

to 821,146; in 1814, to 838,561; in 1815, to 925,264; and in 1821 the sum deposited on account of the Savings Banks amounted to 777,000*l.* and in 1822 to 1,250,000*l.*¹ Yet under these panegyrical circumstances the people are mercilessly traduced. They are forsooth improvident, beastly wretches, who breed without regard to their condition. But are the British people to be damned as odious to God and man—as paupers generating heirs to their parents' beggary, because some of their body are vicious and insensate? I believe the people are as providential as those who call themselves the higher orders; and I am sure they are, all things considered, far their superiors in relieving their fellows².

¹ I am aware that the sums paid into the Savings Banks are often deposited by tradesmen and farmers, as well as by working mechanics and the mere labouring classes.

² Mr. Calcraft mentioned, that of 17,000*l.* which had been applied in Leicester, in the course of a few months, for the relief of the poor, 9,806*l.* were contributed by the poor themselves by weekly subscriptions. *Times*, June 21, 1821. The tailors of London have a common fund to relieve the members of the profession in sickness, and also to maintain their fellows. I have heard from good authority there are about 18,000 tailors in London, and that in the slack time 3,000 are supported by the others, each receiving 9*s.* a week. Now one-sixth of this profession are paupers; and yet this voluntary assistance is not complained of, as many of the payers of poor rates do their charges. Eden supposes that guilds in the 13th century relieved the poor of their fraternities.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

The poor have a RIGHT to relief, in consequence of the laws and regulations obstructing liberty and industry—in respect to their dwellings—their holding land—expulsion from their farms—concerning small and large farms as being more productive and beneficial.

I HAVE in the last Book traced the origin and progress of the poor-laws. I have shown that they are of long continuance; that they have not increased population nor the poor, by a bounty on procreation; that the rates have by no means advanced in proportion to the increased pressure on industry; and that they have not destroyed the spirit and foresight of the people; but, on the contrary, that the people abound in hope and enterprise and resources for all exigencies. Yet let none imagine for a moment that I am friendly to the poor-laws: I have exhibited at length their fraudulent and inhuman policy; yet they may occasionally qualify an evil. I speak with hesitation even on this exception; for when I consider that they have probably always tended to reduce the market price of labour, and have authorized Government to tax necessities without stint, under the impression that they

afforded a fund for the wretched in their extremities,—I doubt if the poor-laws are not an evil in all circumstances of absolute aggravation.

I proceed now to show that the poor have a right, in consequence of the laws which have obstructed industry and liberty, to relief from the opulent who make and execute the laws. Mr. Malthus indeed, true to his aristocratical text, speaking of the poor, says: "They are really the arbiters of their own destiny; and what others can do for them is like the dust in the balance, compared to what they can do for themselves¹." It is false that the poor are the arbiters of their own destiny, when they are without power to nominate magistrates or appoint legislators. Without political power or property, they have been subjected in every state and relation of life to the caprice, the avarice, and tyranny of the rich and the domineering.

My argument for the right of the people to be relieved in their distress, comprehends a tissue of iniquities practised against the people. First, in respect to their habitations. A law was passed to prevent the erection of cottages; and by the statute of inmates, a house in London, and probably in other towns, was limited to a single family; in consequence, to divide a house among two or more poor families was ruled to be a common nuisance. Under such laws if the people multiplied, and it was intended they should not, the increased people were a houseless

¹ page 206.

gipsy generation¹. To the prohibition to erect cottages succeeded the prostration of cottages already erected. This preventive check introduced workhouses in corporate towns where the practice prevailed. Thus, though two families should not inhabit one house, many families were forced to inhabit one house: and this contradiction was equally caused and authorized by law. We have a specimen of this wise mutation,—not indeed to check population, but to disfranchise voters. Sir William Manners in 1801 destroyed 100 houses in Aylesbury; and that their 500 inhabitants might not starve in the streets, he built a large workhouse to receive them. This is not the only coincidence between unhousing and disfranchising the people². After this monstrous practice, countenanced by the legislature, directly contrary laws followed. Statutes were made against depopulating and pulling down of houses; and they were enforced fearfully in the reign of Charles the First³. Yet the custom continued; and it appears that from 1690 to

¹ Roll's Abridgement, 139, pl. 3.

² Times, August 20, 1822.

³ One Sir Anthony Roper of Kent "was fined in the Star-chamber for depopulations 4,000*l.*; to the Relator 100*l.*; to the Parson of his parish 100*l.*; and to the poor of the same parish 100*l.*; he is enjoined also to repair those houses he hath demolished within two years; to let his farms at reasonable rates; if he should die in the interim, yet he is obliged to have these things performed, and not to come forth of person till he hath given security for the true performance of every part of this censure." Strafford's Letters, 1634, vol. i. p. 335. "Much noise here is of the depopulators that are come into the Star-chamber, it will bring in great sums of money." *Id. ibid.* p. 337.

1811 the houses in five counties have declined from 135,119 to 117,116¹. No wonder that a late Committee of the House of Commons on the poor-laws should deprecate any reduction in the number of houses.

To the destruction of cottages followed the abstraction of all land from cottages. This militated against the law of Queen Elizabeth, which prohibited cottages to be erected without four acres of land attached to them;—an impertinent law, though it marked the evil. Mr. Malthus in his early lucubrations resolutely affirmed, that labourers should have no land whatever affixed to their cottages: he said that such labourers were remiss in working the land of others. This the Earl of Winchelsea denied: he stated, on the contrary, that cottagers who possess land “are in general hard-working industrious men; that they are more contented, and more attached to their situation, and are always considered as most to be depended on, and trusted.” He that would reduce country labourers to landless cottagers,—and this practice may explain the anomaly that agricultural labourers became mis-

	In the Year 1690.	In the Year 1811.
Houses in Cambridge . . .	18,629 . . .	17,232
Huntingdon . . .	8,713 . . .	7,566
Norfolk . . .	56,579 . . .	51,766
Rutland . . .	3,661 . . .	3,325
Suffolk . . .	47,537 . . .	37,227
	<hr/> 135,119	<hr/> 117,116
	<hr/> 117,116	
	<hr/> 18,003	M. R.

erable, while farming prospered—proposes to sink them to the cast of the pariahs of the East, of whom Dubois says¹; “In general they have not permission to cultivate the ground for their own use, but are compelled to hire themselves to other casts; for whom for a small allowance they are obliged to undergo the most severe labours,” &c. Yet, after repeating this doctrine through different editions of his Essay on Population, Mr. Malthus (the professor of political economy) in the fourth edition of his Essay suggests: “Perhaps with proper precaution² a certain portion of land might be given to a considerable body of labourers³.” Yet Mr. Malthus also held, (and perhaps he continues to hold,) “it is obvious that a peasantry which depends principally on the possession of land, are more exposed to want than one which depends on the general wages of labour⁴.” The contemptible and pernicious policy of leaving the labourer landless was promoted by the inclosing of commons;—an absolute good no doubt, had it not been made at the expense of the people’s convenience. Inclosures are an old complaint; and in 1585 Stubbs condemned the custom in his “Anatomy of Abuses⁵.” By the inclosure or appropriation of commons, the poor

¹ Dubois, &c. p. 454.

² See Month. Rev. Old Series, vol. xxxv. p. 42, in 1767.—Alderman Waithman lamented that in the parish where he resided it had become the practice to withhold the smallest portion of ground from the cottagers. The inclosures, he said, increased gentlemen’s parks, but the cottagers did not obtain one inch. Morn. Chron. Feb. 10, 1819.

³ vol. ii. p. 465.

⁴ vol. ii, p. 466. ⁵ Retrospective Review, No. 5. p. 137.

were abridged of an outlet which they enjoyed without rent, and in the division the richest obtained the lion's share. Bills of inclosure, or more justly of appropriation, have been numerous; they amounted from 1750 to 1781, according to Howlett¹, to nearly a thousand.

