor-law for the purpose of showing it to Lord Egremont and pointing out to his Lordship the state we were in; and I laid the paper before Lord Egremont, and I said, '*My Lord, these labourers have eaten me up, and they will very soon eat your Lordship up, if something is not done to stop it.*' On the 24th of December we had 44 farming people, 20 bricklayers' labourers, three others, ten bricklayers, seven shoemakers, one carpenter, one weaver, six sawyers, three lathrenders, one harness-maker, one chair-maker, two gardeners, one hatter, one miller, one blacksmith, one tawer; making altogether 103. I have also a statement of the numbers on the 14th of January following.

"What was the total in the next month?—The total on January 14 was 114.

"Were all those upon the parish at that time?—Every one.

"Did they gain the whole of their sustenance from the parish, or only partly from the parish?—I cannot say they gained the whole of their sustenance from the parish, because if I wanted an extra man, of course I sent for him and had him for a day or two; and if any tradesman in the town wanted a man for a day or two to saw a little wood and so on, he sent for the man; but this is the number of persons upon the book at those particular days. I beg leave to add that those people had 74 wives and 117 children; the total number is 330. Then I have added a note here: 'The labour which supports these 330 persons is entirely unproductive.'

"Can you state the charge which that labour produced to the parish?—I can nearly; when we made up our accounts at Easter, 1832, the item of want of employment, that is to say, the expense of those labourers for that one year, was 1401*l.* 6*s.* 3*d.*"—[26—30.]

The dream of Pharaoh, that 'seven lean and ill-favoured kine did eat up seven fat kine; and when they had eaten them up it could not be known that they had eaten them, but they were still ill-favoured as at the beginning,' was realized by the labourers of Petworth. They would have eaten up Lord Egremont and his rector, tithes, and all; and yet they would have still been lean and hungry. They did not come to this pass, for the Amended Poor-Laws stepped in to prevent them. The land was going out of cultivation which should have supported the labourers by wages; and their wages were ground down by being offered in the shape of parish pay. Before the Petworth of 1834 was described before a Parliamentary committee, the condition of such a parish was painted in a few masterly touches by a keen observer of the "actions of men," the late Mr Walker, the police magistrate:—

"In order to exhibit pauperism in its strongest colours, suppose an extensive and fertile parish with an unusual number of wealthy residents, with large woods, much game, a facility of smuggling, two or three commons, several almshouses, endowments for distributing bread and clothes, and much private charity; and suppose the rich to take

no farther concern in parish affairs, than alternately to grumble at the amount of a rate or the harshness of an overseer, as application is made to them for their money or for their protection. Under such circumstances, the spirit of pauperism will be at its height; and yet people who should know better, will be found to hold such language as this: 'I don't know how it is the rates in this parish are so high; we are particularly well off for provision for the poor; there are almshouses, and regular distributions of food and clothes; they have all common rights, at least they take them; they pick up fuel for nothing. I am sure they are never out of my woods; they smuggle almost every thing they want; and then private charity is really quite unbounded; and yet I can't say I see much gratitude in return; the damage done to property is immense, and the expense and vexation about game completely destroy all the pleasure of it. I often wish I had not a bird or a hare on my estate. Really it is in vain to do any thing for the poor; indeed I think the more pains one takes, the worse they are. Lord — gave them an ox to roast last King's birth-day, and they absolutely pulled down his park paling to make the fire.' For poverty put pauperism, and for charity indiscretion, and all will be explained. Giving to pauperism is only 'spreading the compost on the weeds to make them ranker.*"

Under the systems which prevailed in the Sussex and Hampshire parishes, previous to the introduction of the amended law, it might have been expected that those who gave money for nothing, or at the most for very light labour, would have met with some grateful returns for their innocent benevolence. The direct reverse was the case. The people had no idea that they were receiving any benefit (as in truth they were not), but they adhered to the principle which they had followed for more than a century, "The parish must find us." One of the witnesses says,—

"It was almost dangerous for a man to live in a parish for a day that had the money to pay them; indeed I wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners shortly after the Bill took place, when we began to change from money to bread, that it was really dangerous; the first payment that took place we had ninety in the room, and they stood so thick that you might have washed your hands upon the walls, and they would not move out of the room; there were three or four overseers there, and the most respectable part of the parish, and they set us all at defiance."—3977.

