

THE INQUIRY.

PART I.

PETWORTH—WESTHAMPNETT—DROXFORD.

The COMPLAINTS against the working of the new system of the administration of relief to the poor, as produced in the evidence of labourers, farmers, clergymen, and others, resident within the Unions of Petworth, Westhampnett, and Droxford, have been classified by us, and reduced to the following heads:—

- § 1. ALLOWANCES TO ABLE-BODIED LABOURERS—their discontinuance, including the withholding of relief in the shape of *parish employ*.
- § 2. CASES OF EMERGENCY—allegations of neglect in, and the alleged general difficulty of obtaining relief.
- § 3. MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE OUT-DOOR POOR—alleged insufficiency.
- § 4. THE AGED AND INFIRM—alleged neglect.
- § 5. THE WORKHOUSE—loss of liberty in—separation of sexes, and of children from adults—diet—the sick—funerals.
- § 6. BOARDS OF GUARDIANS—that a discretionary power is wanted—that the poor have no tribunal to appeal to—that publicity is wanted.

CENTRAL BOARD—that their orders are imperative, and not adapted to local circumstances—that their control is unnecessary.

It is our intention in this Part, to follow out, in the order here given, the complaints against the new system, whether developed in general allegations or in particular examples.

§ 1. ALLOWANCES TO ABLE-BODIED LABOURERS—their discontinuance, including the withholding of relief in the shape of *parish employ*.

In the Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, dated 17th August, 1836, the following passage occurs, on the subject of withholding out-door relief to able-bodied labourers:—

“In the Poor Law Amendment Bill, as first submitted to the consideration of Parliament, a clause was inserted which directed that all relief to able-bodied paupers out of a workhouse should cease on the 1st of July, 1835. In the progress of the Bill through Parliament this clause was withdrawn, and the Commissioners were charged with the important duty of fixing the time when in each Union that provision (which formed the first recommendation of the Commissioners of Poor Law Inquiry, and is, in fact, the main object of the Poor Law Amendment Act) should take effect.

“We have not ceased to bear in mind this very important part of our functions, and we have carefully watched the progress made in the districts first formed into Unions, for the purpose of ascertaining at what time and to what extent the provision might be enforced in them. To many persons it may, we fear, be a matter of surprise as well as of regret, that we have as yet applied the rule prohibiting out-door relief to the able-bodied only to a very limited extent; although some Unions anticipated our wishes, and of their own authority withheld all relief out of the workhouse to able-bodied paupers. With respect to other rural Unions, the order has, after investigation and report by our Assistant Commissioners, been issued by ourselves. Several of the best managed Unions in Kent and Sussex, and in Berks, Oxford, and Gloucestershire, were evidently in a state to admit of this regulation when applied to able-bodied male paupers only; and availing ourselves of the season of the year, and other favourable circumstances, we deemed it expedient to apply the rule in question successively to the following Unions:

“In Sussex, eighteen; namely,

Westhampnett,	Newhaven,	Lewes,
Westbourne,	Battle,	East Grinstead,
Midhurst,	Hailsham,	Cuckfield,
Thakeham,	Uckfield,	Chailey,
Eastbourne,	Horsham,	Ticehurst,
West Firle,	Petworth,	Hastings.

The Report then recites the names of Unions in other counties, making in all 64.

“It is satisfactory to us to be able to state, that objections to the carrying of the rule into effect have been raised in three Unions only; namely, in Petworth, Uckfield, and Ticehurst.

“No doubt can be entertained that it was the deliberate intention of

Parliament, in framing the Poor Law Amendment Act, that all out-door relief to the able-bodied should cease at the earliest period that it could safely, and with propriety, be put an end to; and the question which we have successively to decide as to each Union is, 'Whether this time may be fairly deemed to have arrived?' And as the work-houses are sufficient for the paupers with respect to whom the difficulty is said to occur, in the three last-named Unions, what time less unfavourable than the present can be expected to arrive for carrying into effect the undoubted purpose of the Legislature? Our adherence, therefore, to the rule which we have issued, though in some measure at variance with the opinions and wishes of the Guardians of these Unions, will, we trust, be deemed consistent with the strict line of our duty."

Out of 64 Unions in which this most salutary rule, the cornerstone of the Poor Law Amendment Act, has been applied, objections have been raised against the rule from three Unions only—three of the most pauperized districts of one of the most pauperized counties in England. In the instance of two out of these three Unions, the case of the objectors is fully and fairly before the public in the evidence on the recent inquiry. The opposition to the rule, and the evasion of the rule, which took place in the Petworth Union, in great measure produced the inquiry; and we think that it is a subject of sincere congratulation to the lovers of truth, that the prejudices and the fallacies which produced the opposition and the evasion, have been completely examined; and, as it appears to us, put down for ever.

The Rev. Mr. Sockett's opinion as to the injury to the able-bodied labourers in the parish of Petworth, is as follows:—

"My general impression is, that in the way in which it (the Poor Law Amendment) has been administered in the Petworth Union, it has been very injurious to the deserving labouring man with a large family."—[9.]

"With respect to the labouring man with a wife and a large family, even mercifully as it has been administered in the Petworth Union, it has produced a great deal of misery."—[9.]

"In what respect do you think it has produced a great deal of misery?—A labouring man at the present wages, the out-door relief being taken off, cannot keep his family in anything beyond bread; in many instances he has been obliged to cease to keep his pig, which is a great support to a labourer, and in few instances can he at all pay rent."—[10.]

"Upon the whole, do you consider that there has been a reduction of the poor-rate, but a great additional misery to the poor?—I say decidedly, to a labouring man with a large family; that is the ground I take most decidedly. I have thought over my parish very carefully, and I have thought over the case of a number of labouring men whom I know, and I cannot think of one who is benefited, and I can think of

many who are injured. I speak of a labouring man with a large family; I confine myself to that."—[107.]

Mr. Foard, an inhabitant of Petworth, and a member of the Board of Guardians there, is of the same opinion with Mr. Sockett:—

"Will you state to the Committee generally your impression of what has been the effect of the administration of the new poor-law at Petworth?—It has been very injurious to men with large families; very oppressive, I might have said.

"In what respects?—I consider that five children and upwards cannot be supported at the price of corn now by a man's earnings of 9s. or 10s. a week."—[345;6.]

"Will you state the effect that you think has been produced by the denial of this out-door relief?—The effect upon the men with large families of five children and upwards has been, that they cannot pay their rents; they are naked, and almost in a state of starvation.

"What wages then are they taking?—Ten shillings is the highest weekly wages."—[471-2.]

Mr. Sockett is of opinion that for the prevention of these evils, the out-door relief to the able-bodied should have been taken off by degrees, and according to circumstances. The opinion of Mr. Ellis, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Guardians, is more explicit:—

"Is your suggestion, with regard to this out-door relief, that it should be administered by a scale in proportion to the number of children?—Every individual case, I should fancy, the board should take into consideration; what a man's wages are; if there are any other advantages that he has; and then they would consider what number of children he could keep, giving him an allowance for the remainder.

