

"Capital is decreasing from the loose manner the laws are administered, and the tenants feeling that they do not in effect pay the rate, but the landlord. I cannot otherwise account for the apathy with which they view, and the tenacity with which, in many instances, they defend abuses." \*

In towns the allowance system prevails less, probably because the manufacturing capitalists form a small proportion of the rate-payers, and consequently have less influence in the vestries than the farmers in country places. But even in the towns it exists to a very formidable degree. The northern counties are least infested by it; but if we turn to Mr. Wilson's Report from Darlington and Barnard Castle, and Mr. Henderson's from Preston, we shall see it creeping in, and enlisting the same private interests in its defence. To which it must be added, that the persons who supply the workhouses, or whose shops are frequented by the poor, are more immediately benefited, as tradesmen, by parochial extravagance, than as rate-payers by parochial economy.

The owners of rateable property might, at least, be expected to be favourable to any change which should avert their impending ruin. But we have seen, that of the property liable to poor-rates, there is a portion, and a portion of considerable importance, less from its value, than from the number of rate-payers among whom it is divided, and their influence in vestries, which not only is in practice exempted from contributing to the parochial fund, but derives its principal value from the mal-administration of that fund. This property consists of cottages or apartments inhabited by the poor. We have seen that in almost all places the dwellings of the poor, or at least of the settled poor, are exempted from rates, and that, in a very large proportion, the rent is paid by the parish. The former practice enables the proprietor often to increase the rent by the amount of rate remitted, and always to be an owner of real property, and yet escape the principal burdens to which such property is subjected. The latter practice gives him a solvent tenant, and if he has influence with the vestry, or with the overseer, a liberal one.

Of the higher classes of landlords, those who reside in towns seldom take much part in parochial government, or have any distinct ideas as to the extent or the effects of its mismanagement, and the majority of those who have become familiarized with the abuses of the villages, seem to have acquired habits of thinking, and feeling and acting which unfit them to originate any real and extensive amendment, or even to understand the principles on which it ought to be based. To suppose that the poor are the

\* App. (B. 1.) Quest. 36. Langley Marish, Bucks. p. 39 c.

proper managers of their own concerns; that a man's wages ought to depend on his services, not on his wants; that the earnings of an ordinary labourer are naturally equal to the support of an ordinary family; that the welfare of that family naturally depends on his conduct; that he is bound to exercise any sort of prudence or economy; that anything is to be hoped from voluntary charity; are views which many of those who have long resided in pauperized rural districts seem to reject as too absurd for formal refutation.

It appears, therefore, necessary to state at some length the effects of the existing system, both to show how short-sighted are the views of those who think that they continue to profit by it, and to show, before we suggest any remedy, the absolute necessity that some remedy should be applied.

These effects may be considered, first, with respect to the owners of property; secondly, with respect to the employers of labour; and, thirdly, with respect to the labourers and their families.

### I.

#### EFFECTS ON OWNERS OF PROPERTY.

THE Committee appointed by the House of Commons in 1817, to consider the Poor Laws, stated their opinion, "that unless some efficacious check were interposed, there was then every reason to think that the amount of the assessment would continue to increase, until at a period more or less remote, according to the progress the evil had already made in different places, it should have absorbed the profits of the property on which the rate might have been assessed, producing thereby the neglect and ruin of the land and the waste, or removal of other property, to the utter subversion of the happy order of society so long upheld in these kingdoms." In consequence of the recommendations of that Committee, a check was interposed by the 59 Geo. III. c. 12. But though that Act, by restricting the power of the magistrates to order relief, and by authorising the removal of the Irish and Scotch paupers, the appointment of representative vestries and of assistant overseers, the rating the owners of small tenements, and the giving relief by way of loan, occasioned, during the six years that immediately followed it, a progressive diminution of the amount of the Poor Law assessment, its beneficial enactments appear to be no longer capable of struggling with the evil tendencies of the existing system. The year ending the 25th of

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March, 1824, was the last year of regular improvement. And we have seen that the amount of relief now given, when estimated in commodities, is actually greater, and greater in proportion to our population, than it was when that Report was made. It has increased still more when considered with reference to the value of the property on which it is assessed.

We are happy to say that not many cases of the actual dereliction of estates have been stated to us. Some, however, have occurred; and we have given in the extracts from our Evidence\* the details of one, the parish of Cholesbury, in the county of Bucks. It appears that in this parish, the population of which has been almost stationary since 1801, in which, within the memory of persons now living, the rates were only 10*l.* 11*s.* a year, and only one person received relief, the sum raised for the relief of the poor rose from 99*l.* 4*s.* a year, in 1816, to 150*l.* 5*s.* in 1831; and in 1832, when it was proceeding at the rate of 367*l.* a year, suddenly ceased in consequence of the impossibility to continue its collection; the landlords having given up their rents, the farmers their tenancies, and the clergyman his glebe and his tithes. The clergyman, Mr. Jeston, states that in October, 1832, the parish officers threw up their books, and the poor assembled in a body before his door, while he was in bed, asking for advice and food. Partly from his own small means, partly from the charity of neighbours, and partly by rates in aid, imposed on the neighbouring parishes, they were for some time supported; and the benevolent Rector recommends that the whole of the land should be divided among the able-bodied paupers, and adds, "that he has reason to think that at the expiration of two years, the parish in the interval receiving the assistance of rates in aid, the whole of the poor would be able and willing to support themselves, the aged and impotent of course excepted." In Cholesbury, therefore, the expense of maintaining the poor has not merely swallowed up the whole value of the land; it requires even the assistance for two years of rates in aid, from other parishes, to enable the able-bodied, after the land has been given up to them, to support themselves; and the aged and impotent must even then remain a burthen on the neighbouring parishes.

Our Evidence exhibits no other instance of the abandonment of a parish, but it contains many in which the pressure of the poor-rate has reduced the rent to half, or to less than half, of what it would have been if the land had been situated in an unpau-perized district, and some in which it has been impossible for the owner to find a tenant.

\* Extracts, p. 86.

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Mr. Majendie states, that in Lenham, Kent, at the time of his visit, some of the land was out of cultivation. A large estate has been several years in the hands of the proprietor, and a farm of 420 acres of good land, tithe free and well situated, had just been thrown up by the tenant, the poor-rate on it amounting to 300*l.* a year.\* He mentions another place, in which a farm well situated, of average quality, was in vain offered at 5*s.* an acre, not from objection to the quality of the land, but because men of capital will not connect themselves with a parish in which the poor-rates would keep them in a constant state of vexation and anxiety.† He states, that in Ardingly, those farmers who have any capital left, withdraw from the parish as soon as their leases expire. One of them admitted to him that it was out of the power of the landlords to relieve them.‡

Mr. Power, after mentioning the universal complaint in Cambridgeshire, that substantial tenants cannot be found at the lowest assignable rents, goes on to say, that Mr. Quintin, a gentleman of considerable landed property in the county, told him that he had a farm at Gransden, for which he could not get a tenant, even at 5*s.* an acre, though land from which thirty bushels of wheat an acre had been obtained. "Downing College," he adds, "has a property of 5,000 acres in this county, lying principally in the parishes of Tadlow, East Hatley, Croydon, and Gamlingay; it is found impossible, notwithstanding the lowering the rents to an extreme point, to obtain men of substance for tenants. Several farms of considerable extent have changed hands twice within the last five years, from insolvency of the tenants in some cases, in others from the terror of that prospect. The amount of arrears at this time is such as only a collegiate body could support. I draw from authentic sources, being myself a fellow of the college."§ In the same county, Mr. Power found that at Soham, a total absorption of the value of the land in twelve or fourteen years was anticipated;|| and Mr. Cowell, that at Great Shelford the same result was expected to take place in ten.¶

Mr. Pilkington's description of several places in Leicestershire is equally alarming. In Hinkley he found the poor-rate exceeding 1*l.* an acre, and rapidly increasing, and a general opinion that the day is not distant when rent must cease altogether.\*\* On visiting Wigston Magna, in November, 1832, he was informed that the value of property had fallen one half since 1820, and was not saleable even at that reduction. It does not appear, indeed, that it ought to have sold for more than two or three years'

\* App. (A.) Part I. p. 213.

† App. (A.) Part I. p. 181.

‡ App. (A.) Part I. p. 249.

§ App. (A.) Part I. p. 180.

¶ App. (A.) Part I. p. 244.

|| Extracts, p. 384.

\*\* App. (A.) Part II.

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purchase, the net rental not amounting to 4,000*l.* a year, and the poor-rate expenditure growing at the rate of 1,000*l.* increase in a single year. And on his return to that neighbourhood, three months after, the statement made to him was that property in land was gone; that even the rates could not be collected without regular summons and judicial sales, and that the present system must ensure, and very shortly, the total ruin of every individual of any property in the parish.\* We cannot wonder, after this, at the statement of an eminent solicitor at Loughborough, that it is now scarcely possible to effect a sale of property in that neighbourhood at any price.†

The following answers, taken from a multitude of others of a similar nature, contained in Appendix (B.), are to the same effect:—

“Annual value of the real property, as assessed April, 1815, 3,390*l.* Annual value of the real property, as assessed November, 1829, 1,959*l.* 5*s.* It has undoubtedly fallen in value since the last valuation, *i. e.* in the last two years, and the population has been more than trebled in 30 years: 1801, 306; 1811, 707; 1821, 897; 1831, 938: and that in spite of an emigration of considerable amount, at the parish expense, in 1829. The eighteen-penny children will eat up this parish in ten years more, unless some relief be afforded us.”‡

“If some material change does not very soon take place, the time is not far distant when the whole rent will be absorbed in the poors’-rates.” §

“Much land in the hands of proprietors wanting tenants. Our poors’-rate being high, makes farms in other parishes more desirable than in this.” ||

“In the adjoining parish, the owners of untenanted farms, who are not farmers, fear to occupy, and prefer the loss of rent to the unlimited expense in poor-rate which would overwhelm the profits of one not perfectly experienced in farming, and the parochial concerns it involves.” ¶

“In the neighbourhood of Aylesbury, there were 42 farms untenanted at Michaelmas last; most of these are still on the proprietors’ hands; and on some, no acts of husbandry have been done since, in order to avoid the payment of poor-rate. I attribute these circumstances principally to the operation of the Poor Laws.” \*\*

“In the parish of Thornborough, Bucks, there are at this time 600 acres of land unoccupied, and the greater part of the other tenants have given notice of their intention to quit their farms, owing entirely to the increasing burthen of the poors’-rate.” ††

\* App. (A.) Part II.