To the custom of pulling down houses and setting cottages without land, another practice worse than both has been adopted at different times in England,—that of ejecting the tenants of minor holdings, and throwing the whole into large farms. By Henry the Seventh's laws against inclosures and for keeping up farmhouses, it is obvious that the evil was felt in that reign². Bacon praises these laws in his History of Henry; and Harrington³ is not less panegyric, "by which means the houses being kept up, did of necessity enforce dwellers: and the proportion of land to be tilled being kept up, did of necessity enforce the dweller not to be a beggar," &c. Such interference with liberty and property I wholly disapprove, and every thing like it: I merely quote the laws and opinions, as significant of the custom, which tended to impoverish, and of course to reduce the population.

¹ Month. Rev. Old Series, vol. lxxiv. p. 386.

² To this inadvertence Mr. Malthus had added one of his own. He says (Principles of Political Economy, p. 282), "that in the latter half of the 15th century wages rose, and corn fell. This he attributes to improved cultivation and the abolition of villainage. Yet he says immediately after (p. 286) that depopulation was loudly complained of at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries. How could depopulation have taken place if wages rose and corn fell, these being two strong inducements to population?"

³ Oceana, p. 69.

Still inclosures and the destruction of small farms continued in the subsequent reigns of Henry¹ the Eighth, of Edward the Sixth², of Mary, Elizabeth³, and James the First⁴; a practice apparently quite sufficient to explain the distress of the people, and the villainous necessity of a compulsory poor-law. A similar practice lately in Scotland called into operation the same law, which hitherto had been nearly forgotten in the statute-book. The habit in modern times of merging many small holdings into a few large farms has been approved by the professors of political economy. These doctors without diploma, talk of surplus produce with ecstasy: extra food is their summum bonum; while men, aye a million, who only produce their own subsistence are nothing,—so utterly negative, that they and their land might be swallowed up in the sea⁵ (so the doctors aver), without the least injury to society. Hence, while surplus produce is the prime object, a surplus man is called a nuisance. Thus mankind are made accessories to food, just as mussulmans⁶ devoted to their ablutions say, God cre-

¹ In Henry the Eighth's reign tillage was abandoned for pasturing sheep; the number allowed to be kept in one flock were restrained to two thousand: yet the statute says, a farmer would sometimes keep twenty-four thousand.—Hume, vol. iv. p. 278. Distress occasioned by displanting the people: for it grants to overseers and churchwardens, by leave of the lord of the manor, to build houses on the waste for the poor to inhabit.—43d of Elizabeth, sect. 5. c. 2. does this.

² Hume, vol. iv. p. 277.

³ Ibid. vol. v. p. 484.

⁴ Ibid. vol. vi. p. 177.

⁵ Steuart, Political Economy, vol. i. p. 88.

⁶ Ricaut, c. 23.

ated meat that good men might have frequent occasion to wash their hands.

Mr. Malthus of course treats man as an accident to be dismissed from *the mighty feast of nature* when the table is full. So does the *Edinburgh Review*¹: "The object in this commercial country is not that every man should cultivate the soil, or even that a greater population than can be profitably employed, should be retained in the country; the mode of occupation which gives the greatest surplus for subsistence of all the classes," &c. Then the object of society is not the happiness of all, but the opulence of a few; and where a field, or a farm, or the soil generally, can be tortured into a little more surplus produce, the commercial English may dismiss their population, and abandon them to their fate. This justifies the degrading name given to this country, and its regulation by Adam Smith and Robespierre. Our economical philosophers talk of surplus produce as a Greenlander does of blubber and train-oil; or to, exalt the allusion, as tippling Boniface does of his ale. Man is the first, midst, and last; the living man requires food, and having enough, surplus is useless or an incumbrance. The object of society is man, and his wants are the true regulators of all supplies². Man is not a mere eating animal:—he is a moral feeling being; he should be intelligent and independent. Old

¹ No. 47. p. 100.

² The Abbe Gagliani, in his treatise *della Moneta*, says, "que la commune mesure de toutes les valeurs est l'homme." Turgot admires this: tom. iii. p. 274.

Gildas said truly, that no improvement in arts nor increase of wealth could compensate the loss of national spirit and the power of self-defence. The rage for surplus produce¹, and national strength and spirit are adverse to each other: when the small farmers are ejected, the yeomanry must disappear;—the *greatest surplus for subsistence* is not morally or politically the sovereign object of society, and the present emergency answers that dogma.

Besides, it still remains to be proved, that large farms are the most productive. And here in the outset the political economists are at variance. Monsieur Sirmondi² insists that the gross produce is the object, many the *net* produce; which is consistent with those who consider the producer's subsistence zero in public arithmetic. Mr. A. Young, who equalled in accuracy of calculation Mr. Colquhoun, or Voltaire's old maid, (who estimated the pleasure between the sexes as 40 and 83,) and who advocated large farms³, is opposed by Monsieur Chateauvieux⁴,

¹ What would Thucydides have said to this doctrine? See what he puts in the speech of Nicias, lib. vii. p. 550.—I should rather take Vauban's opinion on surplus produce, "que des fonds des terres, du commerce, et de l'industrie se tire le revenu des hommes; mais que les véritables fonds du revenu des rois ne sont autres que les hommes même." *Dixme Royale*, p. 235.

² This has been some time a doctrine on the Continent. "L'agriculture pourra approcher de sa perfection, qui consiste à produire beaucoup de denrées et peu de revenu net." *Elémens de la Politique*, t. i. p. 258.

³ The Abbe Manu has written on small and large farms. *Month. Rev. Old Series*, 71. p. 496.

⁴ Phillips's *Travels*, &c. vol. i. p. 8.

who reputes the smaller more productive than the larger farms. And in aid of this position we have the testimony of Mr. Woodhouse¹ and others, that the small farmers pay better at present than the large farmers. I must here interpose and say, that no one who objects to throwing the lands into fewer hands favours the subinfeudation of small holders under middlemen in Ireland, nor the same greedy process under tacksinen in Scotland², with rack-rents and unlimited service. Those who partially advocate small holdings, speak of the fair and ordinary intercourse of landlord and tenant; and it appears according to the most strenuous advocates for surplus produce, who adore money worth, and who according to the ancient poet think "no word lucrative can be evil³," have frequently sinned against their own and the national interest.

In conformity to this remark, the Edinburgh Review says⁴: "It is no doubt true, that our farmers in general have still too great a propensity to tillage." And in a subsequent Number⁵ the reviewer suggests

¹ Times, May 7, 1822.

² Of land possessed by from ten to forty tenants he occupies a part, and subsets the residue to *small tenants* "for a certain money rent; payments in grain, customs, and services; the latter in many cases *unlimited*; so as to have upon the whole a surplus rent for the trouble and risk of recovering the rack rent from their subtenants." This is the statement of an apologist in the Supplement of the Encyclopedia Britannica (Art. CAITHNESS) for the system; and which, he says, "has been so injudiciously recommended for improving the condition of the poor."

³ Δούλω μὲν οὐδὲν ῥημὶ καὶ σὺν κέρδει καλόν. Sophocl. Electra, ver. 61.

⁴ No. 47. p. 87.

⁵ August 1820, p. 31.

that we have injuriously increased our *net* produce. Here is an avowal that too much land has been cultivated for net produce. And from the same quarter we have an assurance that the new and ample fashion of farms is not the most productive. In the Supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica, it is said that the natives of Caithness were more successful in cultivating the land than their successors; and that the proprietors, instead of receiving more by expelling the aboriginal inhabitants, obtained less. It was also positively stated in 1767¹, that large farms did not return such high rents as small ones: and a Scotch clergyman has lately corroborated this testimony in corresponding circumstances. Speaking of Mr. Munro, he writes that he had expelled at once² "nearly 600 persons, able and willing to pay their rents, who were not one penny in arrear, and who had hitherto paid a higher rent than the tacksman who is to succeed them." This is misanthropy and madness: better a thousand times were feudal barbarism and clanship; happier were the ceorls of the Saxons³ who worked the soil;—for while they paid their rent they could not be dispossessed. Suppose the surplus produce was greater on large than small farms—can this justify the expulsion of the inhabitants, and the substitution of sheep for men? If surplus produce be the whole object, why are not the imperfect child and the decrepit parent strangled? Surplus produce is a heartless cant,

¹ Month. Rev. Old Series, vol. xxxvi. p. 323.

² Morn. Chron. March 15 and 28, year 1820.