"Then you would consider it advisable to continue the old system, putting a premium on the number of children?—For a period only.

"For how long?—It is impossible to say for how long; but if the thing were to go on more gently, I think the Act would come into effect without the labourer feeling so much as he does at the present moment."—[1770-2.]

It is a remarkable fact connected with the administration of the Poor Law Amendment Act in the Petworth Union, that since the issuing of the order of the Commissioners for withholding out-door relief from the able-bodied, the local authorities have used every means within their power, direct and indirect, to continue the old system of allowances, regulated by scales of the number of children compared with wages. In several instances the Petworth Board of Guardians have been in correspondence with the Poor Law Commissioners upon these subjects; in others they have acted upon their own responsibility. The following is an extract of a letter from their Secretary to the Petworth Board, dated 22nd November, 1836:—

"The Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales have under their consideration your letter of the 17th instant, stating that there are several able-bodied labourers in the Petworth Union who, on account of their large families, and being out of employment for a short interval previous to coppice-cutting, are considered by the Board of Guardians as being in urgent necessity, on which ground they have ordered them out-door relief in kind. A list of those labourers so relieved, with two gallons of flour each, accompanied your letter. The Commissioners are satisfied of the right intentions of the Board of Guardians in so ordering relief to those individuals; but they cannot consider such cases as coming fairly within the designation of 'cases of emergency,' which would alone justify the administration of out-door relief. If all masters were to discharge their labourers at each short interval between the usual periods of agricultural employment, and if the Union was then to afford support to such labourers, it would, in fact, be a revival of the old practice of relief in aid of wages, and would effectually prevent that natural adaptation of earnings to the amount necessary for the labourer's support, which will otherwise take place, and which will secure an adequate supply of labour for the master, as well as an adequate maintenance for the labourer throughout the whole year."

The Union, however, required more ample powers on this head, and memorialized the Commissioners. The following is an extract from the answer to the memorial:—

"The Commissioners observe, with much satisfaction, the assurance in the eighth paragraph of the memorial, that the right prayed for, of granting relief to the able-bodied in certain cases, would be sparingly exercised in favour of a few honest and industrious labourers having large families of small children, and the Commissioners have no reason to doubt that this assurance would be kept in view by the Petworth Guardians. Still, however, as all rules issued by the Commissioners must be susceptible of general application, it is quite certain that if a power were so given to relieve such able-bodied labourers, it would, at no distant period, virtually become a power to relieve all able-bodied labourers; and thus would be perpetuated that practice heretofore so prevalent in Sussex, of paying wages out of the poor-rates, which has been the fruitful source of such vast mischief to all classes, proprietors as well as labourers, and which it is the main object of the Poor Law Amendment Act to remedy."

The deprecation of the practice of "paying wages out of the poor-rates" was not, of course, agreeable to the farmers of Petworth. This was "the sin which easily beset" them. The mode in which they applied themselves to get rid of the impertinent interference of the Commissioners, and secure their darling "luxury of doing good," was at least ingenious, if not new—it was by the old machinery of the *parish* gravel-pit, not in direct alliance with the Union Board of Guardians, but in amiable sympathy with their exertions. The "Board" and the "way-

warden" entered into a loving partnership; they were "twin cherries on one stalk." The process is triumphantly described by a member of the Board, Mr. James Poard;

"Himself the great original he draws."

"What has been the effect of the operation of the law upon the young single able-bodied men?—We have had a great many emigrate, and I think if none had emigrated we should have had as many employed by the waywardens as we ever had."

"Have you observed that the single men have become more provident since the new law?—No, I have not."

"What wages do they get from the parishes, when working on the highway?—We employ no single men in parish employment, very few with one child; those with two children we employ. *I am myself waywarden of the parish.*"

"What wages do they get?—A man with his wife and one child 7s. a week."

"Is that so now?—Yes. A man with his wife and two children 8s. a week, a man with his wife and three children 9s.; and if they can get employment any day whatever, they go off and get the day's work, and return again if they cannot get any more: that is the way we employ them."

"Does the parish, upon their returning from private employment, immediately employ them upon the wages you have stated?—When they can only get one day's work or two; it sometimes happens that they get a day's work in the town in gardening, and so on, and of course we allow them to go off when they can get a day's work."

"The moment that the private employment ceases, then the parish employs them at the wages you have stated?—Yes, they come to the waywarden, and say that they have no food and no work, and the waywarden gives them employment."

"Has that been objected to by the Poor Law Commissioners?—I have not heard of it. I BELIEVE THE POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WAYWARDEN."

"You pay those wages from the highway-rate?—Yes."

"Do you give this parish employment to labourers indiscriminately, guided only by the number of their families, without reference to their characters or the destitution in which they may be supposed to be placed?—No; we employ those of good characters, and some perhaps not so good when they are in a state of starvation; but I do not know that I should set on a drunken man, or a man of known bad character, of dissipated character."

"Are the men employed upon the highway absolutely wanted?—Perhaps not the whole of them."—[427—437.]

Causes and consequences may, in some cases, be as readily traced in the political body as in the physical. Intemperance produces disease not more surely than false benevolence produces poverty. The result of all this struggle in Petworth to cling to

"the good old times" of high rates, low wages, redundant labour, and the parish gravel-pit, is sufficiently evident. The return of Mr. Hawley in 1836 exhibits a remarkable contrast in the numbers of unemployed poor in the Petworth Union, as compared with other neighbouring Unions, at the same period of the year. In June 1836, 52 persons were unemployed in the Petworth Union, and only 57 in 13 other Unions in the same district. The ready aid of the waywarden may explain the irregularity in the working of the new system—"Yes, they come to the waywarden, and say that they have no food and no work, and the waywarden gives them employment."—Generous man! But in the meantime, who pays a great part of the wages of the employment? The labourers themselves. The gravel-pit keeps down the wages at Petworth, while all around Petworth the wages are rising. Mr. Sockett's evidence not only gives us the fact, but it gives us a reason for it:—

"How are those wages as compared with the wages before the Union was begun?—I do not perceive that they are altered at all; the wages of the poor man with a large family, I think, are not altered at all, but the wages of the single man without a family are lowered by the operation of the New Poor Law.

"How are they lowered?—Because, rather than go to one of those new poor-houses, I could have an able-bodied man of 20 years of age work for me at from 9d. to 1s. a day.

"What did he do before the New Poor Law?—Before, they would not readily work for those wages.

"What did they do if they did not work?—That I cannot exactly tell; but I know that we can have labourers, single men, at a lower rate than we used to have."—[13—16.]