† App. (B. 1.) Quest. 36. Westfield, Sussex, p. 531 c.

§ App. (B. 1.) Quest. 36. Gillingham, Kent, p. 245 c.

|| App. (B. 1.) Quest. 36. Minster, Kent, p. 255 c.

¶ App. (B. 1.) Quest. 36. Adstock, Bucks, p. 30 c.

\*\* App. (B. 1.) Quest. 36. Sherrington, Bucks, p. 43 c.

†† Sir Thos. Cotton Sheppard, App. (C.)

† App. (A.) Part II.

## 1. On Proprietors. 2. On Employers.

We have made these quotations for the purpose of drawing attention, not so much to the immediate evils which the land-owners of the pauperized districts are undergoing, as to the more extensive and irremediable mischiefs of which these are the fore-runners. It appears to us, that any parish in which the pressure of the poor-rates has compelled the abandonment of a single farm, is in imminent danger of undergoing the ruin which has already befallen Cholesbury. The instant the poor-rate on a given farm exceeds that surplus which, if there were no poor-rate, would be paid in rent, the existing cultivation becomes not only unprofitable, but a source of absolute loss. And as every diminution of cultivation has a double effect in increasing the rate on the remaining cultivation, the number of unemployed labourers being increased at the same instant that the fund for payment of rates is diminished, the abandonment of property, when it has once begun, is likely to proceed in a constantly accelerated ratio. Accordingly, it appears from Mr. Jeston’s statement, that scarcely a year elapsed between the first land in Cholesbury going out of cultivation and the abandonment of all except sixteen acres.

## II.

## EFFECTS ON EMPLOYERS OF LABOURERS.

THE effects of this system on the immediate employers of labour in the country and in the towns are very different. To avoid circumlocution, we will use the word “farmers” as comprehending all the former class of persons, and the word “manufacturers” as comprehending all the latter; and as they are the least complicated, and most material, we will begin by considering the effects produced on the farmers. The services of the labourer are by far the most important of all the instruments used in agriculture. In the management of live and dead stock much must always be left to his judgment. Only a portion, and that not a very large portion, of the results of ordinary farm labour is susceptible of being immediately valued so as to be paid by the piece. The whole farm is the farmer’s workshop and storehouse; he is frequently obliged to leave it, and has no partner on whom he can devolve its care during his absence, and its extent generally makes it impossible for him to stand over and personally inspect all the labourers employed on it. His property is scattered over every part, with scarcely any protection against depredation or injury. If his labourers, therefore, want the skill and intelligence necessary to enable them to execute those details for which no general and unvarying rules can be laid down; if they have not the dili-

gence necessary to keep them steadily at work when their master's eye is off; if they have not sufficient honesty to resist the temptation to plunder when the act is easy and the detection difficult, it follows, that neither the excellence or abundance of the farmer's agricultural capital, nor his own skill or diligence, or economy, can save him from loss, or perhaps from ruin.

Now, it is obvious that the tendency of the allowance system is to diminish, we might almost say to destroy, all these qualities in the labourer. What motive has the man who is to receive 10s. every Saturday, not because 10s. is the value of his week's labour, but because his family consists of five persons, who knows that his income will be increased by nothing but by an increase of his family, and diminished by nothing but by a diminution of his family, that it has no reference to his skill, his honesty, or his diligence,—what motive has he to acquire or to preserve any of these merits? Unhappily, the evidence shows, not only that these virtues are rapidly wearing out, but that their place is assumed by the opposite vices; and that the very labourers among whom the farmer has to live, on whose merits as workmen, and on whose affection as friends, he ought to depend, are becoming not merely idle and ignorant and dishonest, but positively hostile; not merely unfit for his service and indifferent to his welfare, but actually desirous to injure him.

One of the questions circulated by us in the rural districts was, whether the labourers in the respondent's neighbourhood were supposed to be better or worse workmen than formerly? If the answers to this question had been uniformly unfavourable, they might have been ascribed to the general tendency to depreciate what is present; but it will be found, on referring to our Appendix, that the replies vary according to the poor-law administration of the district. Where it is good, the replies are, "much the same," "never were better," "diligence the same, skill increased." But when we come within the influence of the allowance and the scale, the replies are, "they are much degenerated, being generally disaffected to their employers: they work unwillingly and wastefully:"\* "three of them would not do near the work in a day performed by two in more northern counties:"† "one-third of our labourers do not work at all, the greater part of the remainder are much contaminated; the rising population learn nothing, the others are forgetting what they knew."‡ "They are constantly changing their services. Relying upon parish support, they are indifferent whether they oblige or disobey their masters, are less

\* App. (B. 1.) Quest. 37, Blunham, Beds, page 2 c.

† App. (B. 1.) Quest. 37, Pershore Division, Worcester, p. 588 c.

‡ App. (B. 1.) Quest. 37, Lenham, Kent, p. 252 c.

honest and industrious, and the mutual regard between employer and servant is gone." "The system of allowance is most mischievous and ruinous, and, till it is abandoned, the spirit of industry can never be revived. Allowance-men will not work. It makes them idle, lazy, fraudulent, and worthless, and depresses the wages of free labour."\* "With very few exceptions, the labourers are not as industrious as formerly; and notwithstanding the low rate of wages now too generally paid, it costs as much money in the end to have work performed as it did sixteen years ago."† "The Poor Laws are perhaps better administered in this parish than in many others; but such a resource in view as parish relief prevents the labourer's exertions, and the young men from laying by anything in their youth. The latter marry early, because they can get no relief unless they have children; this, of course, raises the rates. An instance occurred a short time since, of a labourer marrying, and going from the church to the poor-house, not having money to pay the fees! By old experienced individuals it is supposed one labourer, forty years ago, would do more than two of the present day."‡

The Reports of the Assistant Commissioners are full of the same evidence. In the pauperized districts we find sometimes the labourers, or rather those who ought to be the labourers, absolutely refusing work; sometimes we find them bribed by additional pay from the parish to take profitable work; but always they are represented as so inferior to the non-parishioners as to render their services, though nominally cheap, really dear, and generally dear in proportion to their apparent cheapness.

Mr. Okeden states, that in Wiltshire, the farmer finds his labourers idle and insolent, and regardless of him, and his orders, and his work. They openly say, "We care not, the scale and pay-table are ours."§ Mr. Majendie states, that in Ardingly, Sussex,—

"Labourers refuse work, unless of a description agreeable to them: they say, 'Why should we be singled out for hard labour, instead of working for the parish?' A winter ago the clergyman offered 2s. a day to three labourers; they refused to work unless they had extra pay for remaining after half-past four, saying, that the parish did not require more than that of them. In the last hay harvest a man, inferior to the average labourers, refused 10s. a week from a farmer, saying, that he could do better with the parish.¶" "At Eastbourne, in December, 1832, four healthy young men, receiving from 12s. to 14s. per week from the parish, refused to work at threshing for a farmer at 2s. 6d. and a

\* App. (B. 1.) Quest. 40, Stiffkey, Norfolk, p. 324 d.

† App. (B. 1.) Quest. 37, Summertown, Oxford, p. 380 c.

‡ App. (B. 1.) Quest. 36 and 37, Millford, Southants, p. 424 c.

§ App. (A.) Part I. p. 24.

¶ App. (A.) Part I. p. 181.

quart of ale per day. The fishermen, secure of pay without labour, refuse to go out to sea in the winter: one has said, 'Why should I expose myself to fatigue and danger, when the parish supports my family and pays my rent?' The masters are obliged to send to Hastings to get men for their boats. In May, 1832, a respectable fisherman, said, 'I fear that, like many of my neighbours, I shall be obliged to sell my boat, and come upon the parish for want of hands to man her; I cannot get men here, as they like better their allowance from the parish. I therefore board a Hastings man, and give him as much profit as I get myself, but this ruins me.\*' "At Rochford, Essex, the overseers make up wages to 1s. 9d. per head to families, by the magistrate's order, and this the labourers demand as their right. Good ploughmen are not to be found. The labourers say, they do not care to plough, because that is a kind of work which, if neglected, will subject them to punishment, and, if properly done, requires constant attention, and the lads do not even wish to learn. Nine able-bodied young men were in the workhouse last winter; such was their character, that they were not to be trusted with threshing." †

Mr. Power states the evidence of Mr. King, the overseer, and a large occupier of land at Bottisham (Cambridgeshire), who refers the increase of rates in that neighbourhood, not to any increase of population, or diminution of demand, but to the effects of the existing system on the habits of the labourers:—

"He complained of their deficiency in industry, arising from their growing indifference, or rather partiality, to being thrown on the parish: when the bad season is coming on, they frequently dispose of any little property, such as a cow or a pig, in order to entitle themselves to parish wages. That very evening (says Mr. Power) on which I saw him, one of his men swore at him, and said, 'He did not want his work or his wages; he could do better on the parish.'" †

It is unnecessary to multiply quotations, all of which would be to the same effect.

So much for the effects of the present system on the industry and skill of the agricultural labourers. Its effects on their honesty are well described by Mr. Collett, in his evidence before the House of Commons' Committee of 1824, on Labourers' Wages:—

"Were I to detail the melancholy, degrading, and ruinous system which has been pursued, with few exceptions, throughout the country, in regard to the unemployed poor, and in the payment of the wages of idleness, I should scarcely be credited beyond its confines. In the generality of parishes, from five to forty labourers have been without employment, loitering about during the day, engaged in idle games, insulting passengers on their road, or else consuming their time in sleep, that they might be more ready and active in the hours of darkness.