Colonel A'Court, one of the Assistant Commissioners under the present law, paid a visit to Hambledon, "the worst parish" of the Droxford Union. He found a number of men out of work. His subsequent description is a vivid picture of a pauperized district—a district in which the tyrannies (according to the so-called popu-

* "The Nature, Extent, and Effects of Pauperism." By Thomas Walker, M.A. 1831.

lar petitions) which are now inflicted upon the labourers by finding work at advanced wages, and withholding allowances, are especially brought forward for national sympathy and legislative correction:—

“ I called upon Mr. Butler, who is the resident magistrate there, and assured him that from looking at the number of agricultural labourers in that parish, and at the number of acres, there must be profitable employment for every one of them, even within the parish; he differed from me in opinion, and did not think that it was possible. I went to the poorhouse, and I saw a great number of those labourers, and I recommended that task-work should be introduced immediately instead of day-work, in which they were doing nothing, and that food also should be issued in part, as well as money. I think three days afterwards a representation went back from Harrison, who was the assistant overseer, to the Poor Law Commissioners, stating that there was great excitement in the parish, that it was impossible they could carry out the regulations of the Commissioners, and begging that a Commissioner should go down there. It did so happen that I was, at the time that letter was penning, in the parish, unknown, but making my own observations. I arranged to meet the whole of the paupers out of work on a certain day, and I did meet them. There has been mentioned a well-digger in this room; that person came down at the head of the party; I think there must have been some 70 or 80 people that came down from the parish farm and the roads, and he was spokesman on that occasion. There was something very striking in his appearance; and as he was coming down I ascertained, from those gentlemen who were with me, what his trade was, what his general earnings were, and where he had been at work. I addressed him by name, and asked him if he had not been in the habit of well-digging; he admitted that he had. I said, ‘Why you are working on the estate of a friend of mine in this neighbourhood; you have been earning 2*l.* 2*s.* a week;’ he did not deny it; and I said, ‘How have you the face to be spokesman of this meeting of labourers, you acknowledging yourself to be earning 2*l.* 2*s.* a week, and your family being supported by the parish?’ He admitted that was the case; that he was in the receipt of parish relief, but said that it was not his fault, they chose to give it to his family. They told me that they were starving, that there was no work, that there was no occupation, that there was no employment. I suggested emigration, migration, and the taking of allotments of land, which I had ascertained that the gentlemen of the parish were willing to grant. To show what their ideas were, they asked what quantity of land they were to get; I said, ‘Sufficient to raise vegetables for yourselves and for your families;’ and, with an oath, they said that was not what they wanted, they must have at least two or three acres. I asked them, whether they had tools to cultivate the land, or money to pay the labourers; they said, ‘Oh dear no, the parish are to find that.’ ‘Then you are to be supported by the parish till the crops come round?’ They said, ‘Of course.’ ‘If the crops fail?’ ‘The parish’—still the parish; they would always fall back

upon the parish; they would never let go their hold upon the parish, under any circumstances, that I can state; they would never let go that hold; they declined receiving any land upon those terms.”

The old pauper-system was the reverse of the vaunted principle of Roman conquest—“to raise the humble and depress the proud.” It crushed the timid and worthy man, who was desirous “truly and justly to earn his own living;” and it raised up the bold front of the loiterer in the parish-pit, the bully of the workhouse pay-table. A Sussex labourer, who was examined in 1832, by the Assistant Commissioner of Inquiry for that district, gave the following evidence:—

“In your parish are there many able-bodied men upon the parish?—There are a great many men in our parish who like it better than being at work.

“Why do they like it better?—They get the same money, and don’t do half so much work. They don’t work like me; they be’ant at it so many hours, and they don’t do so much work when they be at it; they’re doing no good, and are only waiting for dinner-time and night; they be’ant working, it’s only waiting.

“How have you managed to live without parish relief?—By working hard.

“What do the paupers say to you?—They blame me for what I do. They say to me, ‘What are you working for?’ I say, ‘For myself.’ They say, ‘You are only doing it to save the parish, and if you didn’t do it you would get the same as another man has, and would get the money for smoking your pipe and doing nothing.’ ‘Tis a hard thing for a man like me.

“If you want anything from the parish, should you get it sooner than a man who has not worked so hard?—No, not a bit; nor so likely as one of those men.

“What would they say to you?—They would say that I didn’t want it, and that I had a piece of ground, and was well off. They’re always giving to men who don’t deserve it, whilst they are refusing to those who do.

“Is it worse in your parish than in others?—No, it is the same in them all. There is partiality everywhere. If I was to offend my master, and he was to turn me away, none of the others would give me work; and if I go to the parish they would put me on the roads. There’s not one in our place that looks on me the better for my work, but all the worse for it.”

Arthur Young said, he should prefer an Essex labourer at half-a-crown a day to a Tipperary man at fourpence. This was before the happy era of allowances. But if Arthur Young had lived in Sussex in 1834 he would have found no difference between one labourer and another, for the parish pay had levelled all distinctions of skill or want of skill, of industry or idleness, of sobriety or drunkenness, of honesty or dishonesty. One of the

witnesses before the late Committee, speaking of this state of things in the Droxford Union, gives the following testimony:—

“Adams is a carter, is he not?—Yes.

“And carters receive ordinarily higher wages than the best able-bodied workmen?—Yes, they have many more hours to work.

“Adams, you say, though a carter, and a very good servant, received less money week by week, under the old law, than the inferior workmen had with six children?—Yes, decidedly.

“Then a carter, a superior workman, under the old system, received less than an inferior agricultural labourer?—He did.”—[6276—6979.]