The new Poor Law, according to Mr. Sockett, has depressed wages at Petworth—it has lowered the rates, and it has lowered the wages! Now if there was a cause operating upon the labour-market at Petworth, which was not in operation in the surrounding district, the probability is that the effect produced at Petworth would be derived from what constituted its peculiarity. In the neighbouring Union of Westhampnett there is no clever waywarden to

"Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame;"—

there are no relaxations of the rule for denying out-door relief to the able-bodied, under fifty pretences; and in spite of the agitation, the Union of Droxford is equally free from their benevolent interferences. Let us hear evidence from these Unions on the subjects of labour and wages:—and first of labour:—

Mr. Raper, the intelligent clerk to the Board of Guardians of

the Westhampnett Union, thus describes the "general employment" in the parishes of his Union:

"In the parishes of the Westhampnett Union, the change has been most extraordinary. There is a very material circumstance as to the parish of Oving, which is adjoining to Chichester; there were said to be in that parish, before the formation of the Union, from 70 to 80 persons employed during winter, in useless labour at the gravel-pits, by which no person of respectability could pass, not only without the risk, but without their receiving actual insult. The rates of the parish were exceedingly heavy; since the formation of the new Union, the rates are reduced, by a paper I have here, to a very great extent; there is not a single soul in that parish, as I am told by persons in it, out of employ, and I am able to state, from the information of persons of respectability in that parish, that there is not so much distress in the parish, and that the people are much better conducted than they were previously." [3202.]

The testimony of Mr. Raper is not unsupported. A clergyman in this Union, Mr. Tufnell, thus speaks to the influence of the gravel-pit:

"Is the amount of employment given by yourself, and by the farmers about you, greater under this new law than it was formerly?—Yes; generally more men are employed on the ground now. I can speak particularly of those men that used to be in the gravel-pits; there is one parish particularly, of the name of Oving, that used to have a great number of men in the gravel-pit: those men are almost all now employed upon the farms. My opinion upon that subject is, at least I know it, that a farmer used to go to the pit and order a man to come to him, to work for him, and if it was wet in the morning he sent the man in the afternoon into the parish pit again. In consequence of there being a place for the masters to go to for those men, they always knew where to find men at half an hour's notice, and the consequence was, that they would not keep them employed longer than they wanted them; now they keep those men in consequence of knowing that they cannot find a man immediately when they do want him, and they give them constant employment upon the ground."—[14,501.]

Mr. Raper, with reference to the absorption of labour at Oving, subsequently said:

"The question has been frequently asked, 'Where are these men gone to?' and if inquiry were made for any of them, it was only to put your finger on them; they are not gone from the neighbourhood.

"They are in employ, and earning their own maintenance?—Certainly." [3260, 3261.]

In the Union of Droxford the effects of the new system are not different from those of Westhampnett, though they are different from those of Petworth. Mr. Stares, the chairman of the Droxford Board of Guardians, gives the following evidence:

"In your own parish of Droxford, do you remember the number of labourers that were, before the law was introduced, out of employment?—I cannot speak to that; we had not so many as neighbouring parishes had out of employment.

"Were there many persons in the parish of Droxford out of employment?—Twenty, or more sometimes, but I cannot speak to the number.

"What was done with those labourers so unemployed?—They were put upon the roads.

"What is the case now?—We have none upon the roads.

"Are there people out of work now?—I do not know of any.

"Are they employed generally within the parish?—Yes, generally, I think.

"Have many of them left the parish in quest of work elsewhere?—Very few that I know; and if you were to ask me, I could not name one.

"You believe that, whereas before the law was introduced, there were from 20 to 30 able-bodied labourers in your parish unemployed, that now that number has been distributed among the occupiers of land in the parish, and that they are all employed?—It is so; they are all employed." [7602—7609.]

And next of *wages*, as far as regards the Petworth system.

We first take the evidence of Mr. Hawley, the assistant Poor Law Commissioner:—

"You state that all able-bodied labourers earn 10s., and in the eastern part of the county frequently as high as 13s. 6d. per week; is your memory correct upon those points?—Yes, it is.

"Are you not aware that the wages of single able-bodied men are at this very time, in several parts of Sussex, so low as 6s. and even 5s. a week?—I heard it stated by one of the witnesses.

"You did not know it before?—No.

"Do you dispute it?—No, certainly not; I think it is very likely to happen when the paupers are put upon the road, that that would have the effect of diminishing the wages in that way.

"Some of the guardians stated that they employed persons at 9d. a day?—Yes, and my opinion is that if those men were not employed on the roads, no employer of agricultural labourers would be able to take a labourer at the price of 9d. a day.

"In paragraph 14 (of Mr. Hawley's Report), you say that 'the farmers, in consequence of savings effected by reductions of poor-rates, have been able to employ a greater number of labourers, and to requite their services with greater liberality,' and you have mentioned to-day that wages have advanced; will you mention how much?—A shilling, and 2s. in some places.

"Will you state where the wages have advanced 2s.?—I would mention an instance which the clerk of the Horsham Union told me, that the wages in the parish of Ifield have been raised 2s. a week."—[1194—1200.]

The opinions of Mr. Wooldridge, of the Droxford Union, a 'practical man,' are quite decided, not only upon the subject of labour and wages, but as to the increased employment of children, the increased industry of the labourers, and the increased rewards of industry, according to degrees of skill and exertion. These points we shall have to notice again and again:—

"What is your opinion, generally, of the effect of the alteration of the law with reference to the condition of the poor?—My opinion is, that they are better off at present than they were before. In the parish where I reside I was overseer a long time; I had the principal management of the parish previous to the commencement of this new Act."—[6594.]

Mr. Wooldridge then mentions the cases of several labourers in his own employ, whose wages had been raised. Henry Smith had 8s. per week, he has now 10s.; William Smith, who had formerly 7s., has now 9s.; John Lane, 10s. The witness adds—

"This is a man I would not have employed at all previously to the introduction of the new system; he was not worth any thing; he was always at work upon the roads.

"Why were you induced to take him into your employ?—Through the new Poor Law coming into operation: his wife came to me, and cried very much, and said that she and her family would be all starved; I told her, that as soon as her husband was ready to work, we should be very willing and anxious to take him on; he came to me the next morning and told me that he would be anxious to do what he could for his family, as he found he must support them.

"What had been the conduct of this man before he came to you and made this statement?—He was always on the roads and did not care to work for any body; indeed his character on the roads always prevented his having any situation whatever.

"Then the effect of the New Poor Law upon this man was to make him feel the necessity of his exerting himself, in order to support his family?—It was so.

"And in consequence of his coming to you, you took him into your employ?—Yes.

"What has been his conduct since he has come to you?—Very much better; I have been satisfied with it."—[6603—6608.]

John Lane, however, does not receive so much in wages as he did formerly upon the roads, and with allowances for children. But he receives what he earns, and he sometimes has task work at which he receives 12s. But John Lane has striven to relieve himself from the burthen of his family, now the parish does not support them.

"Are any of his children employed?—Three of the daughters have got services.

"Were those three children formerly dependent upon the parish pay?—Entirely.

"Were they entirely idle?—Quite so.

"What are their ages?—I cannot speak exactly to their ages; 15 or 16.

"But, at all events, they are of an age to enable them to earn something by their own labour?—Yes; they have got places out.