\* App. (A.) Part I. p. 188.

† App. (A.) Part I. p. 234.

‡ App. (A.) Part I. p. 248.

The weekly allowances cannot supply more than food; how, then, are clothing, firing, and rent to be provided? By robbery and plunder; and those so artfully contrived and effected, that discovery has been almost impossible. Picklock keys have readily opened our barns and granaries; the lower orders of artificers, and even in one or two instances small farmers, have joined the gang, consisting of from ten to twenty men; and corn has been sold by sample in the market of such mixed qualities by these small farmers, that competent judges have assured me, it must have been stolen from different barns, and could not have been produced from their occupations. Disgraceful as these facts are to a civilized country, I could enumerate many more, but recital would create disgust."

And yet this was said in the year 1824—a time to which those who witnessed the events of 1830, in the disturbed districts, or those who examined their effects, must look back as a period of comparative comfort. Partly under the application of force, but much more under that of bribes, that paroxysm subsided; but what must be the state of mind of those who have to calculate every winter whether they may expect to be the victims of its return? Waste of capital and waste of time may be estimated, but at what rate are we to value the loss of confidence? What would each resident in a disturbed district then have given to have saved to himself and his family, not merely the actual expense, but the anxiety of that unhappy period? No complaint is more general than that of the difficulty of finding the means of profitable investment. The constantly increasing capital of the country, after having reduced interest and profits to lower rates than any persons now living can recollect, after having choked all the professions, and overflowed in all the channels of manufactures and commerce, is still seeking employment, however hazardous and however distant. One business alone is described as ill supplied with capital, and that is the business which is of all others the most healthy, the most independent, and the most interesting. It appears that men are anxious to withdraw themselves and their capital from an employment in which so indefinite an outgoing as an ill-managed poor-rate is to be supplied, in which such instruments as pauper labourers are to be employed, and such events as those of 1830 are to be provided against.

It must be carefully remembered, however, that these evils are gradually evolved. Ultimately, without doubt, the farmer finds that pauper labour is dear, whatever be its price; but that is not until allowance has destroyed the industry and morals of the labourers who were bred under a happier system, and has educated a new generation in idleness, ignorance, and dishonesty. In the meantime wages are diminished, and even of those wages a part is paid by others; the principal outgoing of the farm is re-

duced, and as long as the produce remains the same, the occupier, if himself the owner, or a leaseholder, gains the benefit of the difference between what he formerly paid in wages and what he now pays, subject only to the deduction of his additional expenditure in rates; a deduction which, if he were the only rate-payer, would of course be at least equal to his new gains, but which may be trifling if he is only one of many rate-payers, some of whom, such as the tithe-owner and the tradesman, are to a very small extent immediate employers of labour. This accounts for the many instances in our evidence, some of which we have already cited, and others of which we shall cite hereafter, of the indifference of the farmers in some places to poor-law expenditure, and in other places of their positive wish to increase it. If, indeed, the occupier is a tenant from year to year, or at will, the general tendency towards the equalization of profits will prevent his long retaining this advantage. Offers will be made for his farm, and he will be forced to leave it or to pay an increased rent, which will leave his profits no greater than they were before the payment of wages out of rates began. But it is to be observed, that if the tenant without a lease is the person who gains least by the introduction of these abuses, he is also the person who has the least motive and the least power to resist them: he has little motive, because the varying amount of his rent forms a sort of shifting ballast, tending always to keep his profits steady; he has little power, because there are always bidders for his farm, ready to pay the utmost rent that can be afforded, without reference to the means employed. Whether these means are the adoption or the continuance of abuses, he will be forced by competition, unless his landlord, or his landlord's agent, has knowledge and forbearance far beyond the usual average, either to pursue them, or, what is practically the same, to leave his tenancy to some one who will pursue them. This is explained in the following answers from Mr. Hillyard, President of the Farming and Grazing Society of Northampton, and from Mr. Robert Bevan, J. P.

"If a system of allowances is adopted in a parish, the consequences are, the whole of the labourers are made paupers; for if one occupier employs labourers that have an allowance, other occupiers will send the labourers to the parish officers, otherwise he pays part of the other occupiers' labour."\*

"One impoverished farmer turns off all his labourers; the rest do the same, because they cannot employ their own shares and pay the rest too in poor-rates. Weeds increase in the fields, and vices in the population. All grow poor together. 'Spite against the parson' is now ruining a neighbouring parish in this way."†

\* App. (B. 1.) Question 39, Moulton, Northants, p. 338 d.

† App. (B. 1.) Question 36, Rougham, Suffolk, p. 466 c.

Even the leaseholder, unless his term is so long as to put him in the situation of a landlord, has strong motives to introduce abuses; he can reap the immediate benefit of the fall of wages, and when that fall has ceased to be beneficial, when the apparently cheap labour has become really dear, he can either quit at the expiration of his lease, or demand on its renewal a diminution of rent; he has a still stronger motive to continue them when once introduced, as every amendment involves immediate expenditure, of which his successor, or rather his landlord, will obtain the principal advantage. The most favourable state of things is when the farmer is himself the proprietor. The owner of land, unless it be covered with cottages occupied by the poor, never has any permanent interest in introducing Poor Law abuses into the parish in which that land is situated. He may, indeed, be interested in introducing them into the neighbouring parishes, if he can manage, by pulling down cottages, or other expedients, to keep down the number of persons having settlements in his own parish. Several instances have been mentioned to us, of parishes nearly depopulated, in which almost all the labour is performed by persons settled in the neighbouring villages or towns; drawing from them, as allowance, the greater part of their subsistence; receiving from their employer not more than half wages, even in summer, and much less than half in winter; and discharged whenever their services are not wanted. But, with the exception of similar cases, a good administration of the Poor Laws is the landlord's interest; and where he is a man of sense, is acquainted with what is going on, and being an occupier is allowed a vote, he may be expected to oppose the introduction of allowance, knowing that for giving up an immediate accession to his income he will be repaid, by preserving the industry and morality of his fellow-parishioners, and by saving his estate from being gradually absorbed by pauperism. Even when that system has been introduced, he may, in some stages of the disease, refuse to allow his labourers to be infected by it; pay them full wages, and insist on their taking nothing from the parish. Such conduct, however, can seldom be hoped for; both because it must be exceedingly difficult to preserve a set of labourers uncontaminated by the example of all around them; and because the person who pursues it must submit to pay his proportion of the rates, without being, like the other farmers, indemnified.

The effects of the system on the manufacturing capitalist are very different. The object of machinery is to diminish the want not only of physical, but of moral and intellectual qualities on the part of the workman. In many cases it enables the master to confine him to a narrow routine of similar operations, in which

the least error or delay is capable of immediate detection. Judgment or intelligence are not required for processes which can be performed only in one mode, and which constant repetition has made mechanical. Honesty is not necessary where all the property is under one roof, or in one inclosure, so that its abstraction would be very hazardous; and where it is, by its incomplete state, difficult of sale. Diligence is insured by the presence of a comparatively small number of over-lookers, and by the almost universal adoption of piece-work.

Under such circumstances, it is not found that parish assistance necessarily destroys the efficiency of the manufacturing labourer. Where that assistance makes only a part of his income, and the remainder is derived from piece-work, his employer insists, and sometimes successfully, that he shall not earn that remainder but by the greatest exertion. We have seen that in agriculture this is impossible, and that, consequently, the allowance system becomes ultimately mischievous to the farmer who adopts or submits to it; but the manufacturer, who can induce or force others to pay part of the wages of his labourers, not only appears to be, but actually may be, a pure gainer by it; he really can obtain cheap labour. On whom, then, does the loss fall? Partly, of course, on the owners of rateable property, partly on the labourers who are unmarried, or with families of less than the average number, and who are, in fact, robbed of a portion of the natural price of their labour, but principally on those manufacturers who do not enjoy the same advantages. A manufactory worked by paupers is a rival with which one paying ordinary wages, of course, cannot compete, and in this way a Macclesfield manufacturer may find himself undersold and ruined in consequence of the mal-administration of the Poor Laws in Essex.

This is well stated in the following answer from Castle Donington, Leicestershire; though the answerer himself, probably an agriculturist, perceives more clearly the evil to the landowner than to other manufacturers.

"The system of eking out the wages of manufacturing operatives from the parish funds is pregnant with great evils, and is not adopted in this parish. In several places in this county those evils are severely felt; and where once a parish has embarked upon this system, the greatest difficulty is experienced in returning to a better. From the practice of parish officers, when trade is perhaps suffering under temporary depression, soliciting work for the number of men on their hands from the various manufacturers (at any price), and making up the remainder necessary for the support of their families out of the poor's-rate, good trade becomes in a great measure annihilated. Stocks become too abundant; and when a demand revives, the markets are not cleared before

a check is again experienced; the same practice is renewed by the parish officers, and thus the wily manufacturer produces his goods, to the great emolument of himself, half at the cost of the agricultural interest. This is particularly the case in the manufacture of hosiery. Thus land in several places in this county will not let for more than the poor's-rate, and its value as property is altogether destroyed.\*"

The following extracts from Mr. Villiers' and Mr. Cowell's valuable Reports may be used in confirmation of these remarks, if any confirmation is thought necessary:

"Ribbon-weaving is carried on to a great extent in all the villages around Coventry. Work is given out by the manufacturers to persons who are termed undertakers, who contract for it at a certain price, and the amount of their profit depends upon the rate at which they can procure labour; they consequently seek it at the lowest possible price, and for this purpose it is said they often employ persons who are dependent on the country parishes, which of necessity, if done to any extent, must affect the rate of wages in the trade as much as if the competition arose in a foreign country." †

"In the replies of the vestry clerk of Birmingham, he states, that relief is given occasionally according to the number of children, but not given to eke out the wages of able-bodied persons *wholly* employed. Upon inquiring the meaning of the words *not wholly employed*, it was explained to refer to those persons whose masters had certified that they only enabled them to earn a half of the average rate of wages in any branch of manufacture. On this subject Mr. Lewis, the governor of the workhouse at Erdington, who has the management of the poor at Aston, the immediately adjoining parish to Birmingham, and now included within the borough, stated that he was in a manufacturing house for 15 years at Birmingham, and that he is well acquainted with the practices of different masters, and that from his own knowledge he could state that what are termed 'small masters' in this town, *i. e.*, those employing one or two journeymen, and who also work for some of the other masters, were in the constant habit of employing men who were receiving allowances from the parish, and that many in consequence were able to undersell other masters who were paying the full wages themselves." ‡

"The practice of paying the wages of manufacturers out of the rates is strongly illustrated in the case of Collumpton, at a short distance from Tiverton, where the weaving of serge and cloth is carried on by two manufacturers, on whose employment many of the poor in that town have chiefly depended for support: one of these manufacturers, however, receives at present regular annual payments from the parishes in the neighbourhood to employ their paupers, the sums paid being less than the cost of their support by the parishes. The same system is not adopted by the parish of Collumpton: the result, therefore, with regard to the poor at large is not to diminish the amount of pauperism, but to change its locality; for the first effect of such a measure was to increase

\* App. (B. 1.) Questions 39 and 40, Castle Donington, Leicester, p. 280 *d.*

† Mr. Villiers, App. (A.) Part II. p. 25.