But if the skilful workman was degraded to the level of the workman without skill, the prudential labourer was compelled to become reckless and profligate, that he might be entitled to the parish rewards. The Assistant Commissioner for Sussex, in 1832, says (referring to the riots and incendiary fires):

“In the most disturbed parts of this district, attempts have been made to introduce cottage allotments, but they have been ineffectual. The labourers show a decided reluctance to hire them; they think it might diminish their claim to relief, and treat with scorn those who attempt to persuade them to better their condition by economy and industry.”

In the answers which were given to the queries of the Commissioners of Inquiry, by Mr. Courthorpe, of Ticehurst in Sussex, the point is thus pithily stated:

“Could a poor family lay by anything?—If the single man could procure regular work, and could be induced to lay by as he ought to do, I think an industrious man might in a few years secure an independence, at the present wages of the country; but if an industrious man was known to have laid by any part of his wages, and thus to have accumulated any considerable sum, there are some parishes in which he would be refused work till his savings were gone; and the knowledge that this would be the case acts as a preventive against saving.”

Idleness, imprudence, improvident marriage, illegitimate children, were the qualifications for a share of the 12,224*l.* which the parishes of the Petworth Union, and the 9717*l.* which the parishes of the Droxford Union bestowed in “keeping the labourers and their families comfortable,” before the year 1835. But a talent for fraud was another, if not a chief qualification. All the other qualifications were included in the ability to cheat and to lie. The following instance, which occurred in the West-hampnett Union, is one of many similar:

“I recollect the case of a man whose name I frequently see entered

in the parish book, William Fleet; I remember the man coming to the parish of Grassham, now about twelve years ago; I think at that time he was a pauper, so called; he was living in Hampshire; his father lived in the parish of Grassham, died and left him six or seven houses, producing a rental of upwards of 30*l.* a year; in consequence of this legacy he came home to Grassham; I was overseer at the time, and resided there; he told me that his old father had left him what was worse than nothing, a quantity of old houses; that he had been living in Hampshire, where he had had head-money (and I suppose for a large family, amounting to a considerable sum altogether); he felt that 30*l.* a year was as nothing; he continued to reside at Grassham, and still does reside there; in less than seven years he was a pauper upon the parish, because he had a life estate, I had forgotten to say, in those cottages, and he had mortgaged his life estate to different persons, and then presented himself to the magistrates as a pauper; they then required the parish officers to provide for him, and he was so provided for up to the passing of the present Act; I see in this book entries relative to William Fleet, two years backward, 4*l.*; I see several entries of small sums of that description paid to him; he now is in possession of his own property at Grassham; he now pays rates for the property which he holds; and before, though it appeared that he had lost it, he is now in possession of it, and he now gets his own living, and he has never made an application to the board for assistance.

“Has the new law in any way assisted to the recovery of that property?—I apprehend that the loss of it was fictitious.”

The payers of rates, and the dispensers of the rates, assisted now and then in the perpetration of frauds and fraud-like jobs. Payment for house-rent was a great item in parish jobbing. One witness before the committee testifies to this point:

“Did you ever pay for house-rent?—When I belonged to Hambleton we paid 300*l.* a year for house-rent.

“With respect to this individual who had 4*s.* before he married and 6*s.* afterwards, did he have anything for house-rent?—That was brought on by the overseer himself; they were generally men of property in cottages, men that could have paid their rent very well; they would then come themselves to the table, and say, ‘I know I have a poor fellow, he is very badly off; I wish you would raise him his rent; I do not know what is to be done;’ and having got into the book it continued for years.” [4088—4089.]

Some of the labourers had sense enough to see through the thick fog of the evils by which they were surrounded. In 1832 the following colloquy took place between a Commissioner of Inquiry and a Sussex labourer:

“What alterations of the Poor Laws are talked about by the labourers?—They have hopes that Government will take it in hand, as they would then be contented with what was allotted to them; they

would be sure that they would have what was right, and would not be driven about by the overseers.

"Are you sure that the labourers would be pleased to see the overseers deprived of their power?—Yes, that they would, for they often fail, and take the parishes in; and besides, all parish business now goes by favour. Many people do now say that they talk about reform in the Government, but there wants reform in the parish.

"Suppose that the workmen were deprived of the allowance in aid of wages, but deprived in such numbers that the farmers would be compelled to pay wages to the same amount, how do you think such a measure would be received by the workmen?—That would give a great deal more content, and I am sure that they would do the farmer more work. The parish money is now chucked to us like as to a dog."