"Then Lane had an interest, while you made him this large allowance, to keep his children at home and not to send them out?—Decidedly so.

"Was it upon the withdrawal of this allowance per head, that he made an effort to put out his children?—It was.

"And upon making that effort, he immediately succeeded in getting out three?—Not immediately; but he has succeeded.

"Since the out-door relief has been withdrawn, he has got out three?—Yes.

"What do you consider his condition now; is he as well off as he was before?—Quite as well off, I should say, and better."—[6618—6628.]

John Lane was made an independent and skilful workman by the discontinuance of the allowance system; and there can be no doubt, we think, which is the happier, the John Lane of 1834 or of 1837. But the independent and skilful workman under the old system was kept in subjection to the idle and clumsy allowed man. Upon this point Mr. Wooldridge well informs us:—

"You say that your superior labourers used to be discontented that a comparatively idle man was equally well paid, or better paid than themselves?—They used.

"Are they not satisfied that an alteration has taken place in that respect, and that each man receives only according to his earnings?—Yes.

"Do you find that to be the case with the superior class of labourers in your parish, that they feel that the new law is doing justice between labourer and labourer, and paying men according to their deserts?—Yes.

"Have you heard the man at the top of your list speak with satisfaction at the alteration that has taken place?—I have heard him laugh at it, and say that they were obliged to work now, and could not skulk away their time as they used to do.

"And he appeared to be satisfied with the change?—Yes.

"What did he receive under the old law from the parish?—Nothing at all." [6659—64.]

The man "at the top of the list" received "nothing at all from the parish;" the "comparatively idle man was better paid." In the words of old Harrison, the "thrifless poor," such as are here

described, "do but lick the sweat from the true labourer's brow."

The Commissioners of Inquiry, in their Report, stated the principle of the rise of wages consequent upon the discontinuance of parochial allowance:—

"Before the experiment was made it might fairly have been anticipated that the discontinuance of parochial allowance would effect little or no improvement in wages unless a similar change were made in the neighbouring parishes. When a considerable proportion of the labourers who had been entirely dependent upon the parish were driven to rely on their own industry, it might have been anticipated that the wages of the entire body of labourers within the parish would have been injuriously affected by their competition. And this certainly would have been the case if they had added nothing to the fund out of which their wages came. That fund is, in fact, periodically consumed and reproduced by the labourer, assisted by the land and the farmer's capital, and, all other things remaining the same, the amount of that fund, and consequently his share of it, or in other words, the amount of his wages, depends on his industry and skill. If all the labourers in a parish cease to work, they no longer produce any fund for their own subsistence, and must either starve or be supported, as they were at Cholesbury, by rates in aid. A single person who has no property and is supported without working, bears the same relation to the labourers who do work as the parishioners of Cholesbury bore to the neighbouring parishes. He is supported by a sort of rate in aid on their industry. His conversion from a pauper, wholly or partially supported by the labour of others, into an independent labourer producing his own subsistence, and in addition to that a profit to his employer, so far from injuring his fellow-workmen, produces on them the same effects as the enabling the inhabitants of Cholesbury to support themselves has produced on the parishes which had to supply them with rates in aid. This has been perceived by some of our witnesses. A farmer of considerable intelligence, who had resided in Cookham, and observed the effects of the change in that parish, declared his conviction that if such a change could be generally introduced the money saved in poor's-rates would almost immediately be paid in wages. The withdrawal of relief in aid of wages appears to be succeeded by effects in the following order:—First, the labourer becomes more steady and diligent; next, the more efficient labour makes the return to the farmer's capital larger, and the consequent increase of the fund for the employment of labour enables and induces the capitalist to give better wages."

We proceed to the complaints of the condition of the able-bodied labourers in the Union of DROXFORD; which at least are more specific than those of Petworth.

The Rev. Mr. Butler, curate of Soberton, stated that "a great

deal of suffering is entailed upon the able-bodied labourers and their families" in consequence of the rule prohibiting out-door relief; that suffering consisting, in his opinion, in an insufficiency of food. He then proceeded to detail a number of cases taken from his own neighbourhood, in proof of the accuracy of his opinion. One of these cases was that of a man named Benjamin Wild, the features of which, as given by Mr. Butler, are as follows:—

"Benjamin Wild, with a wife and four children, the eldest ten years old and the youngest six months; rent 3*l.* 10*s.*; works for the parish; earns about 8*s.* a-week; that is, when he is on the road he has 8*s.* a-week; he does not always get that, for his pay is stopped in wet weather; he is not working on the road at this present time; but I am stating what he has done during the winter; he hurt his arm, so that he is not able to thresh, he can do all common farmers' work, hedging and ditching, but he cannot lift his arm well over his head.

"How did that accident happen?—I do not recollect.

"Was it in the course of his work?—I cannot say, but it was not in anything disreputable to himself; he states that he 'never suffered so much as this winter; has had nothing but bread and potatoes many days, only three-pennyworth of meat for five weeks; sold a copper cup and a cross-cut saw to get victuals.' He stated to me 'that his children were crying for victuals, and he sold a cup to get some potatoes; very bad off for clothes; in debt 4*l.* or 5*l.*; he applied to the guardians, was not permitted to see them; when his wife was confined, six months ago, he had to pay for the doctor; he has not paid the doctor, but he is in debt to the doctor.' I would mention that, since I have heard of this man's distress, his eldest girl runs of errands for me; I do not exactly know what she has, it is settled by my wife." [5053—5.]

Such was the case of suffering investigated by Mr. Butler; but it happened that one of the witnesses summoned before the Committee, Mr. Stares, the chairman of the Droxford Union, was more intimately acquainted with its merits, and in reply to the inquiry if he knew anything of Benjamin Wild, he stated that Wild's employer told him some days ago, "that he was continually using abusive language, and that he might have been employed for him at this moment, had not that been the case."

At a subsequent period of his examination, some questions were again put to Mr. Stares as to his knowledge of the Wilds.

"Did Mr. Knight tell you what were the wages he had paid to Wild?—Yes.

What did he say was the amount of wages he paid him the last year before he met with this accident?—He only worked for him up to harvest.

"What did he pay him a-week?—Nine shillings a-week; he reaped for him till the wheat harvest was over; I stated that the man made use

of very vulgar language to him, and in consequence he was discharged, though he might have gone on from that day to the end of harvest at 2*s.* per day, or 12*s.* per week, till the summer corn, that is, the barley and oats, were collected together; he might have remained with him till this day if he had not made use of this language, and the wife too; he said 'The man really behaved so ill at different times that I was determined not to put up with it any longer.'

"Was he among the first class of agricultural labourers before this time, or not?—I should say not.

"You know him yourself, and do not consider him among the first-classed labourers?—No, I think not; he is rather advanced in life.

"Yet Mr. Knight was willing to give him 12*s.* a-week?—Yes; at that time he had finished reaping; if he had not made use of that language, Mr. Knight told me that he would have come into the house, and that he would have had 12*s.* a-week with his other labourers, and that he would have kept him through the winter and to this hour." [8100—05.]