³ Wilkins, Leg. &c. Leg. 33.

and fit only for jobbers in the slave market. When men are the victims of barter, the consequence of the doctrine of surplus produce and large farms practically illustrated, has increased the paupers where hitherto they had been scarcely known in our own country. While in other nations the contrary practice, dividing tracts among an occupying tenantry, has had the happiest results. The Marquess of Turbilly¹ in France, in 1737 and in subsequent years, successively broke up the uncultivated land of his estate, and distributed it in moderate portions; and thus he ended the disposition to indolence and beggary in his estate. Count Lodi's arrangement of his property, and dividing it in small agricultural farms, is praised by Pictet and Chateauvieux²: the latter considers the system of agriculture in Lombardy complete³. It is pursued on numerous small farms; the rent is high, but then there are neither tacksmen nor middlemen. But the most extraordinary improvement is that in Hungary by Count Festetil. He purchased a large estate in the Murakos, he gave lands to the peasants at a *fixed* rent:—the value of the lands advanced so rapidly, that the holder of a few acres became wealthy⁴, and the population advanced from fifty to six hundred families, though suffering the spoliation of a bad government and the casualties of unkind seasons; while their neighbours having large farms, but subjected to

¹ Month. Rev. Old Series, vol. xxxii. p. 328.

² Phillips's Voyages, &c. p. 12.

³ Ibid. p. 3.

⁴ Bright's Travels in Hungary.

the illiberal feudal system, were a helpless burthen to their lords.

So persuaded have been persons in authority abroad of the utility of small occupations of land, that in the Bavarian regiments every soldier had a plot assigned to him. Count Rumford speaks of the advantage of this distribution¹. Maria Theresa also ordered that every peasant in Hungary should have an allotment of land, for which he was to pay so many days labour². What the Empress ordered for the villains of Hungary, the House of Assembly in Jamaica have directed for the benefit of the negro slaves of the colony:—and what is more, the Spaniards not only made similar laws, but saw them practised. Each negro has a plot of ground, and Saturday and Sunday to cultivate it: they all keep poultry, some a pig. Humboldt also says, that masters have found their advantage in freeing their slaves, giving them small farms, which add greatly to the comfort of the people and the cultivation of the country.

Thus have foreign lords and tyrants treated their serfs and slaves, while English and Scotch have, in greed of gain and senseless avarice, left the labourer landless. I know nothing more cruel³. And this

¹ vol. i. pp. 11, 54, 210. The garrisons of the regiments were permanent. The Count says, this would not be agreeable in despotic Governments, as habits of social intercourse between soldiers and people would be dangerous, p. 9. True, we know that, and barracks, &c.

² Bright's Travels, p. 228.

³ The utmost violence was committed against the tenantry on the Sunderland estates. Morn. Chron. Dec. 25, 1820. Mr. Loch, the agent, contradicts this. He avers all was done for the

damnable practice, in its worst state, Arthur Young¹, and Crompe in a prize essay², would introduce into the North of Ireland. Are not the Irish north and south wretched enough? The poor have increased in Scotland with the reduction of holdings, and the distress occasioned by farming on a great scale has pauperized the southern districts. The Rev. Mr. Burns says, In 1792 every twelfth person in Stirling was a pauper, which he attributes to its vicinity to the Highlands, whence the people are banished from their homes. On the contrary, where the occupations are compa-

good of the people; though he admits the change was no less than to force the cultivators of land to become fishermen. A remark of Governor Raffles is here in point: "The severest misfortune which a man can suffer, is to be deprived by force of the land upon which he lives, and which he has cultivated," &c.

¹ Mr. A. Young, in his *Travels in Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 132, says: "Unfortunately the linen manufacture is not confined, as it ought to be, to towns; but spread into all the cabins in the country." Then he would have the Ulster weavers huddled together like the weavers in Spitalfields and the liberty of Dublin. Young thought that it made them bad weavers and bad agriculturists. This is a great mistake: nothing is more sanative than a mixture of rural and manufacturing industry. Ramazzini has remarked, that every particular profession of artificers is subject to a peculiar infirmity; this interchange of labour corrects the evil.

² He also laments, p. 249, the combination of weaving and agriculture in Ulster: his remedy is for landlords "steadily to refuse to let an acre of land to any man that has a loom." Thus the land would be in the hands of real farmers, and the weavers be drawn into towns. These speculators seem to be successors of the projector of a proposal for building in every county a working alms-house or hospital, as the best expedient to perfect the trade and manufacture of linen cloth—in 1677. *Harl. Misc.* vol. viii. p. 120.

ratively numerous, pauperism is little known. In Fifeshire, the average size of farms is 150 acres, but many contain from fifty to eight and ten acres. So in Forfar¹, where in 1808 the number of farms amount-

¹ *Suppl. Encyc. Britan.* FORFAR. Mr. A. Young, who was so outrageous against small farms in 1801, seems to have changed his opinion like others. In his *Inquiry into Waste Lands* he favours, as a remedy to distress, the smallest farms: he gives instances of their good effect in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Essex, Surrey, Lincolnshire; and he concludes, 1st, That nothing tends so strongly to give the poor industrious and frugal habits, as the prospect of acquiring, or the hope of preserving, land. 2dly, That whenever they are possessed of it, they are either kept entirely from the parish, or supported at a very small comparative expense. 3dly, That parishes are at as great an expense to keep them in a state of distress, as would fix them in a comfortable situation.—The Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws (*Month. Rev.* Sept. 1819, p. 163), recommended cottage farms for the employment of the parish poor; and the Parliament adopted the suggestion of their Committee: and by the 59 Geo. III. c. 12. § 12 & 13, every parish is authorized to occupy twenty acres of land for the purpose of employing and letting small portions of land to poor persons. Sir E. Knatchbull proposed extending the operation of the Vestry Act, by which twenty acres were to be granted for the employment of the poor. *Times*, May 11, 1822. This scheme of apportioning lands to cottages has actually taken place in England. Sir W. de Crespigny (*Morn. Chron.* Dec. 17, 1819,) mentions the Bishop of Chester, who let seventy acres of glebe in divisions of half an acre to each; which it is said has kept down the poor rates, and otherwise relieved the poor. A similar result is said to have followed a similar proceeding in Rutlandshire. (*Ann. Reg.* 1816, p. 462.) And in the parishes of Cliddisden and Farleigh, in Hampshire and in Kent. (*Ann. Reg.* 1817, p. 287.) A still more extraordinary account is given by the overseer of the poor of Birmingham (*Morn. Chron.* Aug. 31, 1819,) of the benefit of thirty acres of land cultivated by paupers, in lessening the expense of maintain-

ed to 3222; then there was no assessment for the poor. The same miserable policy has tended to the distress of the English; and the relief recommended, and partially adopted, of granting small portions of land to the unfortunate, marks the popular injury of changing "a bold peasantry, their country's pride," into masters and serving-men.

CHAPTER II.

The right of the people to relief, in consequence of the reduction of wages—historically set forth.

AFTER the grievances of the people respecting their habitations and lands, I proceed to their wages, and their right to relief in consequence. I do not pretend to demonstrate my position, but to approximate the truth. The first account of wages deserving notice is in 1091, when cutting turf out of the abbot's marsh in Croyland cost three halfpence a day; and in the 11th, and even in the 12th century, sheep were from 4d. to 6d.; and in 1135 a stalled ox was equivalent to 1s. Compare, then, the value of a day's

ing the poor. There are also interesting accounts of small portions of land cultivated by Britton and Abbot and Austin. (Ann. Reg. 1816, p. 606.) See also an account of a cottager's cultivation of about an acre of Pulley Common in Shropshire. (Month. Mag. Sept. 1820, p. 126.) It is said that the condition of labourers in agriculture has been bettered in the parish of Terrington by the apportionment of from one to five roods to each person. Times, Dec. 27, 1821.

wages in flesh-meat, the ordinary food of the people at this period. Compare wages and the price of wheat. The price fluctuated; but it is certain that wheat was sold at 12d. the quarter: nor was this a singular case, as the preamble to the assize of bread, in the 51st of Henry the Third, states, "that he (Henry) had seen certain ordinances of his progenitors kings of England; viz. that when a quarter of wheat is sold at 12d., their wastel bread of a farthing should weigh six pounds sixteen shillings, that is, six pounds nine ounces and twelve penny weights troy." By this assize the nominal price of wheat advanced; and the prices and weight of bread are apportioned, according as the quarter of wheat is 3s. or 3s. 6d., which seems to have been the average price at this period, though it was still subject to great variation. According to these statements, in a former period a stalled ox could have been bought with nine days labour; and in the latter a quarter of wheat could have been purchased with twelve days labour,—wages in the former period being 1½d., and in the latter from 3d. to 3½d. Besides, it is probable that barley, or some cheaper grain, was the bread-food of the common people, which would still further increase the comparative amount of wages in respect to subsistence.