‡ Ibid.

the number of persons unemployed at Collumpton, and consequently to reduce wages; it was operating also with injustice to the other manufacturer."\*

"On conversing with a manufacturer at Tewkesbury, I found that he regretted the great fall in wages, but said that, as a capitalist, he had no choice between reducing the wages of his men and giving up his business, and that if a certain proportion of the operatives were obliged to take lower wages, the wages of the rest must also fall, since otherwise the master who employed those at reduced wages would get possession of the market. He said that he could always calculate, out of a given number of workmen, what proportion working at low wages would bring down the rest; and that if any circumstance caused a fall in one district, wages must fall in all other districts producing the same article. He admitted that this would equally be the case, if the operatives, in any number, were relieved by the parish."†

"The stocking manufacturers in Nottinghamshire have been enabled to saddle others with paying a portion of the wages of their handicraftsmen, in the same manner as the farmers have done.

"Stockings are made in all the neighbouring parishes in a circle round Nottingham of 20 or more miles in diameter, in the cottages of the journeymen, who rent frames at 1s. per week each, which they hire from a capitalist, who possesses, perhaps, several hundred, and the capitalist gives the operative work to do, and pays him wages. The operative, in whatever parish he may be, is informed that his wages must be lowered, and in consequence applies to the parish; his master at Nottingham furnishes him with a certificate that he is only receiving (suppose) 6s. a-week; and thus the parishes were induced to allow him 4s. or 5s.

"Mr. Caddick, the former assistant overseer of Basford, which is a few miles from Nottingham, told me that this system was universal, and went into a calculation, proving that by means of it master manufacturers were enabled to sell stockings at a profit, though the selling price did not cover the prime cost, if the parochial addition to the wages paid by the master was to be taken as an element of the prime cost, as it undoubtedly ought to be.

"At Southwell I heard of instances in which the master manufacturer had combined with his men to give them false certificates of the amount of their wages, so that they might claim a larger sum from the parish."‡

Whole branches of manufacture may thus follow the course, not of coal mines or of streams, but of pauperism; may flourish like the funguses that spring from corruption, in consequence of the abuses which are ruining all the other interests of the places in which they are established, and cease to exist in the better administered districts, in consequence of that better administration.

\* Mr. Villiers, App. (A.) Part II. p. 25.

‡ App. (A.) Part I. p. 602.

† Ibid.

## III.

## EFFECTS ON LABOURERS.

BUT the severest sufferers are those for whose benefit the system is supposed to have been introduced, and to be perpetuated, the labourers and their families. In treating this branch of the subject, we will consider separately the case of those who are, and of those who are not, actually recipients of relief.

## I.

## EFFECTS ON THOSE NOT ACTUALLY RELIEVED.

First, with respect to those who are not actually relieved. We have seen that one of the objects attempted by the present administration of the Poor Laws is, to repeal *pro tanto* that law of nature by which the effects of each man's improvidence or misconduct are borne by himself and his family. The effect of that attempt has been to repeal *pro tanto* the law by which each man and his family enjoy the benefit of his own prudence and virtue. In abolishing punishment, we equally abolish reward. Under the operation of the scale system—the system which directs the overseers to *regulate* the incomes of the labourers according to their families—idleness, improvidence, or extravagance occasion no loss, and consequently diligence and economy can afford no gain. But to say merely that these virtues afford no gain, is an inadequate expression: they are often the causes of absolute loss. We have seen that in many places the income derived from the parish for easy or nominal work, or, as it is most significantly termed, 'in lieu of labour,' actually exceeds that of the independent labourer; and even in those cases in which the relief-money only equals, or nearly approaches, the average rate of wages, it is often better worth having, as the pauper requires less expensive diet and clothing than the hard-working man. In such places a man who does not possess either some property, or an amount of skill which will ensure to him more than the average rate of wages, is of course a loser by preserving his independence. Even if he have some property, he is a loser, unless the aggregate of the income which it affords and of his wages equals what he would receive as a pauper. It appears accordingly, that when a parish has become pauperized, the labourers are not only prodigal of their earnings, not only avoid accumulation, but even dispose of, and waste in debauchery, as soon as their families entitle them to allowance, any small properties which may have devolved on them, or which they may have saved in happier times. Self-respect, however, is not yet so utterly destroyed among the English pea-



## 3. On Labourers.—1. Not actually relieved.

santry as to make this universal. Men are still to be found who would rather derive a smaller income from their own funds and their own exertions, than beg a larger one from the parish. And in those cases in which the labourer's property is so considerable as to produce, when joined to his wages, an income exceeding parish pay, or the aggregate of wages and allowance, it is obviously his interest to remain independent.

Will it be believed that such is not merely the cruelty, but the folly of the rate-payers in many places, that they prohibit this conduct—that they conspire to deny the man who, in defiance of the examples of all around him, has dared to save, and attempts to keep his savings, the permission to work for his bread? Such a statement appears so monstrous, that we will substantiate it by some extracts from our evidence.

Sir Harry Verney, in a communication which will be found in App. (C.) says,—

“In the hundred of Buckingham, in which I act as a magistrate, many instances occur in which labourers are unable to obtain employment, because they have property of their own. For instance, in the parish of Steeple Claydon, John Lines, formerly a soldier, a very good workman, is refused employment, because he receives a pension. The farmers say that they cannot afford to employ those for whom they are not bound by law to provide. In order to prevent John Lines from being out of work, I am frequently obliged myself to give him employment.”

Mr. Courthope, of Ticehurst, Sussex, in his excellent answers to our Queries, replies to the question, “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.”\*

Mr. Wetherell, the rector of Byfield, Northamptonshire, replies to the same question:—

“With a family, it is scarcely possible he should lay by any thing out of his earnings, and if he could, he dare not let it be known, lest he should be refused employment under the present system of the poor laws, though he is industrious and honest.”†

Mr. Chadwick thus reports the evidence of Mr. Hickson, a manufacturer at Northampton and landholder in Kent:—

“The case of a man who has worked for me will show the effect of

\* Extracts, p. 46. App. (B. 1.) Question 15, p. 528 b.

† App. (B. 1.) Quest. 15, p. 332 b.

## 3. On Labourers.—1. Not actually relieved.

the parish system in preventing frugal habits. This is a hard-working, industrious man, named William Williams. He is married, and had saved some money, to the amount of about 70*l.*, and had two cows; he had also a sow and ten pigs. He had got a cottage well furnished; he was a member of a benefit club at Meopham, from which he received 8*s.* a week when he was ill. He was beginning to learn to read and write, and sent his children to the Sunday-school. He had a legacy of about 46*l.*, but he got his other money together by saving from his fair wages as a waggoner. Some circumstances occurred which obliged me to part with him. The consequence of this labouring man having been frugal and saved money, and got the cows, was, that no one would employ him, although his superior character as a workman was well known in the parish. He told me at the time I was obliged to part with him—‘Whilst I have these things I shall get no work; I must part with them all; I must be reduced to a state of beggary before any one will employ me.’ I was compelled to part with him at Michaelmas; he has not yet got work, and he has no chance of getting any until he has become a pauper; for until then, the paupers will be preferred to him. He cannot get work in his own parish, and he will not be allowed to get any in other parishes. Another instance of the same kind occurred amongst my workmen. Thomas Hardy, the brother-in-law of the same man, was an excellent workman, discharged under similar circumstances; he has a very industrious wife. They have got two cows, a well-furnished cottage, and a pig and fowls. Now he cannot get work, because he has property. The pauper will be preferred to him, and he can qualify himself for it only by becoming a pauper. If he attempts to get work elsewhere, he is told that they do not want to fix him on the parish. Both these are fine young men, and as excellent labourers as I could wish to have. The latter labouring man mentioned another instance, of a labouring man in another parish (Henstead), who had once had more property than he, but was obliged to consume it all, and is now working on the roads.”\*

We have already quoted from Mr. Cowell's Report a letter from Mr. Nash, of Royston, in which he states that he had been forced by the overseer of Reed to dismiss two excellent labourers, for the purpose of introducing two paupers into their place. Mr. Nash adds, that of the men dismissed, one

“Was John Walford, a parishioner of Barley, a steady, industrious, trustworthy, single man, who, by long and rigid economy, had saved about 100*l.* On being dismissed, Walford applied in vain to the farmers of Barley for employment. ‘It was well known that he had saved money, and could not come on the parish, although any of them would willingly have taken him had it been otherwise.’ After living a few months without being able to get any work, he bought a cart and two horses, and has ever since obtained a precarious subsistence, by carrying corn to London for one of the Cambridge merchants; but just now the current of corn is northward, and he has nothing to do;

\* Extracts, App. (A.) Part II. p. 270.