Another case brought forward by Mr. Butler was that of "George Gregory, an able-bodied man, with a wife and six children; eldest sixteen years, a young man out of work; wages, when he works for a farmer, 9*s.*, when on the road, 8*s.*; rent 3*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.*" The ages of the second and third children are 15 and 13, and the youngest child is three years old. Gregory stated that "he was out of work at intervals, since Michaelmas, one, two, and three weeks at a time; once, when out of work for three weeks, had one gallon of bread, but no other relief from the Board."

"Did he state whether he was offered the workhouse?—He does not state that; I recollect the wife telling me she thought she must apply for an order to go into the workhouse.

"He had a gallon of bread only given him?—That was all the relief he had from the parish.

"You do not know that he had no money to buy any?—I do not know it; but the probability is, that, with a large family out of employ, he had not. He had a pig, but was forced to sell it; it weighed about three score; the value is about 10*s.* a-score; but he could not fatten it; he was obliged to sell it before it had got to a profitable weight. General weekly diet, three gallons and a half of flour, or five, if no potatoes; not half a pound of butter since Michaelmas, nor one pound of sugar; one ounce of tea per week; scarcely ever meat. One child, on going to service last year, had 10*s.* given by the Board for clothes.

"Had this man any potato-ground?—I think he had rather a larger garden than many."—[5085-88.]

When Mr. Stares was under examination, inquiries were made of him relative to Gregory's character; he says:—

"George Gregory is a very bad character; I am quite sure that no farmer in my parish or in the parish of Soberton will employ that man if he can get another.

"What do you imagine to be the reason why they would not give him employment?—Because he will never go home if he can help it without taking something; and one day Mr. Knight told me that he lost a pair of hedging gloves. I have several times lost several working tools, and my own men say, 'Oh, sir, I suppose Gregory has been here again;' that is his general character."—[7679-80.]

Mr. Butler's want of knowledge of the true state of the parties on whose statements he was depending is exhibited in other cases besides Gregory's, though it was not so pointedly brought home to him.

"You stated that Gregory had a wife and six children, the eldest 16 years of age; and you stated that he was a sample of a fair moral character; do you recollect that?—Yes; I know nothing against his moral character.

"Do not you know that he is a notorious thief, and that no farmer will employ him?—No, I know no such thing.

"You do not know that he has been convicted before Mr. Butler of turnip-stealing?—No; I do not pledge myself that he has not been, but if he has I do not know it.

Mr. Butler's opinions in reference to the operation of the poor-law do not carry much weight with them, when it becomes known on what grounds he builds his conclusions. Every evil to which loss of character, insolence, and unskilfulness subject men, often for their own reformation and as a lesson of improvement to others, is to be chargeable to the amended poor-law. Were this therefore general, it would be absurd to seek respect and goodwill by decency of behaviour, superior diligence, or unvarying honesty; and every one suffering the penalties of a contrary course would be ready to trace the penalties, not to their real causes, but to the law which relates—not to wages and character—but to destitution and infirmity.

We have dwelt upon the differences produced in the working of the new system of poor-law upon persons of bad and doubtful character as compared with those of unimpeachable reputation, because, as society is constituted, such differences turn the scale of success in every situation of life. We are not amongst those who think too hardly of "the vices of the poor;" indeed, it appears to us wonderful, that with such a demoralizing influence at work for years as that exercised by the old poor-laws, there is any honesty, sobriety, or self-respect left amongst a thoroughly-pauperized population. The successful introduction of the new system, and the change which it has already effected in the habits of the labourers and their families, is a most satisfactory proof of the innate superiority of good to evil, when the good is called forth by kindly associations. The Rev. Mr. Brock, we

think, has formed too low an estimate of the characters of the labouring population. It was his object to deprecate too close a scrutiny into his 13 cases of desolation produced by the new poor-laws; and he thus speaks of his clients:—

"Are they generally cases of persons of good character?—I should say persons of *fair moral character*; but I should wish to make an observation upon that subject, because I am well acquainted with the state of agricultural labourers in my own parish and in some of the adjoining parishes; I am perfectly aware of this, that if I state the cases of 13 labourers to this committee, who are in distress, there are persons who will endeavour to make out that they are not persons of good character, because there is such a scrutiny going on now into the character of the labourers, that any offence is raked up against them, any (what we should call) *trifling offence*, of wood-stealing, or turnip-stealing, or of poaching, is sure to be brought up against the labourer. Therefore, I will not pledge myself as to the honesty of those men; but I think, generally speaking, they are a fair sample of agricultural labourers, because I feel certain that the members of the committee are not aware *how common dishonesty is among the lower classes, or rather how very uncommon strict honesty is among the lowest classes*; I can state this with the greatest confidence."

We think it rather hard upon the "lower classes" that the character of the entire labouring population should be sacrificed to the philanthropic zeal of a minister of charity for the "fair" morals of his favourite workhouse-swampers: and we trust that with many, even of the poorest, wood-stealing, and turnip-stealing, and poaching, are not considered "trifling offences." Those who really know the poor, know how many of the higher virtues many individuals amongst them possess; and they further know how much false legislation and ignorant applications of mischievous laws have done for their corruption. Let us retrace our steps. The following anecdote is an encouragement:—

"Do you know any case where a person has had relief, and, so far from being dissatisfied, expressed the opinion that she received too much relief?—I have a case of that description written out. Martha Mansbridge, wife, is 33; she had a son, before she was married to her present husband, by another husband; he is ten years of age. She has a son eight, and another five; the husband earns 9s. a-week; they receive for the eldest son, from the parish, 1s. 6d.; total, 10s. 6d. She stated to me that she had a nurse for five weeks, and the parish allowed her 3s. 6d. to pay the nurse with. She had a nurse for five weeks afterwards, at 1s. 6d. The allowance to Mansbridge for two months, per week, was three pounds and a half of mutton and one gallon of milk, or six pints of good porter: for two succeeding months, by her own request, she had allowed one pound and a half of meat per week, and half a gallon of milk. She said that she thought the allowance given her was rather too liberal, and as she was not likely to recover for some

time, as there was a good deal of private charity, she would have it at a reduced rate, that they might not be dissatisfied with the application."—[Rev. Mr. Cockerton, 9548.]

Whatever may be the differences of opinion as to the positive honesty of the great mass of the labouring population, there can be no doubt that a confirmed habit of pauperism was a confirmed habit of deceit. The amount of the deception depended upon the temperament and the knowledge of the person upon whom the deceit was practised. On one occasion, in the course of Mr. Brock's inquiries, he was induced to entertain misgivings as to the accuracy of his information.

"I had (he says) a conversation with Martha Newington, after having had a conversation with her husband, in which he represented to me what was not true, and having suspicions of it, I went to Martha Newington to investigate the truth, and I saw that there was a disposition on her part and on the part of her children to keep back the truth, and therefore I spoke to her with some degree of severity upon her attempt to conceal what ought not to be concealed; and I ought to state that that was one of the cases which I mentioned to the guardians under a misapprehension."—[7322.]