The next period presents a medley of foreign wars with great civil confusion. Then, in the 14th century (1351), the first statute of labourers was enacted, which actually deprived the labourer of half his former comforts. By this the wages of masons and tilers were fixed at 3d. a day, when wheat was

6s. 8d. the quarter; though in the middle of the 12th century common labourers got 3d. and carpenters 5d.,¹ when wheat was quoted at half that price, at 3s. and 3s. 6d. Again; about 1500, labourers' wages were fixed at 4d., which was the amount of a foot-soldier's pay in 1264; which pay, if Adam Smith conjecture rightly, was the usual wages of common labourers at the time². If so, in 232 years the wages of common labour continued nearly the same by law, though the prices of all things had trebled or quadrupled, which fed and supported the toiling population during that interval.

In 1562 wheat was exportable when it reached the price of 10s. the quarter; that is, when it was abundant and cheap³: yet in 1581 the wages of common labourers were *fixed* at 8d. a day. Compare wages and subsistence then and now—I mean in 1820; for the passing hour is the crisis of a mighty revolution in property and industry. I have compared the rise of wages with flesh-meat and wheat, and I am persuaded that the same correspondence will be found between wages and other articles of popular subsistence.

It also merits attention, that wages did not rise according to their nominal increase. In our early history the quantity of silver in the coin was reduced from time to time, till it fell to one-third; then this third

¹ A foot-man 4d. a horse-man 8d. State Trials, vol. i. p. 689.

² Wealth of Nations, vol. i. c. 8. p. 120.

³ I take this for granted. Thus it is mentioned that *wheat might be exported when it was cheap, by a license*. Anderson's Commerce, vol. i. p. 603.

was further reduced by the baseness of the coin. In all periods, I may say, during the authentic records of our history, the value of the coin has been diminishing by the reduction of the precious metals contained in it: besides, the metals themselves have been depreciated by their increase since the discovery of America. Bodin¹, when he wrote, calculated the increase of prices from the increased quantities of gold and silver, to be ten times their former amount: and Mr. Hallam² computes the price now, compared to those in 1423, as 15 times greater in the same denominated coin. This depreciation of money, it may be said, was followed with a rise in the wages of labour; and they would have further advanced, had not Parliament obstructed their progression. Yet it is doubtful if they would have equally advanced had Parliament been passive: and this is confirmed by the depreciation of the circulating medium and the rate of wages in our time³. The rich (that is the employers) have always an advantage in such changes; as the former can do better without workmen, than the workmen without wages. But suppose wages did rise, or were

¹ De Republica, liv. vi. c. 2. in 1028. ² vol. i. p. 75.

³ The Bank Restriction Bill had the same effect. Mr. Peel lamented "its peculiar severity upon the labouring and lower orders." Morn. Chron. May 25, 1819. The return to cash payments will have perhaps a contrary effect. Thus Hutchinson, in his History of Massachusetts Bay, mentions one advantage from paper money; "Upon the depreciation, from time to time, the wages of seamen, and the rate at which coasting vessels and others were hired, did not immediately rise in proportion of silver and exchange with London and other parts of the world."

disposed to rise, in proportion, and the employer was disposed to pay the difference of the depreciation of the coin, the Legislature prohibited the demand or payment of such wages: thus, by all means the labourer was defrauded of a fair compensation for his industry.

Many writers of various views and pursuits, I may say all (for the Quarterly Review contradicts itself¹), have declared their belief that in several periods wages have been disproportioned to the wants of the people. Sir F. Morton Eden², speaking of the rates of wages in the reign of James the First, said: "In these rates of wages the justices seem to have calculated that half the day's earnings were equivalent to diet for one day. In modern times, however, a much greater proportion of the daily pay of a labourer is appropriated to the purchase of the single article of bread." Dr. Price calculated, from Bishop Fleetwood's Book

¹ "The wages of labour, in point of fact, are higher in England at this time, when compared with the price of corn, than they are in any other country, and at least equal to what they were at any former period in this." No. xxiv. p. 423. Yet in the preceding Number it is said: "which (the recompense of labour) has certainly met with a very inadequate return during the greatest part of the last fifteen years, owing to the peculiar circumstances of the country with the operation of the poor laws." And this contradiction is heightened in the following page: "The average price of the quartern loaf, for the ten years preceding the last, was 14d., while the price of labour cannot be averaged higher than 14s., which is little more than half of what was necessary in order to place the labourer on the level of the labourer thirty years before." No. xxiii. p. 150.

² vol. i. p. 148. Hist. of the Poor Laws.

of prices, that though labour in husbandry had advanced from 1 to 4, corn had ascended to 8, and flesh-meat to 15.¹ Mr. Howlett says, that from 1746 to 1765 wheat was on the average 32s. the quarter; and after 1776, 45s.; though wages had not risen, from 1737 to 1787, more than from 10d. to 12d. He also said that the increased poor proceeded from the price of labour not advancing with the price of provisions². The Letter-writer to Mr. Peel³ insists that the diminution of wages far exceeded the progressive application for parish relief. Mr. Playfair says, that from 1775 wages of labour have increased a third, but bread and butchers' meat and other provisions have doubled in price⁴. Mr. Curwen holds the same proportions, though the sum of both is increased in his estimation⁵. Sir Egerton Brydges⁶, Mr. Strickland, the Monthly Review⁷, nay, more than all, Mr. Malthus (who said the poor are *the arbiters of their own destiny*) declares, that the comparative decline of wages has been of long duration; and he calculates that in the reign of Henry the Seventh⁸ a labourer by a day's wages could purchase a peck and three quarts of wheat; that from 1660 to 1720⁹

¹ Month. Rev. p. 72, 73—80.

² Ibid. Old Series, vol. lxxviii. p. 512.

³ pp. 84—90.

⁴ vol. i. p. 218. Editor of Wealth of Nations.

⁵ Morn. Chron. April 30, 1819.

⁶ Letters on the Poor Laws.

⁷ March 1821, p. 314.

⁸ Principles of Political Economy, p. 268.

⁹ Ibid. p. 284.

the same wages could purchase three-fourths of a peck; and that from 1720 to 1750¹ it could purchase only two-thirds of a peck of wheat. Mr. Malthus also says (I have already quoted his words), that from 1793 to 1814 the price of labour had been kept down by artificial means below the average price of corn. If this be true, and Ruggles² and a hundred others confirm the statement by their abortive expedients to counteract bad laws³, it follows, that as men have been obstructed in their endeavours by various statutes to obtain a competent price for their work, this also gives them a paramount right to be relieved in their necessities.

¹ Principles of Political Economy, p. 253.

² "The agricultural poor do not only not receive wages equal to their services, but also they are not paid in the same proportion to the prices of the necessities of life, as they were throughout the three first centuries:" that is, the 14th, 15th, 16th. Letters on the Poor, vol. i. p. 23. Again; he says that a poor family in the middle of the last century earning 20*l.* a year, was in a better situation than one now (about 1790) with 50*l.* Ibid. p. 125.

³ Lord Warwick, in 1800, proposed a maximum to be affixed to the sale of provisions; and he praised John Radford, who during the scarcity sold his grain at half the market price. Ann. Reg. 1821, p. 21. Mr. Whitbread said, that as the highest wages were fixable by the magistrate, he proposed that the magistrate should also determine the lowest. Ann. Reg. 1796, p. 49. Mr. Baring, in 1819, suggested a minimum in respect to weavers and spinners. Mr. Clarkson proposed that the wages of labourers should be fixed at the quarter sessions, and that every labourer should receive ten quartern loaves from his employer.