We have thus run through the most prominent features of the old system of Sussex and Hampshire pauperism—that system which has been put down by "the Administration of the Relief of the Poor, under the orders and regulations issued by the Commissioners appointed under the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act." It is to be noted, that from the most pauperized district of England has come the fiercest opposition to the destruction of pauperism. The opposition has come, not from agricultural parishes where the evils of the old system were seen, and vigorously, but of course partially, corrected (because wanting a central control), before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act; not from the *Southwell* of Mr. Nicholls, or the *Cookham* of Mr. Whateley, but from the *Petworth* of Mr. Sockett and the *Bishop's Waltham* of Mr. Brock. The opposition has come from parishes where the improvement of the condition of the people, as represented by the diminished rates, the increased employment, and the advanced wages, has become intolerable to those who have for years been fighting for high rates, low wages, and the parish gravel-pit. We cannot resist, before going into the details of this opposition, the pleasure of transferring to these pages, by way of contrast, the address of the Rev. Thomas Whateley to his parishioners of Cookham, on the occasion of their presenting him a service of plate upon his removal to another living, after a pastoral residence amongst them of forty years. Referring to the great parochial reforms effected under his superintendence, this *truly* benevolent clergyman said:—

"You pursued your course with a singleness of purpose, and with a degree of unanimity, that was admirable, and this enabled you to carry out into active operation the great principles upon which the new Poor Law Amendment Bill was founded; a measure which has already saved to the country no less a sum than 2,400,000*l.* annually, and which will save the country as much more if its operation is not thwarted by those who,

under the pretence of a sickly and puling philanthropy, are only endeavouring to acquire a little pot-house popularity. Their motives and conduct will, I doubt not, be fully appreciated and duly rewarded. You, I say, carried out those great principles into active operation and minute detail. They are now fully discussed and understood by all the wise and good from one end of the kingdom to the other. But this was not the case when you were engaged in your labours. You had no precedent to refer to—no authority to quote. But you groped your way in the dark, trusting only to your own good sense, and to your own integrity of purpose. The result was, that you effected a saving to the rate-payers of 15,000*l.* in the first eight years, and of more than 30,000*l.* in all. But you did that which was worth more than double the money—you bettered the condition while you improved the manners and morals of the lower orders to a degree that is scarcely credible. There are still (it is to be lamented), as there ever will be everywhere, men who consume in profligacy those resources which, if properly disposed of, would secure to themselves and to their families all the comforts of life; but these are the exceptions, not the rule. The manners and the morals of the great mass of the people are wonderfully improved. You have the satisfaction of having placed a Bible in every house, blankets upon every bed, fuel upon every fire, clothes upon every back, and plenty of wholesome food in every pantry. There is plenty, and to spare. Had any one suggested to a labourer that, by pinching penury, he might save a penny a week out of his earnings, he would have considered the suggestion a gross insult: now there are better than 340 persons who do this without solicitation. By the books of the Savings' Bank it appears that only 73*l.* 2*s.* 8*d.* was withdrawn from it on the 13th December last, which had been placed there during the last year; since which time, and while the snow was five feet deep in the road between Cookham and Maidenhead, a further sum of between 20*l.* and 30*l.* has been deposited by 340 persons at one penny per week each, towards the exigencies of next winter. There is also 536*l.* 14*s.* in the Savings' Bank belonging to the Cookham benefit club, 59*l.* belonging to the lying-in charity, so that the poor are independent in sickness, and their wives are amply provided for during the time of their confinement. 153*l.* was placed in the bank last year to purchase coals, added to which there is now 3550*l.* 2*s.* 3*d.* in the Savings' Bank, belonging to 153 depositors."

It would be out of place, in this brief sketch, to enter into details of the manifold ameliorations that have been produced in the condition of all classes, by the general introduction of the system of Union management in Sussex and Hampshire. These details of reform will be strikingly exhibited in the analysis of the evidence; for they must be for the most part presented in juxtaposition with the complaints of the opponents of the new system. In the meantime we exhibit a table which presents at a glance the summary of what Sussex pauperism was under the *old* system, and what it is after little more than one year's experiment of the *new*:—

Name of Union.	Population.	Average Annual Rates at the Formation of the Union.	Rates for the Quarter, June—September, 1836.	Rate of Saving on Year.	No. of able-bodied Paupers at the time of forming the Union.	No. of able-bodied Paupers in March 1836.	No. of able-bodied Paupers in June 1836.
Uckfield . . .	16,109	16,643	1,479	611	218	8	..
Cuckfield . . .	12,017	17,139	2,136	463	419	45	..
Chailey . . .	6,977	9,576	1,114	301	139	33	15
Eastbourne . . .	7,823	11,961	1,410	40	265	12	..
Hailsham . . .	11,825	18,351	No return	..	350	69	..
West Fife . . .	2,361	2,957	539	26	40	15	..
Tinhurst . . .	13,317	10,915	1,569	50	360	12	1
Battle . . .	12,068	14,235	1,413	33	608
Lewes . . .	9,297	5,770	912	36	175	4	2
East Grinstead . . .	11,476	12,053	3,162	..	658	43	3
Hastings . . .	13,280	6,969	1,319	243	266	13	6
Rye . . .	11,418	11,588	1,377	52	372	42	14
Westbourne . . .	6,585	8,095	1,753	32	90	6	..
Steyning . . .	11,071	9,339	1,120	15	236	11	30
Thakham . . .	7,311	9,796	1,313	30	542	25	..
Horsham . . .	12,270	11,693	1,776	57	451	51	1
Medhurst . . .	12,239	17,536	1,478	66	306	20	..
Petworth . . .	9,042	12,226	995	32	382	71	52
West Hampnett . . .	15,017	16,457	1,687	49	216	18	..
Newhaven . . .	4,400	3,371	492	41	61	11	..
Totals . . .	205,936	229,613	27,014	45	6,100	554	124