The truth is, as Mr. Spackman remarks, [18,257,] that "the resources of the poor are not known to us; it is impossible for us to know; they do not tell the whole state of their circumstances." Sir F. Eden, in his laborious inquiries into the state of the poor, upwards of forty years ago, expressed the same opinion even before the late Poor Law had taught them the art of concealment and the advantages to be derived from filth and squalor. Mr. Walker, the late Police Magistrate, from whose pamphlet we have already quoted, says:—

"The difficulty of getting at the truth from persons who were always inclined to throw themselves upon the parish the moment they had an apparent pretext, is almost inconceivable. They live a prey to suspicion, concealment, and apprehension, both on their own individual account and on account of the common cause. Hence the gross errors which well-meaning and superficial inquirers fall into respecting them. I once counted a row of eggs laid upon a shelf in a pauper-labourer's cottage; and then asked the wife how many hens she had, which, coupled with my having a note-book in my hand, so alarmed her that she was seized with a violent illness. If she had been aware of my coming the eggs would have been concealed. In a cottage in Lancashire, whilst the inmates were complaining that they had not tasted butcher's meat for a month, a terrier I had with me turned up a mug, under which were the bones of a neck of mutton newly picked. A woman, just after telling me that she could not get food, forgot herself, and cut a large slice of bread to quiet a squalling child. The child bit one piece, and then threw the remainder indignantly into the dirt."

Mr. Teather stated to the Commissioners of Inquiry (1833), that "it is the study of bad paupers to deceive you all they can; and as they study more their own cases than any inquirer can study each of the whole mass of different cases which he has to inquire into, they are sure to be successful in a great many instances." The consequences of taking moral qualifications into consideration in every case of relieving destitution—of sitting in judgment upon men's actions, which are pointed out by Mr. Chadwick and the Rev. Mr. West, in another part of this work, deserve to be referred to in connexion with this point. But not only were the moral features of the cases produced by Mr. Butler and Mr. Brock hidden from their view, but those which constituted the only ground on which they could be brought forward were equally obscured. With scarcely one exception they seem to us to have made no pretension to investigate and sift the evidence on which they founded their complaints of the law. Another gentleman (the Rev. Mr. Dewdney), in producing cases of alleged hardship, escaped these blunders by not choosing to go into any of the points on which the merits of each depended. Whether the wife earned any portion of the family's subsistence, or if the elder children were able to procure employment, do not seem to have been at all considered as grounds for determining the condition of each family. Imposition is encouraged where so little pains are taken to investigate the truth. Mr. Dewdney brought forward the cases of two families named May and Moon, and Sir James Graham, and the Chairman of the Committee, proceeded to elicit the state of each in the following manner:—

"Do you know this family of John May yourself?—I took the examination of May from himself.

"Have you that examination which you took with you?—Yes.

"Are you reading from that examination?—No, from an abstract of it.

"Will you be so good as to give John May's age?—Forty-five.

"The age of his wife?—I do not know.

"Are the eight children living with him?—Yes.

"What is the age of the eldest child?—I do not know.

"Will you refer to the examination, and state the children's ages?—

[*The Witness referred to the examination.*]—I have not got them.

"Will you mention the next case, illustrating your notion of starvation, in the popular sense?—The next case is Moon.

"What is his christian name?—John, I believe.

"In what parish does Moon reside?—Hambleton.

"Have you seen Moon?—Yes.

"Have you examined him as to his condition?—Yes.

"What is his age?—He is a middle-aged man; I have not got it down.

- "Has he a wife?—Yes.
 "Do you know the age of his wife?—No.
 "How many children has he?—Nine.
 "Do you know the ages of the children?—Of some I do, and of some not.
 "Do you know the age of the eldest child?—No.
 "Do you know whether it is a boy or a girl?—No.
 "Do you know the age of the second child?—No, I would not pledge myself to it.
 "Do you know whether it is a boy or a girl?—No.
 "Do you know the age of the third child?—I did not take the ages of the children.
 "Do you know any other cases illustrating your popular sense of starvation, except those two which you have mentioned?—I am not inclined to produce any more, certainly."—[10,296—319.]

It seems extraordinary that, instead of relying upon their own powers of investigation, neither Mr. Butler nor Mr. Brock were willing to aid Mr. Wooldridge, the vice-chairman of the Droxford Union, in obtaining an accurate knowledge of the condition of the poor. Mr. Wooldridge addressed the following circular letter to the clergymen residing in the different parishes of the Union, from each of whom, with the exception of Mr. Butler and Mr. Brock, he received a polite reply affording the desired information:—

"Reverend Sir, Meonstoke, March 1st, 1837.

"As a guardian of this Union, will you favour me with replies to the following questions, as they relate to your parish:—

"Do you know of any person who has suffered from not being properly and punctually attended by any officer belonging to this Union?

"Do you know of any family within your parish reduced to the greatest state of destitution, and must have been (or nearly) starved except for private charity?

"Your answer will oblige your most

"Obedient and humble Servant.

"H. WOOLDRIDGE."

Out of about a dozen replies which Mr. Wooldridge received, nearly the whole of them were of the most satisfactory nature. Mr. Brock withheld information, on the ground that the letter from Mr. Wooldridge, as it did not proceed from the Board, was not of an official character. Mr. Butler, in answer to the second question, mentioned only one case, the family of Green. He says:—

"The woman declared to me, that she had nothing to eat for herself and children; and I, believing from her neighbours that her case was most destitute, relieved her, or rather kept them for a fortnight."

Here again Mr. Butler was unfortunate; and the destitution of this family was not chargeable to the hard provisions of the New Poor Law, but to their own bad conduct, as appears from the following note appended by Mr. Wooldridge to Mr. Butler's communication:—

"Belongs to Bishop's Waltham; has a very indifferent character, and particularly the wife; she some time since stole a silver spoon, broke, and then sold it; in fact there is not a worse character in the Union. About a month since, the man went to seek work at the railroad, and the wife applied to the board the next day. In consequence of her bad character, the board gave relief of a gallon of bread, and an order to go into Bishop's Waltham workhouse. She is of the age of TWENTY, has two children, *one of which is a bastard, which she had before she was sixteen.* The eldest child is four years of age."

Mr. Scrope asks—[5532]:—"The only case of destitution, then, which you mentioned to the guardians was a case of destitution in a family, the woman of which was of bad character, and the man of a character somewhat reformed?" to which Mr. Butler is compelled to reply:—"That was the only case of destitution I mentioned to the guardian." Mr. Butler failed in producing a single instance in which persons of good character were suffering under the operation of the new law. Out of nearly a dozen letters in answer to the circular of Mr. Wooldridge, only two cases of distress were pointed out amongst the suffering population of the Droxford Union. The rector of Exton says:—

"The case of the Greens has, perhaps, been the most distressing. I know that at times they have stood much in need of assistance from private charity; but when I say this, I do not mean to imply that it was owing to any neglect on the part of the Union."