CHAPTER III.

The right of the poor to relief in consequence of apprenticeships—corporate laws, &c.

THE next cause of the people's right of support is apprenticeship. By the common law any one might exercise any trade he pleased¹; and if he acted unskilfully, the party injured had his action. By a law of one of the Edwards, the fabrication of cloth required an apprenticeship of seven years: this was repealed by Mary. However, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth all were prohibited from exercising any trade or mystery, who had not served seven years apprenticeship at least.—In Scotland apprenticeships are about three years duration; but in a legal view they are not necessary². Why the sages of Elizabeth's reign adopted a seven years preliminary, I don't know; the slaves of the Jews were bound only for six years³. Elizabeth manumitted bondmen⁴, and Sir T. Smith⁵ calls apprenticeship *vera servitus*. This law of

¹ Law Dict. vol. ii. p. 714.

² It appears that members of guilds, &c. in Scotland anciently were admitted in right of their workmanship, and not of apprenticeship, &c. Ann. Reg. 1792, part ii. p. 117.

³ Exod. chap. ii. ver. 2. Deut. chap. xv. ver. 12.

⁴ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 187.

⁵ p. 272. "Another kind of servitude or bondage is used in England for the necessitie thereof, which is called apprenticeship: but this is only by covenant and for a time, and during the time it is '*vera servitus*,'" &c. Whitelock says: Parliament ordained that "those who should enlist in the army should have the time of their service for their *freedom*." Memorials, p. 62.

Elizabeth, which was evidently intended to rule the whole kingdom, the judges have partially repealed, for their construction confines its operation to market-towns.

I do not object to apprenticeships, nor did Adam Smith, as has been ignorantly supposed¹. Apprenticeships are a necessary means of instruction; and it is advantageous to many to give time rather than money for their instruction:—but this should be regulated by circumstances, and consigned absolutely to the judgement and convenience of the parties.—There may also be exceptions: It is ruled that no one should be trusted with the sole care of a boat between Gravesend and Windsor² till sixteen years of age, if a waterman's son, and not till seventeen if he be the son of a landsman: and in France and Holland also, a pilot must be between twenty-five and sixty years of age, robust, and he must have sailed four years in the openings. These precautions may be right in such peculiar circumstances; but in general, no number of years should be made preliminary to the exercise of any profession. Yet Mirabeau intimates that physicians, surgeons, druggists should have a prescribed noviciate³. The suggestion is more suited to the *malade imaginaire* than to Mirabeau, a genius of paramount sagacity and consummate eloquence.

¹ Say—"de tous les arts mécaniques, le plus difficile, peut-être, est celui du jardinier et du laboureur; et c'est le seul qu'on permette partout d'exercer sans apprentissage." Tom. i. p. 232.

² Beawes's *Lex Mercatoria*, p. 112.

³ *Education Publique*, tom. v. p. 552. *Œuvres*.

Formerly the bishop of London licensed midwives¹. Are women worse served since the ecclesiastic has ceased to induct into that department? Yet men-midwives require diplomas; and not many years since an attempt was made, which had it succeeded in all its amplitude, no child could be born otherwise than by Act of Parliament. Supposing that years and a diploma ensure ability,—will this prevent quack-doctors? No; for England abounds with them. Besides, years and expense must be remunerated with a large fee. Should none but such men practise, the people must be excluded from medical advice. To make seven years a qualification is as absurd, in my apprehension, as Dr. Last's pretence to infallibility because he was the seventh son of a seventh son. Even length of time in studying an art does not secure ability: Dr. Beddoes, in 1808, died at Clifton of an affection of the lungs, the nature of which it is supposed he mistook, though during the greater part of his professional life he had been particularly engaged in the study of that class of diseases². Years are commonly added to secure the elders in the profession from junior competition, and expense is superadded to extend the prerogative of age to the richest³.

Yet to time and expense, relegation or expatriation is sometimes superadded. Thus no native of Tonga—hear this, ye doctors!—is permitted to practise surgery, who has not sojourned some time at the Figi

¹ *Strafford's Letters*, vol. i. p. 336.

² *Month. Review*, Jan. 11, p. 130.

³ See *Johnson's Isle of Man*, p. 125.

islands, one hundred leagues from Tonga. So to practise law, a native Irishman, beside many preparatory years of supposed study at home or abroad, must eat so many dinners in London during two years,—as Venetian ships were forced to touch at Trieste after Venice was betrayed to Austria. Travelling for knowledge is good; and in Germany artizans make tours to improve themselves in their profession: it is customary in other countries among enterprising individuals: but—to make vagrancy a preliminary is impertinent.

A consequence of the law of apprenticeship is the order that no one shall follow two professions. I don't know whether this was the case in Egypt in respect to physicians, where, according to Herodotus¹, each attended distinctively to a particular disease;—one to the eyes, others to the head, teeth, bowels;—in that happy country, where the division of labour was so elaborate, that if a patient died, and the physician had departed from the remedies prescribed in the sacred books, he was punished with death². In Greece, from the scholar's oath prefixed to the works of Hippocrates and praised indiscriminately by Bayle, it would appear that each proficient had his official walk, who was sworn not to interfere with the pro-

¹ Euterpe, c. 4. Division of labour is good, but when the law directs it, it is absurd. As medicine and magic are akin, possibly to ancient orders we may attribute the reserve of those who fascinate serpents; those, Haselquist informs us, never touch other poisonous animals, scorpions, lizards, &c.

² Diod. Siculus, lib. ii. p. 136.

session adopted by another—*pugnatum est arte mendi*¹. This exclusive property extended to other arts and professions. Demosthenes says it was the law at Athens that no one should exercise two crafts². Plato adopted this in his laws, saying that no one can expertly exercise two arts³; therefore a copper-smith must not be an architect, but every artist shall exercise one, and a single art. So at Rome, according to the adage, *Satis in re una consumere curam*.

It is true that a man will probably excell in one rather than in two or three professions; but why should all be confined by law to a single trade, or to one branch of it?—this cannot secure ability. Besides, such injunctions may cramp superior genius, and offend the industry of the people. Yet has England carried this absurdity to its height. Thus, a brewer could not be a cooper, nor a Quaker a currier⁴, nor a currier a tanner⁵, nor a tanner a shoemaker; nor could dyers of worsted calender worsted⁶: so

¹ lib. vii. v. 526.

² *μη δυο τεχνας μετεχειναι*. In Timocratem.

³ De Legib. lib. viii. p. 917.

⁴ No Quaker (by a law in 1719) should be taken as apprentice by the curriers' society, on pain of forfeiting 100*l*. Month. Rev. vol. iv. p. 31.

⁵ A currier in Aberdeen makes thermometers and large reflecting telescopes. Dupin—Phillips's Voyages, &c. p. 4. Suppose the English laws respecting the division of labour were potent in Scotland, this currier dare not make telescopes.—There is or was a law in Scotland, that to practise merchandise a man must renounce his craft. Anderson's Commerce, vol. i. p. 643.

⁶ Yet such is the contradiction in error in the English law, that no one should buy yarn or wool but those who make it into

apothecaries could not be physicians¹; and this when barbers were surgeons². In short, by the 37th of Edward III. c. 6, artificers and handicraftsmen were directed to confine themselves to one trade only, in order that they might excell therein³. In England also a man cannot renounce one profession to serve another, even after the servitude of a second apprenticeship, as should he unfortunately be a Protestant clergyman. Thus Mr. Highmore was prevented from practising as an advocate in Doctors' Commons, according to the sovereign dispensing power of the Archbishop of Canterbury, by the canon law⁴: as was Horne Tooke prevented from practising in the four Courts, and who was excluded from a seat in Parliament, by a special law of that very Parliament in which he was a representative.

The laws of apprenticeship occasion contests of various kinds. In 1813, 32,000 masters and journeymen petitioned the House of Commons, complaining that many obtained work in London who had not served seven years apprenticeship. That those who had paid the price should be jealous of others who obtained the meed without the purchase, is not

cloth; nor to take wool from sheep skins, unless they made them into leather or parchment.