## 3. On Labourers.—1. Not actually relieved.

and at any time he would gladly have exchanged his employment for that of day labour, if he could have obtained work. No reflection is intended on the overseers of Barley; they only do what all others are expected to do; though the young men point at Walford, and call him a fool, for not spending his money at the public-house, as they do; adding, that then he would get work.\*

The same Report contains the following statement from Mr. Wedd, an eminent solicitor of Royston, who was himself personally acquainted with the details of the case:—

“An individual who had risen from poverty, and accumulated considerable personal property, bequeathed legacies to a number of labourers, his relations. Circumstances delayed for several months the collecting in the testator's estate. The overseer's deputy of one parish, in which some of the legatees were labourers, urged to the agent of the executors the payment, on the ground that it would benefit the parishioners, as, when the legacies were paid, they would not find employment for the legatees, because they would have property of their own. The legatees afterwards applied for money on account of their legacies. It was then stated that some of them, who lived in a different parish, had been refused employment, because they were entitled to property.” †

Mr. Richardson states, that in Northamptonshire, in those parishes in which labour-rates, or agreements in the nature of labour-rates, exist,—

“Objections are constantly made to the allowing persons possessing any property to be counted on the rate,” (that is, to be admitted on the number of those, the employment of whom exempts *pro tanto* a rate-payer from the burden of the labour-rate). “At Culworth, a man of the name of James Nuld, who had never applied for parish relief, was objected to partly on that ground, and partly because he kept a pig. At Eydon the same thing had taken place. One of the delinquents had qualified himself immediately as a pauper, by selling his house. At Middleton Cheney, a man with any property was neither employed on the rate nor relieved.” ‡

Those who are guilty of a still more important act of prudence and self-denial—that of deferring the period of marriage—are punished sometimes by being refused permission to work, sometimes by being allowed to work only a given number of days in each week, and sometimes by being paid for a full week's labour only a portion, often not half or a third, of what they see their married fellow-workmen receive. The principal evidence to this effect is to be found in the returns to our printed Queries, and there is much in the Reports of the Assistant Commissioners.

Mr. Power states, that in Gamlingay (Cambridgeshire), the wages paid to men employed by individuals are about 6s. a week to single men; to married men, with children, from 9s. to 10s.,

\* Extracts, p. 379. App. (A.) Part I. p. 586.

† Extracts, p. 380.

‡ App. (A.) Part I. p. 402.

## 3. On Labourers.—1. Not actually relieved.

with further allowance from the rates, according to the number of the family; \* and mentions, as a general remark, that when the farmer employs the young single man, it is seldom or never by the grate, but at daily wages, little above those of parish employment. †

“At Nuneaton,” says Mr. Villiers, “the overseer mentioned a case which had only occurred a few days before to himself, in an application made to him by a lad, to procure him relief from the parish. His answer to him was, ‘Go away and work, you foolish boy;’ the boy's answer was, ‘Ah, but, Sir, I married yesterday, and I expect the parish to find me a place to live in.’ On examining a labourer at Holsworthy, he said that he was only receiving 4s. a week from the parish for his work upon the roads; but that he did not complain of the smallness of the allowance, since he knew what numbers there were then depending on the parish. Upon asking him to what he attributed this increase of number, he replied, that the reason was evident, ‘since,’ to use his expression, ‘the young folks married up so terrible early in these days.’ On asking him if he could account for this, he said, ‘that many of them thought they should be better off if they were married than if they were single, and get more regular employment from the farmers.’ He said that he was sixty-eight years of age, and that he remembered a very different state of things; that ‘when he was a young man, the farmers preferred a man who was single to a married man, and that he was used to live in the house with them; that men did not use to marry till they had got a character as good workmen, and had put by some of their earnings;’ and that ‘if any man applied to the parish, he was pointed at by all who knew him, as a *parish bird*; but that it was very different now.” ‡

Mr. Stuart states, that in Suffolk,—

“The policy of most parishes is to employ the married men in preference to the single, and that when the single are employed, their wages are generally less. The farmers frequently said that they considered it bad management not to make this distinction, yet none complained more of early marriages.” §

Messrs. Wrottesley and Cameron state, that in West Wycombe (Bucks)—

“The notion of wages, as a contract beneficial to both parties, seems to be nearly obliterated. The rate of weekly wages paid by the parish is, to a single man under twenty, 3s.; above twenty, 4s.; married men, without children, 5s.; and so on. We asked what wages the farmers gave; the answer was, the same as the parish. We asked if piece-work was common—There is very little of it; it does not answer. Why not?—We have got too many people, and want to employ them. You mean that men would do too much work if employed by the piece?—That is just what I mean.” ||

\* App. (A.) Part I. p. 243.

† App. (A.) Part I. p. 242.

‡ Mr. Villiers' Report, App. (A.) Part II. p. 29.

§ App. (A.) Part I. p. 347.

|| Extracts, p. 83.

## 3. On Labourers.—1. Not actually relieved.

Mr. Richardson states, that in Northamptonshire,—

“As the farmers have, under the scale system, a direct inducement to employ married men rather than single, in many villages, particularly in the southern district, they will not employ the single men at all; in others they pay them a much lower rate of wages for the same work, in the hope of driving them to seek work out of the parish. Instead of this, they marry directly, knowing that if they cannot maintain themselves, the parish must do it for them, and that the farmers will be more ready to give work to men likely to become burthensome, than to those who are not. The usual remark they make is, ‘Well, I’ll go and get a wife, and then you must do something for me.’”\*

He adds, that

“Sometimes single men are not counted on the labour-rate. A clergyman of Culworth gave me an instance of a labourer who told him that he had married only because, under the labour-rate, he could not get work without. If they are admitted, it is at a lower rate than married men? ‘Of course, Sir,’ as I have often heard from the overseers, who seemed a little surprised at my putting the question.”

We will close our instances of this conduct by the following law enacted by a vestry:—

“At a Vestry Meeting, holden in the Parish Church of Edgefield, on Monday, April 8, 1833,

“Resolved,—That the rate of wages for able-bodied men be reduced to 4s. per week; that 1s. per week be given to each wife, and 1s. for each child per week. If there is not any children, allow the wife 1s. 6d. per week.

“Agreed for three months from this date, to commence Monday 15th.”

[Here follow 15 signatures.]

All the previous testimony has been given by persons belonging to the higher orders of society. Some, however, has been furnished by the labourers themselves; and we quote the following passages from the Reports of Mr. Villiers and Mr. Chadwick, to show what effects are attributed to the existing system by the very class to whom it professes to extend its bounty and protection.

“After observing,” says Mr. Villiers, “so many instances of an almost necessary connexion between the condition of the people and the mode of administering relief by the parish, I examined persons of different classes with regard to the interests which might be supposed to be involved in the continuance of the present system in the agricultural districts; and on this point the following evidence of some labourers themselves, who were wholly unprepared, and unacquainted with the object of my inquiry, is not unimportant. They were examined

\* App. (A.) Part I. p. 399.

## 3. On Labourers.—1. Not actually relieved.

in the presence of two gentlemen, one a proprietor, and the other an occupier of land in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire.

“Thomas Bayce, labourer, stated, That he was not settled in the parish in which he worked; that he was upwards of fifty years of age, and that neither he nor his father had ever received relief from any parish; that he knew many labourers were getting pay from the parish, and that many were relieved who were not so badly off as others who would not demand it; but that people did not care to go to the parish now as they used when he was a young man. Upon being asked his opinion of the roundsmen system, he answered in the following manner:—‘That is the very worst thing that has ever happened for the labourers of this country; that is the way our wages are kept down. A farmer wants to get some work done; he proposes starving wages to the labourer. If the labourer refuses to take them, the farmer says, ‘Very well, I do not want you,’ and sends to the overseer and gets a man, whom he pays what he likes, and then the parson and the shopkeeper are made to pay the rest. And if a man is not in his own parish, he will often take less than he can live upon, sooner than be sent back to his own parish where he is not wanted.’ Upon being asked how he came to have been always employed, and (as he had previously said) earning sometimes 14s. a week, he said, ‘That all farmers were not alike, and that some farmers knew the value of a labourer who was honest and hard-working, and that his character might be learnt of any farmer with whom he had ever worked;’ but he added, ‘This is not always the case, for I have seen many a man employed, not because he has a good character, but because he has a large family; and there are many who know that to be the case.’

“J. Stanton, aged fifty, was a married man; had no children at present; he was a tenant of half an acre of land; he stated that it never took him from his other work, (as if he had much to do); he got some single man to work for him, as there were always some unemployed; the farmers always preferring to employ the men with large families, to keep them off the parish. One of the gentlemen present asked this man whether he would not prefer to see a man get employment who had children to support, than a single man who had only himself to provide for; his answer was in these words:—‘To speak openly, Sir, I consider that a man ought to be paid for his work, and not for his family; and that if I had done a good day’s work, I should sooner have the value of it myself than see another man paid because he has got children.’ He was then asked if he had heard of men marrying with the view to obtain regular employment from the farmers, or more relief from the parish: he said, ‘There are many, Sir, who do think that they shall be better off if they have a family, and I have heard them often say so.’ He was asked if the labourers thought that the more industrious they were, the more encouragement they would receive: ‘No, they do not do that, because we see many a man get parish pay whether he is industrious or not.’ He continued, ‘But, Sir, what is the use of a man working hard if he has got no master to

## 3. On Labourers.—1. Not actually relieved.

oblige, paid half by the parish and half by the farmer? How would a man be better off if he were to work ever so hard? It would be better for us to be slaves at once than to work under such a system.' I asked him if some of the labourers did not prefer the system as a means of being idle, or of only doing half a day's work; he said he believed that might be the case sometimes, and added, 'Where is the wonder; when a man has his spirit broken, what is he good for?'