In reference to this case Mr. Wooldridge gives the following information:—

"Green of Exton; wife was confined prematurely with twins; relieving officer saw the family the next day, and relieved them with 2s. in kind, and the following week relieved them with 5s. in money and three gallons of bread; and at this time he earned 8s. per week. The family consisted of five children, one of whom was generally employed. They would not apply for the Union medical officer, preferring a midwife instead; this woman generally receives 7s. 6d.

Mr. Haygarth, another clergyman residing within the Droxford Union, addresses Mr. Wooldridge as follows:—

"I am happy to report, that I know of no family within my parish who have been reduced to any thing like destitution; I am only aware of Henry May's family as requiring the favourable consideration of the Board, as he has six children who are unable to do any thing for their maintenance, and (if I am correctly informed) their allowance has been

recently curtailed. The aged have certainly more comforts under the new system than under the old."

Mr. Wooldridge says, in relation to May's case:—

"This man's pay was taken off, because, although the wife is near-sighted, she had picked stones and earned from 4s. to 6s. per week, but afterwards refused to do it; she bears a very bad character; a daughter had clothes for service, stopped a week, and then left; have other children who ought to be got out."

In order to illustrate still more completely the condition of Mr. Butler's district (the Droxford Union), we give one more extract from another letter addressed to Mr. Wooldridge, written, as well as the preceding, by a clergyman:—

"The operation of the new Bill (as far as I know) is very beneficial amongst us; if it has in some degree affected the means of education, it has at the same time contributed to pull down that most pernicious of all created nuisances, the beer-houses. I have not heard of any reduction in the weekly allowance of aged out-of-door pensioners, and heartily grieved indeed should I be to hear of any such cruelty. I visited the poorhouse at Waltham a fortnight ago; it was as clean and comfortable as possible, and I found an old parishioner of mine with reformed habits of sobriety and cleanliness, not only contented, but thankful and happy. The governor seemed most humane and judicious, and he spoke of the great liberality with which the Board of Guardians allowed him to improve and enlarge the dietary, according to circumstances, at his discretion, during the prevalence of the influenza. I cannot but express a wish that all clergymen had been made guardians by virtue of their office: they are now, for the first time for above a thousand years, *prevented* (so far) from watching over the interests of their poor.* For many years I looked upon our old

* There are numerous instances in which clergymen have been elected to the office of Guardians. They are then more peculiarly the representatives of the interests of all classes. It is to be feared, that if clergymen were admitted to a seat at the Boards without the intervention of public election, the temptation to many of them of earning a mischievous popularity as the "poor man's friend" would lead to no good result. Besides, the right could not be confined to the ministers of one particular class, and the concessions demanded would swamp and destroy the useful character of the Boards. A little pamphlet has been lately published by the Rev. Mordaunt Barnard, M.A., vicar of Amwell, Herts, entitled "Reasons of a Clergymen for acting as a Guardian of the Poor." Two years ago he was unfavourable to the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act:—"The new law," he says, "appeared likely to be unpopular among a considerable part of my parishioners,—not only among the poor but among those *who think with the heart*, and whose kind feelings therefore often somewhat interfere with the exercise of their judgment. I confess that I had myself some prejudice against the provisions which I was becoming an instrument to enforce, and even that I was weak enough to dislike it by anticipation as introduced by those from whose political creed I dissented: but I thought that, if the execution of it were left either to partisans, or to those who from

Poor Laws, administered as they were, as a canker preying upon the vitals of the state, and we owe much to those who, in spite of obloquy, have brought forward the present measure. Let it only be worked out in a merciful and generous spirit, occasional improvements adopted, and sufficient discretion given to the guardians, it will tend more to the salvation and happiness of the country than any other ever attempted.

"Yours truly,

"H. V. Bayley, Rector of Westmeon.

"I have just been examining one of our old parishioners, who says that Mr. Hayden (the relieving officer), who pays their weekly allowance, is not only kind in his manner, but also inquires straitly of their consolation. I shall only be doing justice to our medical officer if I state that in no one instance, I believe, has there been the slightest imputation against him, for want of ability, care, and kindness."

The Rev. Mr. Seard, a clergyman residing in the central town of the Union, who was formerly opposed to the new law, speaking of the guardians and officers of the Droxford Union, says:—"I have always received the greatest attention whenever I have made application for the relief of any poor person."

The cases of distress which Mr. Butler professed to discover in the parish of Westmeon, were those of "two labourers with families, who earn either 9s. or 10s. a-week, and some of the farmers proposed getting up a subscription to relieve these men: they heard that they were in distress and not able to keep their families; and I understand that that subscription did not take place, as it was disapproved of by the clergy." The Rev. Mr. Cockerton, the curate of the parish of Westmeon, offered the following explanation of this case to the committee:—

"The man's name is Greentree, his wife is 33 years of age and himself about 40, has five children, their ages 11, 7, 5, 3, and 1; wages at present 9s. a-week. This statement I have read over to Greentree himself; it was taken from his own evidence. Eldest child offered work by the surveyor of the roads, to pick stones in the field; the parents de-

pecuniary interest had made up their minds beforehand, it would not have that fair trial which a collision of feelings and motives seem best calculated to give. * * * With these motives I consented to be put in nomination, and the result has been that, where I entered to mistrust and to watch, I remain to admire and to enforce. Some persons have taken a course precisely opposite. Apparently with a craving appetite for popularity (and that not within those limits where legitimate popularity enlarges the sphere of utility) they have ministered to a morbid humanity by chiming in with the interests and prepossessions which such a subject is sure to have created. Whatever had been my feelings I should have scorned to become an agitator, and should have submitted to it if I had not approved the law; but I rejoice that they have been of that tempered kind which have permitted me to approach so near the subject as to form a decisive and I hope well-grounded opinion."

cline the offer; Greentree does a little task-work, such as mending sacks, by which he earns 6*d.* or 1*s.* a-week extra; he has been offered task-work by his master, by which others earn from 12*s.* to 15*s.* a-week; Greentree's father resides within a mile of Westmeon; he keeps a beer-shop; his cottage is his own; he has an excellent garden; sells vegetables and fruit; he has no children at home; he has a brother a clock and watch maker, a widower with one child; this child is kept by the grandfather; when his wife was confined she was attended by the parish doctor; he has land, I believe, to the amount of a quarter of an acre, to cultivate as potato-ground, in addition to a small garden. The reason, I must state, why I objected to give any thing to this man's subscription was this, that I thought he was living very expensively; he was living entirely upon bread; and I offered to support his family at my own expense for a week, if they would allow me to give them meat instead of bread, to put them upon a different system."—[9399.]