¹ The French law in Provence said a physician should not be an apothecary. Du Moulin, tom. ii. p. 142.

² All the musicians belonging to the temples are taken from the cast of Barbers, one of the lowest among the Sudras. Dubois, p. 406.

³ Reeves's Hist. English Law, vol. ii. p. 399.

⁴ See what Warburton says of the Canon Law: Letter 81.

extraordinary,—but why is this code continued? it causes division and dissention among men of the same profession, while it actually injures the public and the art. Those who suffer the longest apprenticeship, the charity children, are generally the least efficient; and where casts are established—an aggravated apprenticeship—invention is unknown. Were apprenticeships strictly enforced, Brindley would have continued a millwright, and Arkwright a barber.

The next obstructions to the industry of the labouring people are corporations, boroughs, burghs. They at first, perhaps, checked the tyranny of great men, and in some cases they afforded a refuge to bondmen¹: but being an expedient, like most half-measures they recoiled on the people, and increased the evils they were intended to controul. It was insisted that towns should have a prerogative; as labour in them, it was said, must be more expensive than labour in the country²: in many cases they took mercantile possession of the surrounding territory³. The towns being

¹ By the laws of the burrows (c. 17.), any bondman, except the king's, who dwelt for a year and a day within a burrow, was entitled to freedom. Chalmers's Caledonia, vol. i. p. 724. The burghs were Berwick, Roxburg, Edynburg, and Stryvelin. p. 726.

² "No one ever advanced that the industry carried on in towns, where living is dear, ought to suffer competition with that of the country, where living is cheap: I mean for the direct consumption of the inhabitants." Steuart's Political Economy, book ii. c. 23.

³ "The very principles," says Chalmers, (Caledonia, vol. i. p. 78,) "upon which the burghs (Scottish) were formed, was exclusion and monopoly. Each community tried to obtain a

so honoured, each particular profession started its peculiar monopoly, and a few men as masters ruled the whole: so that when Hobbes called "corporations so many lesser commonwealths in the bowels of the greater, like worms in the entrails of the natural man¹," he morally illustrated their evil. Holland was ignorant of guilds and corporations in its distinguished prosperity; and de Witt² condemns their introduction as injurious: he says "that liberty of trade, freedom of public worship, hospitality to strangers, first made Holland rich and populous. Then there was no dear-bought city freedom to gain a livelihood³. But this was altered in 1618; certain religions were subjected to taxes—the fisheries were impeded by ordinances⁴," &c. And thus, as he attributed the opulence and energy of Holland to perfect freedom, he referred its decline to corporations, companies, and their accompanying restrictions.

The injury of corporations is extreme. Take one instance of a corporation in London—the Fishmongers. Mr. Tull, the son of Jethro Tull⁵, attempted to supply London and Oxford with fish at reduced prices:—this was defeated by the fishmongers. Another attempt was made in 1760 to supply the poor of

district, within which it might alone carry on its traffic by excluding other towns: the burghers of Dumbarton tried to exclude the men of Glasgow from trading in Dumbartonshire, till Alexander the Third interposed."

¹ Leviathan, part ii. c. 29.

² Interest of Holland, part i. c. 17. ³ Ibid, c. 15.

⁴ Ibid, c. 18.

⁵ Ann. Register, 1761, p. 167.

London with fish at a cheap rate¹:—this also was defeated by the same body. And they have repeatedly rendered ineffectual similar efforts to relieve the laborious in dearths and scarcities. Bobbers and shorers (a sort of middlemen between the poor and the fisherman) who attend Billingsgate, it is said, have been repressed²: but the fishmongers continue to prevail against charity and the laws³,—because the law which made them a company, annulled, in respect to their well-doing, the authority of the legislature.

It is absurd to permit corporations to continue.—Every profession has an *esprit de corps*; but by casting professions into particular guilds and companies that spirit is heightened, and it proceeds till it becomes dominant and irresistible. Each man favours himself; those of the same profession, and even those of certain portions of it, would uphold their fractional share in the craft, to the ruin of others and the injury of the state. In 1653 there was a petition of the ancient hackney coachmen in London against the multitudes of hackney coaches⁴. Here we see the *elder brethren* on the alert. In 1763 a petition was presented against the multitude of coaches and caravans

¹ Ann. Reg. 1760, p. 165. See also year 1762, p. 145; year 1763, p. 161. And yet, while their deeds were tolerated, premiums were granted for the delivery of large quantities of herrings at Billingsgate. Ann. Register, 1768, p. 176.

² Morn. Chron. Nov. 9, 1820.

³ As that they should purchase fish at sea. Law Dict. vol. ii. p. 67: and by the 29 of Geo. II. that they should not purchase more fish than their trade required.

⁴ An order was made for an act to redress this. Whitelock, p. 548.

about London, because "they hinder the breed of watermen, who are the nursery for seamen, and they the bulwark of the kingdom." Thus the watermen, had they the power, would have made boats (as in Venice) the means of communication, and to effect this perfectly, have substituted canals for streets. Has not the shipping interest, though not a corporate body, imposed monstrous taxes in various ways on all the people, because sailors are the bulwark of the kingdom? How had humanity to struggle against the slave-trade¹, because it affected the cursed sordidness of ship-owners and slave-dealers! So very sensitive were these commercial gentlemen, that when Cumberland's "West Indian" was announced, those concerned in the trade, fearing that the drama should be a libel on their calling, conspired, and attended the theatre, to prevent its representation².

But the greater evil of corporations is, that while they act against the community, they inflict all sort of violence against the great body of their own trade and profession: and it is most melancholy to think that those masters are often the most unkind, who have themselves drudged through the lowest rank of industry³. The law protects the masters against the

¹ Thus the Guinea trade was held to be a nursery for sailors; though from the muster-rolls of 350 slave-ships of Liverpool and Bristol, having on board 12,263 sailors, 2,645 were lost in twelve months. Ann. Register, 1791, p. 92.

² Cumberland's Memoirs, p. 248.

³ Nam nil asperius humili, qui surgit in altum. I have been told that the most hostile to liberating sizars from attending at the fellow-commoners' table in Trinity College Dublin, were the fellows who had been sizars.

journeymen. This is most vicious:—the law, if it interfered, should support the weak against the strong; therefore it should defend journeymen against masters. Yet this is neither agreeable to English law or English equity: for we scarcely find an intimation in favour of the working classes, except the 2d and 3d of Philip and Mary, which begins, "Whereas the rich clothiers do oppress the weavers¹," &c.: and then the clothiers are ordered to pay them so much a year. A few other laws may be added: as that men are to be paid in money, and not in goods²—that children shall not be worked at night³, &c. which shows a good, but in my mind a meddling, disposition. With such paltry exceptions, the whole code tends to confirm the strong in their strength, and to cripple the enfeebled.

The reign of George the Third multiplied vexations of this kind. In 1768 a great want of provisions compelled the labouring population to demand increased wages: yet they were foiled by the law and the magistracy. Many penal laws have been enacted against the poor combining to raise their wages⁴; but none against combinations to depress wages, though every rich man is in himself a combination. In 1810

¹ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 133.

² 13th Geo. II. 8th Geo. II: Servants in Scotland not to be paid their wages in salt. Law Dict. vol. ii. p. 639.

³ That, it is admitted by Mr. Smith and Mr. Peel, is defeated. So is the former; as various petitions in 1820 were presented from Staffordshire that wages should be paid in money. Morn. Chron. July 7, 1820.

⁴ Fielding, Increase of Robbers, p. 84.

the journeymen printers of the *Times* newspaper were convicted of a conspiracy, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Newgate¹. Thus, lately Justice Bayley said "that combination was worse than many kinds of felony." And Baron Wood, in passing sentence on James Wood, declared that "conspiracies were very mischievous; and if they were allowed there would be no commerce." But these worthy judges never discovered any evil in conspiracies to lower wages; because masters, landlords, legislators, have combined and conspired to depress wages. Combining either way is merely a contest between wages and profits. The rich and strong are the employers, who consider that low wages are their gain; and the legislators and magistracy combine with the strong; and they, with Judge Bayley and Baron Wood and their fellows, of course hallow their own deeds. Thus Government truckles to underling tradesmen; and the bondman has changed his name, but not his condition. Rich men can always command the poor man's work; the poor man must eat, and his wages are his means of living.