"Gibson, labourer, stated that he was seventy years of age; he had brought up a family of six children, and had never applied to the parish, but on one occasion, to assist him to pay his rent in time; he knew many a man who was receiving parish relief, not so badly off as he had been himself, but that there were so many now with large families, that he hardly thought they could keep off the parish; 'but,' he added, 'what is a man to do, Sir; for if he has not a family, he has a bad chance of getting steady work in his own parish.'"

"Charles James, labourer. He had four children; he had never received parish relief; on being asked what he thought of the roundsmen system, he said, 'it completely ruined the labourer,' and added, 'and people may say, Sir, what they like, but there are one set of farmers who always will keep it up as long as they are allowed to do so; and it is no use their saying they do not approve of it, when last week farmer ——— turned off all his men, and in the same week took the same men all back from the parish, and now he pays them half the wages that he did.'

"Cockerell, labourer, said that he lived with his father-in-law, who was a very old man, that he often heard him remark 'what a sad change there was now in men going on the parish, and that he remembered the time when a man would rather starve than apply; but that now-a-days, a man was more employed because he went on the parish than because he was industrious and strived to keep off.'

"On another occasion, the gentleman at whose house I was stopping, being doubtful of the encouragement offered to early marriage from the mode of administering the Poor Laws, proposed to obtain, if possible, the opinion of the first labourers to be met with in the fields; an opportunity soon occurred: four men were working together near a farm-house; upon questioning them as to the wages they were earning, one among them, who informed us that he was 30 years of age and unmarried, complained much of the lowness of his wages, and added, without a question on the subject being put to him, 'That if he was a married man, and had a parcel of children, he should be better off, as he should either have work given him by the piece, or receive allowances for his children.' He was immediately joined by two of the other men, who said, 'Yes, Sir, that is how it is; a man has no chance now unless he is a family man.' The other, an old man, who was nearly 80 years of age, said, 'That he was yet able and willing to work, but that he was obliged to go upon the parish because the farmers gave all the work they could to men who had families. When he was young, there was no such thing as that.' The men proceeded to reckon what was allowed to families according to their numbers; and they spoke of the

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system with great irritation. That it tends in no degree to make the class happy and contented may be inferred from this part of the country having been the scene of considerable riot and outrage in 1831.\*

"Thomas Pearce, Labourer in husbandry, of the Parish of Govington, Sussex; Examined.

"WITNESS has worked all his life for Mr. Noakes, of Wannoch.

"At first the witness, who appeared to be a stout, hard-working young man, was examined as to the diet and usual mode of living of the labourers of that district. His evidence was confirmatory of that which is elsewhere stated, as to the modes of living of the labouring classes, and as to the superiority of the condition of paupers.

"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.

"What would be thought of a plan, of making all go either wholly on or wholly off the parish, so that the men should not be paid half in wages and half as a pauper?—I do not know; but my master (Mr. Noakes) says, that he would take his full part of men; and if all the others did the same, there would be no men on the road, except an old man or two just to let the water off. But some of the farmers like to poke the

\* Mr. Villiers, App. (A.) Part II, p. 18.

## 3. On Labourers.—1. Not actually relieved.

men on the roads, so as to make the blacksmith and the wheeler and the shopkeepers come in, which helps the rates.

“But do not the workmen see that the farmers do this to serve their own turn, and pay less in wages?—Yes, that is how it is. A farmer, when he wants his stock in, will say, ‘I want to keep my cattle going; I won’t take away my cattle men, but I’ll get some extra men from the roads.’ And so he does; and when he has got his stock in, he says, ‘Now you may go, and the parish may keep you. He will get these men to do an extra day or two’s work, but he won’t give them more than the parish gives; for which reason they do not like to go, as they do not work half so hard for the parish.

“Would it, do you think, be a good thing to prevent the farmers using the parish to keep a stock of hands ready for these extra jobs?—I do not know how that would be, as I never seed it tried; but I think he would make the farmers keep more men for constant, which would be a good thing, as they would find more work for them. The land is not near done here as it should be, for want of hands.”\*

Piece-work is thus refused to the single man, or to the married man if he have any property, because they can exist on day wages; it is refused to the active and intelligent labourer, because he would earn too much. The enterprising man, who has fled from the tyranny and pauperism of his parish to some place where there is a demand and a reward for his services, is driven from a situation which suits him, and an employer to whom he is attached, by a labour-rate or some other device against non-parishioners, and forced back to his settlement to receive as alms a portion only of what he was obtaining by his own exertions. He is driven from a place where he was earning, as a free labourer, 12s. or 14s. a week, and is offered road-work, as a pauper, at sixpence a day, or perhaps to be put up by the parish authorities to auction, and sold to the farmer who will take him at the lowest allowance.

Can we wonder if the labourer abandons virtues of which this is the reward? If he gives up the economy in return for which he has been proscribed, the diligence for which he has been condemned to involuntary idleness, and the prudence, if it can be called such, which diminishes his means just as much as it diminishes his wants? Can we wonder if, smarting under these oppressions, he considers the law, and all who administer the law, as his enemies, the fair objects of his fraud or his violence? Can we wonder if, to increase his income, and to revenge himself on the parish, he marries, and thus helps to increase that local overpopulation which is gradually eating away the fund out of which he and all the other labourers of the parish are to be maintained?

\* Mr. Chadwick, App. (A.) Part II.

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

## II.

## EFFECTS ON LABOURERS ACTUALLY RELIEVED.

But though the injustice perpetrated on the man who struggles, as far as he can struggle, against the oppression of the system, who refuses, as far as he can refuse, to be its accomplice, is at first sight the most revolting, the severest sufferers are those that have become callous to their own degradation, who value parish support as their privilege, and demand it as their right, and complain only that it is limited in amount, or that some sort of labour or confinement is exacted in return. No man’s principles can be corrupted without injury to society in general; but the person most injured is the person whose principles have been corrupted. The constant war which the pauper has to wage with all who employ or pay him, is destructive to his honesty and his temper; as his subsistence does not depend on his exertions, he loses all that sweetens labour, its association with reward, and gets through his work, such as it is, with the reluctance of a slave. His pay, earned by importunity or fraud, or even violence, is not husbanded with the carefulness which would be given to the results of industry, but wasted in the intemperance to which his ample leisure invites him. The ground on which relief is ordered to the idle and dissolute is, that the wife and family must not suffer for the vices of the head of the family; but as that relief is almost always given into the hands of the vicious husband or parent, this excuse is obviously absurd. It appears from the evidence that the great supporters of the beer-shops are the paupers. “Wherever,” says Mr. Lawrence, of Henfield, “the labourers are unemployed, the beer-shops of the parish are frequented by them.”\* And it is a striking fact, that in Cholesbury, where, out of 139 individuals, only 35 persons, of all ages, including the clergyman and his family, are supported by their own exertions, there are two public-houses:—

“Hundreds of instances,” says Mr. Okeden, “came under my observation, in which the overseers knew that the wages and parish allowance were spent in two nights at the beer-houses, which ought to have been the week’s subsistence of the whole family. Still no steps are taken; the scale is referred to, and acted on, and the parish actually supports and pays for the drunken excesses of the labourers. The character and habits of the labourer have, by this scale system, been completely changed. Industry fails, moral character is annihilated, and the poor man of twenty years ago, who tried to earn his money, and

\* App. (D.)

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

was thankful for it, is now converted into an insolent, discontented, surly, thoughtless pauper, who talks of 'right and income,' and who will soon fight for these supposed rights and income, unless some step is taken to arrest his progress to open violence. Some rude efforts he may, at first, make to shake off his state of servitude; but he finally yields to the temptations of the pay-table and the scale, feels his bondage, puts off his generous feelings of industry, and gratitude, and independence, and,

- - - - - to suit  
His manner with his fate, puts on the brute.\*

"With the exception," says Mr. Millman, of Reading, "of decent persons reduced by inevitable misfortune, as is the case with some of our manufacturers, whose masters have totally failed, and who are too old, or otherwise incapable of seeking elsewhere their accustomed employment, I should state, in the most unqualified manner, that the cottage of a parish pauper and his family may be at once distinguished from that of a man who maintains himself. The former is dirty, neglected, noisome: the children, though in general they may be sent to school at the desire of the clergyman or parish officers, are the least clean and the most ragged at the school; in short, the degree of wretchedness and degradation may, in most instances, be measured by the degree in which they may burthen the parish. Unless some few tenements, inhabited by the lowest, and usually the most profligate poor, the refuse of society, the cottages in my parish which it is least agreeable to enter, are those of which the rent is paid by the parish, in which the effect of our exertions, and of the liberality of the landlords to cleanse on the alarm of cholera, was obliterated in a very few weeks."†

Mr. Chadwick states, in his Report, that in every district he found the condition of the independent labourer strikingly distinguishable from that of the pauper, and superior to it, though the independent labourers were commonly maintained upon less money.

The Assistant Overseer of Windsor examined:—

"What is the characteristic of the wives of paupers and their families?—The wives of paupers are dirty, and nasty, and indolent; and the children generally neglected, and dirty, and vagrants, and immoral.

"How are the cottages of the independent labourers as compared to them?—The wife is a very different person; she and her children are clean, and her cottage tidy. I have had very extensive opportunities of observing the difference in my visits; the difference is so striking to me, that, in passing along a row of cottages, I could tell, in nine instances out of ten, which were paupers' cottages, and which were the cottages of the independent labourers."

\* App. (A.) Part I. p. 24.

† Extracts, p. 335. Mr. Chadwick, App. (A.) Part II.