There can be little doubt that the ameliorations which the Amendment Act was silently effecting in the most pauperized districts of England, were fast producing the conviction that it would in the end confer undoubted advantages upon all the various orders of society. The interested persons who had been affected by the change were beginning to perceive that, while they had perhaps sustained a temporary loss, they would reap a permanent advantage in the reduction of rates and in the increased ability of the labouring classes to purchase the necessaries of life. This doctrine is excellently put in the letter of Mr. Chadwick, as secretary of the Commissioners, to the master bakers of Bermondsey, (24th November, 1836).

“The Commissioners apprehend that the master bakers of the parish of Bermondsey labour under a common error, on the part of tradesmen accustomed to sell supplies paid for out of the paupers’ rates, in supposing that they must eventually be losers to the full amount of any diminution of the expenditure formerly maintained from that source. Until the present extent of out-door relief is reduced by the progressive operation of the new law, and the regulations of the Commissions, tradesmen, circumstanced as those in Bermondsey, will no doubt sustain some loss and inconvenience; but it is already found, in the dispauperized districts, that the tendency of the Act in discontinuing the practice of

giving relief in aid of wages, and in throwing the able-bodied paupers upon their own resources, has by no means been injurious to the whole class of shop-keepers, though it may have disturbed or diminished the trade of some few individuals; those able-bodied persons who formerly purchased goods as paupers from the paupers’ rates having, upon the change of system, purchased goods from their own wages as independent labourers. Employment having become steady and increased, and wages having risen in some districts in consequence of the increased industry and value of labour, more money has been spent as wages than have been heretofore spent as rates. Although less money and time is spent at the beer-shop, or the gin-shop, it is stated in evidence that more money is spent in the necessaries and comforts of life; and that many shop-keepers who were adverse to the law now perceive that their interests are concurrent with those of the community at large, and actually support the law, being now aware that almost every individual who remains or who becomes a pauper is a customer lost.”

It is in evidence (Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, pp. 34-5) that the small shop-keepers, and in some cases even the keepers of beer-houses, considered that they were benefited by the change. Those who imagined that they had been despoiled of their just influence found that they were become the depositories of a power which they might exercise with advantage to the community, without intimidation, and with reference only to sound and just views; and the people of all ranks beheld, for the first time, local power unwarped by local prejudices and selfish personal interests. The agitation and opposition which had in some places, Sussex amongst others, attended the introduction of the change, had become nearly extinct. It was, however, again revived, but under a different phase, and the opposition ended in the appointment of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry: the progress of the inquiry stimulated the agitation. In 1834, the paupers stood in the first rank of the opponents of poor law improvement; in some cases the classes above them, from motives of interest, secretly fomenting their discontent; and the paupers and some of their supporters then hoped to obtain by intimidation that which they did not venture to ask on any legitimate public ground. But in 1837 the spectacle presented a different aspect. The agricultural labourers, though growing in energy, were not again to be worked upon in masses. If their condition were so much worse than it had been in 1830, it is difficult to account for the impossibility of raising the same lawless spirit amongst them. The inference is, that in the former case agitation and clamour acted upon ignorant men, and in the latter upon men, to a certain extent, seeing their way more clearly. They had become aware that the intention of the amended Poor Law was to raise them to a better condition instead of to grind them down, as had been

represented. They looked at the increase of wages, the greater regularity of employment, the employment of children, the increase of task-work, and they were not to be moved. Notwithstanding the inertness of the agricultural labourers, there were two or three individuals found who constituted themselves their champions. It is not by any means contended that unworthy motives of any description raised them to this position. On the contrary, they appear to have been actuated by the most kind and benevolent feelings. But they acted from feeling only; they took the most circumscribed view of the case, and then blindly followed the impulses of excited emotion. Had their ideas been enlarged by a more extensive consideration of the question, their course would have been modified; but it was headstrong in proportion as their views had been limited to a narrow space. There might be some who acted from motives less pure, but equally mistaken—who preferred some private advantage of a very doubtful nature to the public good. The time was favourable for others to assume the title of the "Poor Man's Friend," and it was to be improved accordingly. The Rev. Mr. Spencer, chairman of the Bath Union, has given one or two striking instances of this mischievous love of popularity, in a published letter, from which we quote:—