The conduct of the French should direct us. The Republic passed a law, pronouncing it criminal to raise or lower wages: this showed equity at least. After this imperfect step, the legislature had learned that Turgot², one of the wisest of his age, abolished, when minister, various corporations, &c.—his biographer Condorcet says, with the most beneficial results. In

¹ Ann. Register, 1810, p. 293.

² Life of Turgot, p. 115, Engl. version.

consequence, a mortal blow was given to the whole system in 1789¹. In 1791 the corporations which confined the industry of individuals (and the ordinances to this effect filled thirty volumes) were disfranchised²; though afterward an ineffectual attempt was made to re-establish two of them.—This perfect liberty, says Mons. Chaptal³, has accelerated the progress of the arts. Thus we have the strongest reasons for the abolition of companies, corporations, apprenticeships, and of all preliminary obstructions—general reasoning, equity, the injury which their adoption inflicted on the industry and commerce of Holland, according to de Witt, and the benefit of their extinction in France, according to the testimony of all interested in the welfare of the nation. Every man should work when, and where⁴, and at what occupation he pleases: his work is his examination and his diploma; every man should buy and sell labour at what price he can obtain; and to make laws against combinations or conspiracies to raise wages, is to conspire to depress wages and to distress the people.

¹ Les assemblées ne pourront se former par metiers, professions ou corporations, mais par quartiers ou arrondissement—passed 1789. Code Français, partie i. p. 162.

² Month. Rev. vol. lxxxvi. p. 488.

³ La suppression des jurandes et maîtrises a encore puissamment contribué à accélérer les progrès des arts. tom. ii. p. 41.

⁴ At Fond every stranger is permitted to settle there if he brings a certificate of his good behaviour. "Here," says Coxe (Letter 46 on Switzerland), "there is no apprenticeship, and industry exerts herself untaxed."

CHAPTER IV.

The right of the people to relief—the law of settlement—impressment—crimping, &c.

THE next grievance I shall mention for authorizing the relief of the laborious poor is the law of settlement. This law, which declared a free-born Briton, in respect to the poor-rates, a prisoner at large, was enacted the second year after the Restoration¹. The preamble of the 13th and 14th of Charles the Second states: "Whereas poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavour to settle themselves where there is the best stock and largest commons and wastes to build cottages," &c. Thus, the reason here given for the law of settlement is conclusive against it: for the preamble declares, by implication, that the poor should live where there were many people and little stock. Yet such is the submission of mankind to enactments, that Ruggles² says, This act was a useful addition to the 43d of Elizabeth: though this law in effect condemned all men to poverty, whose parish did not afford them means of employment.

Having made men fixtures, the law (or the subterfuge of law) forced them, magician-like,

... to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curl'd clouds³—

¹ Scarlett's Speech, Times, Jan. 1, 1822.

² Letters on the Poor Laws, vol. i. p. 122.

³ Prospero and Ariel—Tempest.

For the only limit to their movements is the circumference of the world. I allude to impressment, the most outrageous of all conscriptions. This complicates many evils, of which slavery is among the least enormous; for men, who have been worn down by long voyages to the North and South, are hurried away in consequence to be shot or consumed at the opposite extremity of the earth: while others, who have made a favourable bargain to navigate a peaceful ship, are seized and sent to work the royal navy at the statute price of service. On some occasions the statute of labourers makes part of the marine code. Thus in 1741 it was enacted, "Whereas sailors, taking advantage of the present war with Spain, have insisted upon extravagant wages, &c.; no seaman in the merchant-service shall be paid more than 35s. per month¹." What multiplied and aggravated iniquity! Suppose it had been enacted, "Whereas landlords, taking advantage of the high prices of grain, have raised their rents, &c.; and that the moneyed interest, taking advantage of the want of money, demand extraordinary interest for loans to Government,—We enact, that rents shall not exceed &c.—and that money shall be lent at three per cent." Had the Parliament done any thing affecting land or money, how would Lords and Commons, and the Stock Exchange, and the moneyed men, have stormed! They would have roared to the crack of doom.

But these diabolical statutes against the poor man's industry and liberty passed with little comment and

¹ Anderson's Commerce, vol. iii. p. 503.

no opposition, because the poor have no power in making or executing the laws: and with these outrages the rich and the landed dare to say, the people should continue prostrate at the mercy of their oppressors. Yet until political power be common property, sailors and their families so tormented and robbed have a right to relief:—and observe, that there is a stoppage from the pay of sailors in merchantmen, to entitle them to pensions; yet pensions *they do not receive*¹. Considering the fraud on the sailors, their impressment, with balloting, trepanning and crimping soldiers,—so many of the people so cheated and reduced, have also a right to support, nor are they inconsiderable. The *Edinburgh Society* for the relief of paupers state, that those who came principally under their notice, were widows, with families, of soldiers killed in battle or abroad²: all these derelict by the outrages of state policy have a right to support.

CHAPTER V.

The people have a right to relief from the taxes on their necessities—tithes—corn laws, &c.

THE next ingredients in the right of the poor to re-

¹ By the 7th and 8th of William, 6d. a month was to be deducted from the wages of seamen in the merchant service, who were in consequence to receive pensions from Greenwich hospital, in the same manner as sailors in the navy. This they pay, and obtain no requital.

² See Supplement to the Enc. Britannica, word "*Beggar*."

liefare, the taxes. No position is more clear than that the lowest class of labourers should be exempted from taxation; because their wages seldom exceed the means of affording them a rude maintenance. In the time of the commonwealth of Rome the proletarii were exempt from taxes; and during the empire, "that gold was considered base which was wrung from the commonalty¹." Yet, has the English Government not only taxed the poor and the poorest, but the aristocracy (or rather the oligarchy) has habitually relieved the rich at the expense of the poor. Walpole exonerated the land of one shilling in the pound, imposing a tax on salt. To supply the deficiency of the revenue, taxes on soap, candles, leather, tobacco, &c.—a labyrinth of taxation,—were imposed, which fell with tenfold weight on the poor. The people have been sacrificed to the rich, not incidentally but directly. The necessities of the people were lately assessed considerably, in order to secure a sinking fund, as they called the mockery. That Parliament which would not endure 5 per cent. taxation on the rich—that is, on themselves—authorized the levy of three millions of taxes principally on the poor, to counter-secure the fund-holders wallowing in opulence. And have not those, so taxed, a right to a drawback from the funds supplied by their industry? Enough of this topic at present: I shall resume in the next book the subject of taxes.

To taxes, succeeds tithe, which Paley truly calls the most noxious *of all* taxes. My reasoning, how-

¹ Evagrius Scholasticus, lib. v. c. 18.

ever, at present does not affect the vice of the imposition—that deserves infinite consideration. I speak of the right of the people to relief from their robbery by the clergy, who in their *Reformation* held fast for themselves the poor man's share of the tithe. Tithe was divided into four parts. One fourth was granted to Bishops, to exercise hospitality; and the Epistle read at their consecration requires them to "be given to hospitality;"—not an interchange of feasts with the opulent; but truly that their abundance may supply others' want. This is not denied; but it is left undone. The ecclesiastics do not flout the Gospel with the Rev. Mr. Malthus; their sin is only that of omission.

But the Good Bishop, with a meeker air,
Admits and leaves them Providence's care.

Besides, another fourth of the tithe was set apart absolutely and entirely for the poor at the institution of the assessment¹. This the clergy hold, and there is no remedy; for though *nullum tempus occurrit ecclesie*², the people and the poor are precluded from all rights, even when transiently despoiled.

The laws of bounty and prohibition respecting the food of the people would alone give them an uncontrollable right to relief. To gratify landlords, bounties on export were granted in order to raise the price

¹ Paolo Sarpi De Beneficiis, c. 7; and Bishop Fleetwood's Church Government, p. 98.