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

Mr. Brushfield, of Spitalfields, London, examined:—

"Have you ever compared the condition of the able-bodied pauper with the condition of the independent labourer?—Yes. I have lately inquired into various cases of the labouring poor who receive parish relief; and, being perfectly acquainted with the cases of paupers generally, the contrast struck me forcibly. In the pauper's habitation you will find a strained show of misery and wretchedness; and those little articles of furniture which might, by the least exertion imaginable, wear an appearance of comfort, are turned, as it were intentionally, the ugliest side outward; the children are dirty, and appear to be under no control; the clothes of both parents and children, in nine cases out of ten, are ragged, but evidently are so for the lack of the least attempt to make them otherwise; for I have very rarely found the clothes of a pauper with a patch put or a seam made upon them since new; their mode of living, in all cases that I have known (except and always making the distinction between the determined pauper and the infirm and deserving poor, which cases are but comparatively few), is most improvident. It is difficult to get to a knowledge of particulars in their cases; but whatever provisions I have found, on visiting their habitations, have been of the best quality; and my inquiries among tradesmen, as butchers, chandler's shop-keepers, &c., have all been answered with—'They will not have anything but the best.'

"In the habitation of the labouring man who receives no parish relief, you will find (I have done so), even in the poorest, an appearance of comfort; the articles of furniture, few and humble though they may be, have their best side seen; are arranged in something like order, and so as to produce the best appearance of which they are capable. The children appear under parental control; are sent to school (if of that age); their clothes you will find patched and taken care of, so as to make them wear as long a time as possible; there is a sense of moral feeling and moral dignity easily discerned; they purchase such food, and at such seasons, and in such quantities, as the most economical would approve of."

Mr. Isaac Willis, collector of the poor rates in the parish of St. Mary, Stratford-le-Bow, London—

"Have you had occasion to observe the modes of living of those of the labouring classes who receive aid from the parish or from charities, and of those independent labourers who depend entirely on their own resources to provide for their families?—I have for many years, in collecting through my district.

"Are the two classes externally distinguishable in their persons, houses, or behaviour?—Yes, they are. I can easily distinguish them, and I think they might be distinguished by any one who paid attention to them. The independent labourer is comparatively clean in his person, his wife and children are clean, and the children go to school; the house is in better order and more cleanly. Those who depend on parish

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

relief or on benefactions, on the contrary, are dirty in their persons and slothful in their habits; the children are allowed to go about the streets in a vagrant condition. The industrious labourers get their children out to service early. The pauper and charity-fed people do not care what becomes of their children. The man who earns his penny is always a better man in every way than the man who begs it."

Mr. Samuel Miller, assistant overseer of St. Sepulchre's, London—

"In the course of my visits to the residences of the labouring people, in our own and other parishes, I have seen the apartments of those who remained independent, though they had no apparent means of getting more than those who were receiving relief from the parish, or so much as out-door paupers. The difference in their appearance is most striking; I now, almost immediately on the sight of a room, can tell whether it is the room of a pauper or of an independent labourer. I have frequently said to the wife of an independent labourer, 'I can see, by the neatness and cleanness of your place, that you receive no relief from any parish.'—'No,' they usually say, 'and I hope we never shall.' This is applicable not only to the paupers in the metropolis, but, it may be stated, from all I have seen elsewhere, and heard, that it is equally applicable to other places. The quantity of relief given to the paupers makes no difference with them as to cleanliness or comfort; in many instances very much the contrary. More money only produces more drunkenness. We have had frequent instances of persons being deprived of parochial relief from misconduct or otherwise, or, as the officers call it, 'choked off the parish,' during twelve months or more, and at the end of that time we have found them in a better condition than when they were receiving weekly relief."

The testimony, with relation to the superiority of the class of labourers who are deprived of the facilities of obtaining partial relief, is almost as striking and important. We shall advert to it in a subsequent part of the Report.

The following testimony of Mr. Sleeth, of Albany Road, Kent Road, is an instructive example of the tendency of pauperism to sap the foundations of industry, virtue, and happiness:—

"I have been a witness to the gradual ruin of a very deserving class of people, effected, as well as I can judge, by the superior temptations of parish allowance and idleness, to those of independence with industry.

"I was employed from 1819 to 1831 in a commercial house, of which the greater part of the business was the sale of home-made fabrics, chiefly of stockings. The demand for homespun articles is still very extensive amongst old people of all ranks, on account of their superior warmth and durability. The call for these goods when I first became acquainted with the business was very constant, and the supply abundant, but not excessive. The competition of the factories had driven the

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

spinners quite out of the market, and also the great bulk of the knitters; but of these latter, some of the most resolutely frugal and industrious, persevered in working for the low reward which was to be got while the employment was breaking up. But after this period of change, which had taken place before the time at which my knowledge begins, the people who had persevered remained the only workers. In fact none were brought up to it, and none continued in it but those who had been long used to it, and of those only the most independent and exemplary. But they got the reward of their struggle in the monopoly of the supply, when all the most supine had ceased to contend with the progress of the factories.

"The earnings of a family by knitting sometimes amounted to more than 20*l.*, and commonly from 12*l.* to between 16*l.* and 18*l.*, a very large sum, as everybody knows who knows the economy of a well managed cottage. These latter earnings were wholly additional to the ordinary labourer's earnings, as they never interfered with farm work, were frequent in parts of Sussex ten years ago, where the practice is unknown now, except by some single superannuated old woman. The general shop of the village was, latterly, the medium between my employers and these poor people, who there received the materials and returned the made-up article, and could always receive the amount of their earnings at the same time. Usually they were partly taken out in goods, such as tea, soap, tapes, needles, &c., and sometimes in cash: they frequently made the dealer thus banker for some portion of their gains. Such was the occasional self-denial of these people, that I know one family, of the name of Hinde, that received three several years' earnings in *cash*, during seven years that they were at work for us, amounting to above 43*l.* This family consisted of a man past fifty, his sister older than himself, three orphan nieces, and one nephew. The history of this family, is interesting. The man was and is an agricultural labourer; he speculated with his savings, purchasing the fruit or pigs of his neighbours, or their poultry, when they had a right of common, before they were fit for the market, by advance of money on them, his neighbours tending them to maturity. He had a reputation of being very rich, and often lent some few guineas to needy farmers. *He found great difficulty in getting employment, it was refused him on account of his savings;* and bought a piece of ground to occupy himself on, but was afraid of farming. His sister was a bit of a shrew, but very notable, and the earnings by knitting were owing to her, for when she became bed-ridden, the industry of the girls declined, and on her death ceased altogether; they quarrelled with their uncle; the boy is now married and has a pauper family; one girl is married after having had a bastard, the other girl is in service in London, and is respectable. I consider these young people ruined solely by the example of their idle and dissolute half pauper neighbours, who are never content to be haunted by the presence of more industrious or deserving characters, and spare no effort of argument or raillery to bring them to the common level—an event of itself too much to be

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

feared, consisting of a change from care and labour to profligacy and idleness.

"I should say I know 500 families who have so given up knitting for idleness and parish allowance, though their remuneration was constantly on the increase through the falling off of hands. In 1828 the quantity of these goods produced in the South became so small that we ceased to make any arrangements for them, and relied solely on the West of England, in parts where the parish allowance has not extended, and therefore where the motive to work continues unabated, yet at that time prices were more than double what could have been earned when this kind of industry was universal.

"The allowance from the poor rate was at the bottom of the whole, for competition had ceased, and it was generally allowed by the workers that equal industry would procure more men than *twice* the quantity of food or clothing that it would have done when the employment was general and prosperous. But the labour was continuous and irksome; even the cleanliness which was indispensable to putting the work out of hand in a proper state, the confinement to the house, perhaps the control of the old people, were in violent and constant contrast with the carelessness and idleness of those who could dispense with industry by relying on the parish. Pauper women are all gossips, the men all go to the ale-house; the knitters had little time for either, and they were assured that they debarred themselves for the good of the rich, and it was seen that no idleness or extravagance was attended with any alarming consequences against which the parish served as a shield.

"I have every autumn been into the country, and have observed the gradual deterioration of these previously respectable families. The clothing was in great part made at home, and was sedulously well made.

"Cleanliness was indispensable to the work, and the work itself was cleanly; and as it kept them much at home, it made comfort in that home more necessary than it is to those who loll their time away out of doors.

"Besides, comfort and cleanliness are not the policy of those who apply to the parish; for the overseer always observes to those who are decent and tidy in their persons and houses, 'that they seem too comfortable to want,' and mentions his suspicions of concealed savings.

"I wish to be understood as speaking of the disappearance of these people all through, not as the result of competition with manufacturers, but as the consequence of the diminished industry of parties who had virtually a monopoly in their own hands, but who wanted motives to continue the industry necessary for its preservation.

"I have to add, that I regard the demoralization of these people as a further evil in the way of loss of a good example; for wherever they remained, in ever so small number, the superiority of their appearance was a model for their equals in grade, and formed a sort of *ton* for the rest, to which the parish officers and the gentry constantly pointed, and

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

strove to make the general habit; but as they lost the characteristic the standard fell, and those who had formerly been pointed out as patterns, are become undistinguishable from the rest. My observation is, that the air of content and cheerfulness which formerly distinguished them has been displaced, in the very same individuals, by the common pauper appearance; that is, they look dirty, ill fed, discontented, careless, and vicious.\*"

Even the least contact with parochial assistance seems to be degrading. The following are extracts from the evidence of Mr. Barker, of Hambledon, Bucks; Mr. Chappell, Vestry Clerk of St. George's, Hanover-square; Mr. Booker, Assistant Overseer of St. Botolph-without-Bishopsgate; Mr. Hobler, Chief Clerk in the Lord Mayor's Court; and Mr. Brushfield, of Spitalfields:—

"In the year 1824 or 1825 there were two labourers, who were reported to me as extremely industrious men, maintaining large families: neither of them had ever applied for parish relief. I thought it advisable that they should receive some mark of public approbation, and we gave them 1*l.* a piece from the parish. Very shortly they both became applicants for relief, and have continued so ever since."†

"I can decidedly state, as the result of my experience, that when once a family has received relief, it is to be expected that their descendants, for some generations, will receive it also."