"I know a man (he says) for whom no labourer will work, who himself informed me that he was under the necessity of mowing his own lawn, and digging his own garden, 'because,' said he, 'when I apply to those rascally labourers, although in the evening they promise to come to work for me, yet in the morning they are sure to disappoint me.' This was a curious phenomenon, and I inquired into its cause, and found that he was a hard master, celebrated for grinding the poor, always beating down their wages, and stipulating for a less sum than that for which they could afford to work; and for this he was odious in their sight. Happily, however, for him, the new Poor Law passed, and caused excitement in the place, and he came forth as the 'Poor Man's Friend!' I know a man who paid our distant poor, and who, for five years, professed to pay 3s. 6d. a-week to a widow at Bristol, but who kept back 2s. a-week all that time, thus robbing the parish and the poor of 25l., as was proved before the magistrates, and confessed by himself. When the select vestry were examining into the cases of all the poor upon the list, this man exclaimed loudly against the cruelty of *diminishing* the pay of *poor widows* at a distance, or of causing them to come and give an account of themselves. When, however, this *poor widow* did accidentally come, it appeared that she was a young and hearty woman, who had been married again the preceding four years to a respectable mason of Bristol."

Some of the employers of agricultural labour were opposed to the new law, because, though it reduced rates, it caused wages to advance, and they wished to continue the old system of paying

the wages of the labourers out of the parochial fund, to which those who never employed labourers had contributed. The owners of cottage property, disappointed of obtaining high rents for ill-built tenements, now that they could not pay themselves out of the public purse, were also easily disposed to join the clamourers. It is remarkable, considering the elements with which agitation came in contact, that they were not at once excited into an inflammable state. It must be regarded as a proof of the great progress which sound principles have made in reference to this question, that this effect was not produced.

In noticing some particular acts of agitation by which this Inquiry was accompanied, the scene of which was entirely confined to the districts in which the operation of the principal agitators on the question extended, we regret that we cannot avoid mentioning the names of gentlemen of great personal respectability, whose zeal has been exerted in the belief that their poor neighbours were oppressed. The conduct of these gentlemen, as it seems to us, might have been more consistent with their character of philanthropists, if they had not withheld their advice from their poor parishioners,—if they had enlightened them upon several points of great importance to their future welfare,—and if they had not allowed many erroneous notions on the subject of the new system to exist in their minds. The refusal to co-operate with the newly-constituted Boards can scarcely be justified in men whose office was to smooth the hardships which they supposed the new law was calculated to produce, and not, by magnifying those difficulties, to thwart and impede its operation. One of the above gentlemen, however, went somewhat beyond the mere withholding of his co-operation;—that his career did not end in serious mischief did not proceed from any lack of zeal, or any distrust of the prudence of those whom he was addressing. The advice which only went to "swamping the workhouse" might have been interpreted into "burning the corn-stack." It was fortunate that the corn-stack was secure, and that the workhouse was not pulled down by those without, as well as "swamped" by those within. The labourers have learnt something since 1830.

The Rev. Mr. Sockett, rector of Petworth, had been chairman of the parish vestry for twenty years, and visitor of a union workhouse under Gilbert's Act; but he refused to continue in the administration of the law under the Amendment Act. He says:—"I intimated to my friends in the parish that I hoped they would not nominate me, because I did not wish to serve the office of guardian;" and yet he appears to complain of this voluntary seclusion, and says,—"I have no more power to assist or do anything for the poor people than if I were

anywhere else." Perhaps the administration of the old law had been anything but satisfactory while in his management, notwithstanding his not having missed twenty vestries in twenty years. The fact is, that the result of the reverend gentleman's parochial policy, as we have already described, had rendered his parish the most pauperized spot in the most pauperized county in England. Lord Egremont has endeavoured to stem the torrent, and 1456 individuals have proceeded to Canada, chiefly at his Lordship's expense, within the last five years. The Petworth Union comprises five parishes, but one-third of the population is resident in the parish of Petworth. The assessment of the five parishes is made on a valuation of 17,200*l.* per annum, and the poor-rates amounted in 1833 to 14,291*l.*; the population being 9042. At the time of the formation of the Union the state of pauperism was as follows:—

Able-bodied persons and their families, receiving out-door relief,	2238
Aged and infirm persons, ditto	208
In-door paupers	173

Total paupers (about 29 per cent. on the population) . 2619

It may be thought that, under the above circumstances, Mr. Sockett acted prudently in declining to take any further share in the concerns of the poor, except in his private capacity, in which he may be allowed to criticise with severity the system which has produced such different results from that which he had acted upon for twenty years. "The labourers have eaten me up, and they will very soon eat your Lordship up;" and yet, when a measure is carried through the Legislature by the enlightened men of all parties, for the express purpose of "putting a stop to it," Mr. Sockett refuses to employ the influence which doubtless he possesses in his own parish, and does nothing to further or promote the objects of the law; and his apparent, though not we believe intentional aim, is to thwart its operations. It is difficult to find an adequate motive for the course which he has pursued. In his opinion "the aged and infirm are as well off as they were before the new Poor Law came into operation." To them it has not been injurious. The young unmarried and able-bodied people "are become more frugal and saving than they used to be." But "the deserving labouring man with a large family has been injured." This is the great evil of the amended system; but the remedies which he has to propose would merely tend to perpetuate former evils, and injure the rising generation of agricultural labourers. He objects to "some of the modes of working" the new Poor Law; but if he had "had the honour of being a member of either

House of Parliament, he should have voted for it [258]." Some of the reverend gentleman's views will be noticed in a subsequent portion of this work. It does not appear that there was any ground for his withdrawing from the cares of the parish, excepting the dissatisfaction which might naturally arise from the complete failure of the old system with which he was identified, and perhaps some soreness at the loss of his former consequence at the parish vestry.