² Thus lands leased off by bishops of Ireland, after a great length of time were resumed by commissions from the Crown. See Strafford's Letters, vol. i. p. 123 et seq.

of grain at home, or uphold its price abroad. If any question the motive for the bounty on the export of corn, none can doubt the object of the prohibition; and it operated powerfully during the vitiated currency: for the average price of wheat from 1814 to 1820 was 78s. the quarter¹; yet during this period wheat might have been bought in the Baltic for half that amount. Then I aver, that as the law raised the price of wheat on the industrious poor, they were entitled in their distress to claim assistance to the extent of the legal enhancement, from those who were iniquitously favoured at their expense.

This claim is of ancient date. In the reign of Edward the Fourth (in 1463) grain was not importable if it did not exceed 6s. 8d.; while now grain is altogether prohibited, for the permission to import implies famine. Yet all this is piously and patriotically imagined. Bishop Watson says²; "Poverty is a most necessary ingredient in society, without which nations and communities could not exist in a state of civilization." Paley says: "The wisdom and goodness of God having made both rich and poor:"—adding, that the condition most favourable to the population of a country and to general happiness is, "that of a laborious frugal people ministering to the demands of an opulent luxurious nation." Most civilized Bishop! Excellent Archdeacon! What could you not after these dogmas prove in Law, Morals, or Theology? Yet the whole policy and laws of England aim at this

¹ Mr. F. Robinson's Speech, Morn. Chron. May 31, 1820.

² Life, p. 270.

desideratum : for the laws respecting wages, apprenticeships, corporations, settlements, vagrancy, impressment, taxation, bounty and prohibition—without extending the schedule—tend directly to reduce the wages of the laborious and increase the expense of their living.

Under this cumulative pressure and complicated spoliation, Mr. Malthus insists that no one has a right to subsistence if his labour will not purchase it¹. "Begone!" said the Professor, "you have no business to be there." The natives of Hindostan act under this impression. Mrs. Graham says², "that when a man becomes infirm or has a dangerous illness, if his relations have the slightest interest in his death, they take him to the banks of the river, set his feet in the water, and stuffing his ears and mouth with mud leave him to perish, which he seldom does without a hard struggle"—for he has no right to be there. Mr. Malthus also condemned the gentry and clergy as criminal and seditious³, for advocating in famine the

¹ His words are: "There is one right which man has generally been thought to possess, which I am confident he neither does nor can possess;—a right to subsistence when his labour will not fairly purchase it: our laws say indeed he has that right." vol. ii. p. 307.—He sneakingly contradicts this saying: "The sole reason why I say the poor have no claim of right to support is, the physical impossibility of relieving this progressive population," &c. But he had said, "They have no right to the smallest portion of food, and in fact have no business to be where they are." vol. ii. p. 341.

² p. 148.

³ With equal consistency he says, "Though we have often reason to fear that our benevolence may not take the most beneficial direction, we must never apprehend there will be too much of it in society." vol. ii. p. 450.

cause of the poor. He says, that to assist the children of improvidence is overweening vanity, and an attempt to counteract God's promise of visiting the sins of the parents upon the children. Miserable teacher! the later announcement declares, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father!"

Yet this man and his followers say nothing of the minions of the aristocracy and the boroughmongers; or, if noticed, they are hailed as the benefactors of industry and production: these must be provided for, past, present, and to come. This minister has 6000*l.* a year, and on his dismissal from office he must have 3000*l.* a year; the law ordains it. Others having had less salaries, obtain less enormous pensions, and so on: for, according to our glorious system, the more a minister has had in office, the more he must have out of office²; as the longer he has been employed with full pay, the greater is his claim to a large retiring pension³. To enrich placemen, is the politic constitution of Church and State. Mr. Perceval said that the tellership of the Exchequer, and the like, were offices legally within the gift of the Crown, and that they were *vested interests* in the holders. Mr.

¹ Ezekiel xviii. 20.

² A person called Litchfield enjoyed his office for thirty years; he then retired on two-thirds of his salary: the greater officers having 6000*l.* &c. are entitled to pensions of 3000*l.*, if two years in office, &c. So secretaries of the navy, &c.

³ Sir C. Long stated, that the reason of large pensions to accountants was, that they had received salaries to the amount of four or five thousand a year. Times, March 31, 1821. To all this there are double superannuations. British Traveller, Feb. 23, 1822.

Ponsonby concurred¹; and he also denied "that the State acting for the public good might interfere with the emoluments of office." Again, Mr. Goulburn² considered it the greatest cruelty and abuse to deprive men of places in the colonies where they did not reside, while Mr. Stephen³ declared that offices held at pleasure were *vested rights*.

Yet the poor shall be denied a *right* to relief in actual misery, after having exhausted their lives in drudgery of all kinds. It is the higher orders, the idle, the salaried, who are to be cherished without measure; politic sympathy is reserved for them⁴;—they are to be specially secured from occasional want or eventual distress⁵. Oh, says George Rose in his speech on Savings Banks, in 1816, the labouring peo-

¹ Annual Register, 1812, p. 72.

² Ibid. 1814, p. 109.

³ Ibid. p. 110.

⁴ "In what manner it affects the labouring part of the community is shown by the state of the manufacturing population and by the poor-laws. Yet it will be found that the miseries which arise from this cause in the higher classes are greater in degree, and in their tendency more dangerous to the commonwealth." Quart. Rev. No. xliii. p. 59.

⁵ Even Mr. Banks refuses this doctrine; he does not see why a young man going into a Government office should command a provision for life, any more than if he had embarked on any other course. Times, March 12, 1822. Mark how the common Turks judged. A scarcity and insurrection afflicted the camp at Jaffa; yet, says Dr. Waithman (p. 206), in the midst of their discontent they were willing the English should have barley, because they were good friends; and that the horses which drew the guns should also have provender: but they denied that any part of their store should be issued to the great officers of state, as they could make the requisite purchases.

ple can save I don't know how much weekly. This very man, who, while he brought up the Mendicity Report, the professed object of which was *to repress scandalous and abominable imposture*, enjoyed emoluments to the amount of 20,000*l.* a year: and yet, after all, this arch-impostor left his son an immense charge as sinecurist on the nation. This discourse in the House of Commons, outdid a scene in Ben Jonson's play, in which, to promote picking pockets, one of the gang mounts a stool and vociferates against cut-purses. But George Rose was rich, and he was a placeman. "The horse-leech hath two daughters, Give! Give!" The remark is as old as poetry, that the greatest consumers of another's means are most apt to refuse the miserable relief:

Thou wouldst not grant the poor a grain of salt
From thy own board—who at another's fed
So nobly, canst thou not spare a crust to me?¹

No, the most rapacious are the most heartless—the idlest and greatest pensioner is always the most austere economist, when the laborious and needy solicit assistance. Yet the poor's right to relief in England is absolute and paramount: the corn law alone would confirm this right: men may live without clothing, and without houses as the Troglodytæ²; but they cannot live without food, and the law and the law-makers have laboured to enhance the food of Englishmen. Such corrupt landlords and legislators, to escape the

¹ Odyss. b. xvii.

² Troglodytarum more sub terram habitantes.

curse of murder, should amply support the poor,—“the bread of the needy is their life: he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood¹.” *Dies me deficiet si vellem paupertatis causam defendere*².

¹ Eccles. xxxiv. 22.

² Cicero, t. iv. p. 192.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

*Different petty schemes suggested for reducing the poor-rates—
Chief causes of the people's poverty—the royal expenditure and
example—the ecclesiastical establishment—the increased nobility
—the corruption of the House of Commons—greediness of mini-
sters—courtiers—military establishment, &c.*

THOUGH I have, in the last chapter, advocated the right of the British poor to assistance, as a partial indemnity for the ample funds of which they are iniquitously deprived, yet I reiterate that my testimony in favour of the poor's rights has no disposition to favour the poor-laws. These laws tend to make “the poor,” instead of a term of tenderness and commiseration, a name of reproach. Demosthenes¹ said sarcastically, that the public money distributed to the indigent is either praised or blamed as persons are rich or poor: but the poor-laws are offensive to those who give and to those who receive. The Greek proverb, that “What is necessary is grievous²,” applies pointedly to them. Enforced charity is a contradic-

¹ De Repub. Ord., Opera, p. 113.

² Aristot. Ethic. ad Eud. lib. ii. c. 6, p. 209.