"The change that is made in the character and habits of the poor by once receiving parochial relief, is quite remarkable; they are demoralized ever afterwards. I remember the case of a family named Wintle, consisting of a man, his wife, and five children. About two years ago, the father, mother, and two children, were very ill, and reduced to great distress, being obliged to sell all their little furniture for their subsistence; they were settled with us; and as we heard of their extreme distress, I went to them to offer relief; they, however, strenuously refused the aid. I reported this to the churchwarden, who determined to accompany me, and together we again pressed on the family the *necessity* of receiving relief; but still they refused, and we could not prevail upon them to accept our offer. We felt so much interested in the case, however, that we sent them 4*s.* in a parcel with a letter, desiring them to apply for more, if they continued ill: this they did, and from that time to this (now more than two years) I do not believe that they have been for three weeks off our books, although there has been little or no ill health in the family. Thus we effectually spoiled the habits acquired by their previous industry; and I have no hesitation in saying, that, in nine cases out of ten, such is the constant effect of having once tasted of parish bounty. This applies as much to the young as to the middle aged, and as much to the middle aged as to the old. I state it confidently, as the result of my experience, that if once

\* Mr. Chadwick, App. (A.) Part II.

† Evidence of Mr. Barker, Extracts, p. 85.



## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

a young lad gets a pair of shoes given him by the parish, he never afterwards lays by sufficient to buy a pair; so if we give to the fathers or mothers of children clothing or other assistance, they invariably apply again and again.\*

"The regular applicants for relief are generally of one family; the disease is hereditary, and when once a family has applied for relief, they are pressed down for ever."†

"Whether in work or out of work, when they once become paupers, it can only be by a sort of miracle that they can be broken off; they have no care, no thought, no solicitude, on account of the future, except the old musty rent-roll of receipts or an old dirty indenture of apprenticeship, which are handed down from father to son with as much care as deeds of freehold property, and by which they pride themselves in the clear claim to the parish money and the workhouse. All the tricks and deceptions of which man is capable, are resorted to; the vilest and most barefaced falsehoods are uttered, and all the worst characteristics of human nature are called into exercise, for the purpose of exciting a favourable feeling in their behalf; their *children are eye and ear witnesses to all this*. The child remembers his father's actions, and the hereditary pauper increases his ranks by instruction as well as by example. Their numbers will, as a matter of course, still increase, while these laws exist in their present form."‡

The most striking examples, however, of the effects of pauperism are to be found in the Report of Mr. Codd, on the Western Division of the Metropolis. We will extract, from among many other passages equally striking, a further portion of the evidence of Mr. Booker:—

"The deterioration in the character and habits of persons receiving parochial relief, pervades their whole conduct; they become idle, reckless, and saucy; and if we take them into the house, or place them at farm-houses, the younger learn from the older all their mal-practices, and are ready enough to follow them.

"We have a good many young people upon our casual out-door poor list. We first received them into the house, to endeavour to place them out in trades, or in service, or as apprentices; but they were so refractory, and behaved so ill, that the old people petitioned to be relieved from them: they would beat them, or steal their victuals, or sing indecent songs in the open yard, and so as to be heard by every one on the premises, and would annoy them in every way, besides doing everything they could to plague the master and mistress of the house, until we were obliged, in justice to the other inmates, to send them away to farmed houses, for which we paid 5s. per head per week, besides clothes. At such houses, however, they were so disorderly

\* Evidence of Mr. Booker, App. (A.) Part. I. p. 88.

† Evidence of Mr. Hobler, App. (A.) Part I. p. 91.

‡ Mr. Chadwick, App. (A.) Part II.

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

and irregular, that the owners refused to keep them, and sent them back to us. We then sent them to other houses, and by constantly changing them from one to another, as they behaved ill, we got over a certain period of time. But at length most of them became so well known, that no establishment of the kind in the metropolis would take them. We then tried them with employment out of the house, and used them to convey potatoes, coal, &c., to our infant establishment at Edmonton. This we were obliged to discontinue, because some stole a part of the loads with which they were intrusted, and others made away with the whole, and did not return to us for two or three weeks afterwards. For this conduct we took them, in some cases, before the magistrates, and got them committed to the tread-mill for seven or fourteen days; but this rather hardened them than did them any good. We then tried them at stone-breaking, but they broke their tools, almost as a matter of course; either on the first or second morning the hammers were brought in broken in the handles, by accident, as they alleged; but, as we well knew, by design. Our next course was to give them 2s. a week, at different periods in the week, with bread and cheese on the intervening days, leaving them to pursue their own course; but this we found left them upon the streets to prey upon the public, which they did so effectually, that several of them were transported in a very short time afterwards, leaving their wives and families, where they had them, chargeable to the parish. The increase of depredations to which this plan gave rise, was loudly complained of by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and we were, therefore, obliged to give it up.

"We are now employing the men as scavengers, and the women as cinder sisters; but they constantly avoid working upon some excuse or another, although *we are actually obliged to pay the contractor 6s. a week for employing them, and to pay for their clothes besides*. These 6s. are paid by the contractor, at the rate of 1s. nightly, to the persons who have worked, and by us repaid to him; but the parties are not satisfied, and it is no uncommon thing for them to beset my house, soliciting me to send them to the Compter; and if I refuse, they remain at the door, and cannot be removed except by force. If they are taken before the magistrates, and committed for short periods, they come to us again immediately that the period of their confinement is over, and behave worse than ever.

"Whoever comes to us, and swears before a magistrate that he has neither work nor money, we are obliged to relieve, because we can neither give them work, nor prove that they have constant employment; and paupers now understand the law, and also the practice of magistrates so well, from the many hours that they spend in police offices applying for summonses, &c., that they claim relief, not at all as a matter of favour, but as a matter of right."\*

The worst results, however, are still to be mentioned: in all ranks of society the great sources of happiness and virtue are the

\* App. (A.) Part I. p. 89.

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

domestic affections, and this is particularly the case among those who have so few resources as the labouring classes. Now, pauperism seems to be an engine for the purpose of disconnecting each member of a family from all the others; of reducing all to the state of domesticated animals, fed, lodged and provided for by the parish, without mutual dependence or mutual interest.

“The effect of allowance,” says Mr. Stuart, “is to weaken, if not to destroy, all the ties of affection between parent and child. Whenever a lad comes to earn wages, or to receive parish relief on his own account” (and this we must recollect is at the age of fourteen), “although he may continue to lodge with his parents, he does not throw his money into a common purse, and board with them, but buys his own loaf and piece of bacon, which he devours alone. The most disgraceful quarrels arise from mutual accusations of theft; and as the child knows that he has been nurtured at the expense of the parish, he has no filial attachment to his parents. The circumstances of the pauper stand in an inverted relation to those of every other rank in society. Instead of a family being a source of care, anxiety, and expense, for which he hopes to be rewarded by the filial return of assistance and support when they grow up, there is no period in his life in which he tastes less of solicitude, or in which he has the means of obtaining all the necessaries of life in greater abundance; but as he is always sure of maintenance, it is in general the practice to enjoy life when he can, and no thought is taken for the morrow. Those parents who are thoroughly degraded and demoralized by the effects of ‘allowance,’ not only take no means to train up their children to habits of industry, but do their utmost to prevent their obtaining employment, lest it should come to the knowledge of the parish officers, and be laid hold of for the purpose of taking away the allowance.”\*

Mr. Majendie states, that at Thaxted, mothers and children will not nurse each other in sickness, unless they are paid for it. † Mr. Power mentions the following circumstance as having occurred at Over, Cambridgeshire, a few days before his visit:—

“A widow with two children had been in the receipt of 3s. a week from the parish: she was enabled by this allowance and her own earnings to live very comfortably. She married a butcher: the allowance was continued; but the butcher and his bride came to the overseer, and said, ‘They were not going to keep those children for 3s. a week, and that if a further allowance was not made, they should turn them out of doors, and throw them on the parish altogether.’ The overseer resisted; the butcher appealed to the bench, who recommended him to make the best arrangement he could, as the parish was obliged to support the children.” ‡

“Those whose minds,” say Messrs. Wrottesley and Cameron, “have

\* App. (A.) Part I. p. 347.

† App. (A.) Part I. p. 228.

‡ App. (A.) Part I. p. 251.

## 3. On Labourers.—2. Actually relieved.

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

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

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

“‘David Walker’s wife applied to be allowed something for looking after her father and mother (old Stevens and his wife), now ill, who receive 6s. weekly. To be allowed 1s. weekly.’

“‘Mary Lacy applies for something for waiting on her mother, now ill. Left to the governor.’

“‘Elizabeth Prime applies to have something allowed for her sister looking after her father, now ill. Left to the governor.’”\*

“At the time of my journey,” says Mr. Cowell, “the acquaintance I had with the practical operation of the Poor Laws led me to suppose that the pressure of the sum annually raised upon the rate-payers, and its progressive increase, constituted the main inconvenience of the Poor Law system. The experience of a very few weeks served to convince me that this evil, however great, sinks into insignificance when compared with the dreadful effects which the system produces on the morals and happiness of the lower orders. It is as difficult to convey to the mind of the reader a true and faithful impression of the intensity and malignancy of the evil in this point of view, as it is by any description, however vivid, to give an adequate idea of the horrors of a shipwreck or a pestilence. A person must converse with paupers—must enter workhouses, and examine the inmates—must attend at the parish payable, before he can form a just conception of the moral debasement which is the offspring of the present system; he must hear the pauper threaten to abandon his wife and family unless more money is allowed him—threaten to abandon an aged bed-ridden mother, to turn her out of his house and lay her down at the overseer’s door, unless he is paid for giving her shelter; he must hear parents threatening to follow the same course with regard to their sick children; he must see mothers coming to receive the reward of their daughters’ ignominy, and witness women in cottages quietly pointing out, without even the question being asked, which are their children by their husband, and which by other men previous to marriage; and when he finds that he can scarcely step into a town or parish in any county without meeting with some instance or other of this character, he will no longer consider the pecuniary pressure on the rate-payer as the first in the class of evils which the Poor Laws have entailed upon the community.” †

\* Extracts, p. 85.

† App. (A.) Part I. p. 583.