The Rev. Stephen Butler, curate of Soberton, in the Droxford Union, took a much more active course of opposition than Mr. Sockett. Forgetting the principle that the more that is done for an individual the less inclined he is to exert himself, he considers that the old agricultural labourers are entitled to a provision in their old age from the parish. He would have the labourer look in his old age, not to a state of independence, but to a state of pauperism. He does not seem to have taken pains to inform the poor of his parish as to the means by which they might avail themselves of the new law. He had been less active in dissipating the erroneous ideas of his poor neighbours as to the real intentions of the law than in his opposition to its enactments. This fact was rendered evident in the course of his examination:—

"Do not you think it the duty of the magistrates and clergy resident in the parish to make the poor acquainted with those clauses of the Act of Parliament which especially concern their condition?—Yes.

"Then when you say that the poor do not understand the meaning of the Act, and suffer from not understanding the meaning of the Act, the magistrates and clergymen residing in that parish, do you consider that they discharge their duty if they allow their poor to continue to suffer by their ignorance of the meaning of the Act?—No; but the question arises, what are sudden and urgent cases; for instance, I went to the overseer of our parish respecting a pauper who died of the small-pox; I wanted to have her immediately buried, and the overseer told me he did not know what he could do, and what he could not do, and after speaking to him for some time, and explaining what I conceived the Act to be, he thought he could do it.

"Your last answer refers to the corpse of a person dead, and not what is to be done for the care of a person living?—I spoke first to the overseer, and he went to the relieving officer; I mention it to show the difficulty.

[*The previous question was read.*]

"Do not you think it rather more the duty of the clergymen and the magistrates resident in those parishes to explain to the poor the meaning of an Act, when those very clergymen and magistrates are parties complaining themselves that the poor suffer from the Act?—I can only answer the same as I did before, that I certainly think it the duty of

the clergyman and magistrates, as occasion may require, to explain to the poor the nature of the Act; I do not profess myself to be fully acquainted with the nature of the Act; many questions might be put to me which I could not answer.

"Have you ever stated to any pauper who has complained to you of the non-attendance of the relieving officer, that he might, in cases of emergency, apply to the overseer?—I dare say I have; but I cannot tax my memory that I have in any particular case."—[5210—14].

The Rev. Mr. Brock exceeded both his reverend brethren in the extent to which he allowed his excited feelings to carry him. Endowed with a larger portion of enthusiasm, his views on the philosophy of pauperism, and on the economical bearings of the question, are about as full of mistaken ideas as fanaticism without knowledge is apt to engender on all subjects. He takes no principle for his guide, but is swayed solely by the ardour of his feelings. He appears to have been much more successful in operating upon the labourers than any of the opponents of the law who were summoned before the Committee of Inquiry; and yet when examined he was driven to confess the defects of the old law, the evils of which might still have been in operation if their correction had depended upon men of his cast of mind.

"Do you conceive that the tendency of the old law, as administered in your parish, was to keep a redundant population dependent upon the parish fund?—I think, certainly, that was the tendency of the abuse of the old law, to encourage a superabundant population.

"Do you conceive that that had a tendency to destroy the independence of the poor man?—I think the law, as administered, certainly had that tendency.

"Do you conceive that any law which would have a tendency to raise again that feeling of independence would be a benefit to the lower part of the community?—Certainly; but I do not think that this law has that effect.

"Do you find that you have as large a superabundant population in your parish now as you had previously to the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act?—I cannot state; I should not think there were so many, but I cannot state; there have been a great many works going on, which would naturally take away some: there is the railroad, and there are other works; and there might have been just as many, but for those works, out of employment as there were before.

"Then the tendency of the present law has been this,—to lead the superabundant population of the parish to go to look for work in other parts of the country?—Yes.

It did not accord with Mr. Brock's temperament quietly to co-operate for the purpose of relieving the distress of his neighbourhood, though solicited for this purpose:—

"Did you receive a letter from Mr. Stares, the chairman of the board of guardians, containing these expressions:—'At the same time

the board will at all times be ready to afford relief in any case of distress that you may report to them, if after due inquiry it should be found to deserve it, knowing, as they do, that the clergymen of every parish, if they do their duty, are the more likely to know where real distress exists?'—Yes, I received that letter.

"Did you ever act upon that letter, and suggest to the board the propriety of relieving in particular cases?—No.

"Why did you not?—Because the cases of distress that I had to complain of were such cases as I knew that the guardians could not relieve without their being sent into the poor-house."—[7393—95].

The Guardians of the Droxford Union, which comprises Mr. Brock's parish, had dismissed two of their relieving officers, for whom they had not sufficient occupation, and the third was allowed a horse in order that he might perform his duties in a satisfactory manner. It is shown in the evidence that this reduction did not injure the interests of the poor; but Mr. Brock considered it as a clear proof that their wants were not regarded [739]; and by such general reasoning, he satisfied himself as to the inutility of making known cases of distress to a board whose professions he considered at variance with their practice. Mr. Brock having thus disconnected himself with the parties authorized by the rate-payers to distribute relief, constituted himself the representative of the poor, and with a view of producing before the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry cases in which the amended system had operated in a cruel manner, he called a meeting of labourers at his own house. After making inquiry as to their wages, mode of living, and general circumstances, he advised that they should go into the workhouse; "that they should be united," and show the impossibility of confining relief to the workhouse by "swamping it with numbers."

It is scarcely necessary for us to follow the course of this agitation, but we shall extract a passage from the evidence which exhibits some of its results.

The Inquiry before the Parliamentary Committee commenced on the 9th of March. On the 24th of April, Mr. H. Wooldridge, Vice-Chairman of the Droxford Union, gave the following evidence before the Committee:—

"You say that last week the labourers began to express an adverse opinion with regard to the operation of the new law?—Yes, they certainly did; I was at Botley market, and I heard there that some of the labourers had been with Mr. Brock; I knew one of them; he was in my road home; and I rode past him, as he was hedging, and I said, 'Well, Dowse, how do you get on; are you as well off as you were under the old system?' and he said, 'No;' 'What is the matter?' I asked; 'They used formerly (he said) to pay his rent for him, and every child he had above three was paid for; now (he said) he had four to

keep himself? I told him, of course, he could not be, under those circumstances, quite so well off, but I asked him whether his elder boys did not go to work, and he said they did; two of them were then working on the same farm for 6s. I said, 'Do you not obtain more money now than you did?' he said 'He did not know.' I asked, 'What money do you obtain now?' '11s. a week.' I said, 'You would not have obtained that in the winter-time under the old system;' and he did not know about that; he would not say that he thought that he was better off, but he did not deny that he should not have obtained that under the old system.

"Was he earning 10s. a week himself, and his boys 6s.?—Yes; 16s. a week; he said that Mr. Brock had sent to him, requesting him to come to his house, and he went, with others, from Corhampton; that after they had been there a while, he took them into an upper room, and asked them if they had anything to complain of; they then went into the kitchen and had provisions.

"Mr. Brock assembled labourers in his house to hear complaints against the law?—Yes.

"He took this course within the last fortnight?—Yes.

"Till this course had been taken, you, in your communication with the labouring men, had heard no complaint against this new law?—We had not.

"You trace it to this communication with Mr. Brock?—I do; several persons were induced to complain that would not have complained otherwise.

"How long ago is it that this meeting took place at Mr. Brock's?—A day or two before I saw him; I saw him a fortnight ago.

"Was it after the inquiry into the Droxford case had been begun in this Committee?—Perhaps not, but since the Committee has been sitting.

"Since Easter?—Yes.

"How did Mr. Brock summon them?—He sent down to this place; the man told me that he had sent down to request them to come to his house; and that they did go.

"Labouring men?—Yes.

"How many were there assembled?—The man told me in his own words, 'There were a fit many of them.'

"What took place at that meeting; did he tell you?—He said that he questioned them respecting their situations now and previously, and after he had got all he could from them, that he gave them a shilling each and a meal of victuals.

"Did he give any opinion to them as to their condition, or did he ask them their opinion?—He advised them all to go into the house; that the man stated to me.

"He, as a clergyman, gave them that advice?—Those were not his parishioners; they belonged to Corhampton.

"Then he went beyond the limits of his own parish to assemble them?—Yes.

"He sent into the neighbouring parishes to assemble the labourers at his house?—Those labourers belonged to Corhampton parish.

"How many had he from that parish?—He had a good many from his own parish, I understood; this man was from Corhampton.

"Any from any other parishes?—I cannot say.

"And the advice he gave them was, bodily to go into the workhouse?—Yes, that was what the man told me.

"All to go into the workhouse?—The man said, 'He advised us all to go into the workhouse.'

"Was any application made to you at the board of guardians the next week for admittance into the workhouse?—No; this man said particularly, 'I shall not go into the house.'—[6950 to 6971.]

The details we have given in this introductory sketch of the condition of the agricultural districts of Sussex and Hants, and of some of the circumstances which gave rise to and were connected with this Parliamentary inquiry, have been painful to us, whenever they have been associated with the names of respectable individuals, whose mistakes have for the most part proceeded from no unworthy motives. These details were however necessary for the proper understanding of the evidence itself; and the allegations against the cruelty of the new system will appear less overstrained, when it is considered that the charges proceed from partisans heated with the belief that they were defending the oppressed against the tyranny of the powerful.