The other case was that of a man named Sims, who, it appears, according to the statement of Mr. Cockerton, "belongs to a benefit club, the wife to a clothing club, the children to a school club; he has from the benefit club 7*s.* a-week when sick, and will have 3*s.* 6*d.* after he is 65 years of age, as a permanent annuity; has earned lately 15*s.* a-week, and earned during the winter, which was more than half his time, 11*s.* 6*d.*; wages at other times 9*s.*" This statement was made by the man himself. Mr. Cockerton says:—"Sims told me, but I do not know whether I ought to believe him or not, that Mr. Butler said his wages were too little for him to live upon."

Mr. Butler found some men so far hankering after the old system as to be willing again to become parish paupers; but where, in other cases, a more independent spirit was found to exist, his fellow-labourer in the wide field of benevolence, Mr. Brock, endeavoured to degrade that spirit to the level which the actions of both appear so well calculated to produce. Among other cases of alleged hardship occasioned by the new Poor Law, he instanced that of Thomas Leman, "a man considered to be very well off," though, in the eyes of Mr. Brock, his family must necessarily be in a state of considerable wretchedness, chiefly because they have no longer relief from the parish; it making no difference in the views of the reverend gentleman whether the deficiency is made up by higher wages. They are deprived of a gratuity out of the parish fund, and that is the only point which he seems to take into consideration. The case of Leman, as laid before the Committee by Mr. Brock, contains the following statements:—"He has a family of eight children, the eldest of whom, a daughter aged nineteen, is at home ill. The next child is fourteen years old, a girl; and the next is twelve, a boy; and the next is ten, a boy; down to five months old. He has no rent to pay; he earns

10*s.* a week, and his eldest boy 3*s.*, and his wife has threepence a couple upon fowls, which she sells for her master. "I state this," says Mr. Brock, "as the case of a man who would be supposed to be well off;" and he adds:—"If persons in that situation of life are straightened in their circumstances, how much more must those labourers be whose wages are not so large?" Now, what are the facts of this case, upon a consideration of which Mr. Brock concluded that other labourers, not in so favourable a position, were so wretched? The evidence of Mr. Wyatt, a member of the Droxford Board of Guardians, and further, the opinions of Leman himself on his own circumstances, exhibit Mr. Brock's tendency to form exaggerated and most unfair views of the social condition of the labourers. Being asked what he knew of Leman's case, Mr. Wyatt replies:—

"Since I heard Mr. Brock mention his case, I have seen the man, and asked him upon it; I was greatly surprised to hear his case mentioned as a case of distress in the parish of Bishop's Waltham; and the man himself is greatly surprised at his case being mentioned by Mr. Brock as a case of distress.

"What did he say as to his own situation?—He told me that Mr. Brock had called at his house, and wished him to come to his, Mr. Brock's, house, but he refused to go; he told me that his earnings were 10*s.* a week, and his boy's 3*s.*; his master finds him his house-rent and firing; his wife looks after the poultry, and has so much a couple; but Mr. Brock did not state all, because the woman and the man state to me that they look after a dairy of five or six cows for the master.

"What profit do they derive from that?—The whole of the skimmed milk; he has a fat hog every year; occasionally he fattens his own hog, and when he does not his master supplies him with a hog.

"Altogether, taking his earnings and advantages into consideration, did the man describe to you his situation as being one of distress?—He said he was not in distress, and his feelings and those of his wife were very much hurt in consequence of their case being mentioned by Mr. Brock.

"Does he say that he has been benefited or injured by the introduction of the law?—He says he is benefited; he said, before the new law was introduced he had 2*s.* 6*d.* a week from the parish, and he had 10*s.* a week earnings; immediately that this law took place, he got his master to employ his boy, who gave him 3*s.* a week; and the man's own words were, that he had 6*d.* a week more than he had before; he has eight children at home, and one has been to service, but returned.

"Is it a girl or a boy?—The eldest is a girl, 19 years of age.

"Has she returned in consequence of being unwell?—Yes.

"Has Leman applied for any assistance to the Board of Guardians?—None whatever; he told me that his wife was lying-in lately, and I asked him why he did not apply to the medical man, as he might have had that and other necessaries for his wife; his answer was, 'I would rather find it myself than apply to the parish.'

"Did he describe himself, from his circumstances, as being in a condition unable conveniently to supply himself with those necessities?—No, I never saw a man's feelings so hurt as that man's were at anything being said of his being in distress; he feels quite independent of the parish, and I was glad to hear it: the master told me that he employed the two eldest girls as well as the boy, in the summer, in weeding and couching, and another younger boy occasionally; his master spoke very highly of this man as a good honest servant, and the man also spoke of having a good master, and he did not conceive what business Mr. Brock, or any body else, had with him, as to inquiring about his case, or representing it to this Committee." [10,060-8.]

In determining the condition of an agricultural labourer, we have seen that Mr. Dewdney thought it of no importance to ascertain whether his wife or children contributed by their earnings to the resources of the family, and he had not even obtained information as to the age of the eldest child. Mr. Brock interested himself in the case of a man who felt annoyed at his interference, being in a better condition now than when he was in the receipt of parish relief. The exact merit of these and other cases which were brought forward probably did not differ much in degree; and all cases of alleged hardship, if thoroughly examined would, perhaps, be found to originate in some temporary pressure or some cause which never fails to be attended by its suitable penalties. To remove men from the suffering which their follies or imprudence entail upon them, would be one means of effectually obstructing the growth of their better qualities. The New Poor Law, however, will lessen the amount of improvidence and its consequent sufferings. Even if Mr. Dewdney or Mr. Brock were to discover a case of real hardship, occasioned by no improvidence or misconduct, we should have little faith in their exposition of it in a correct light, unless they conducted their inquiry in a different spirit.

As the inquiry into the operation of the amended Poor Law will probably be continued in the next session of parliament, let these gentlemen, should they feel disposed to bring forward more cases, previously endeavour to learn with reference to each—and not for a single week, but for a period which includes all the various labours of the agriculturist—the wages received during one year, in harvest as well as winter. The condition of the labourer is not determined by the amount of weekly money wages alone, his earnings being made up of:—1. Money wages weekly:—2. Money wages for piece work; money wages for harvest work:—3.—Money wages to his wife during harvest time:—4. Money wages to his wife for occasional work, such as charring:—5. Money wages to his elder children. By the time that a labourer's

family consists of five children, he may be considered as receiving wages under each of the above heads. But besides the payment of wages in money, the labourer's family is often in receipt of payments or gifts in kind, some of which are regular, while others are irregular. They cannot well be represented with any pretensions to accuracy in money, but they increase the means of existence just as much as money. Unless these advantages are taken into account, it is impossible to judge fairly of the case. Money wages may be low, because a larger amount of benefits in kind make up the deficiency. In one of Mr. Brock's cases, the labourer received a dinner from his master every time he went out with a load of corn, which proved to be above a hundred times in the course of a twelvemonth. In another case a man was allowed a shilling for milking the cows on a Sunday evening: and we have known a labourer receive a certain sum for every score of eggs which he brought into the house. In many districts, the labourers are supplied with milk and butter-milk and butter, at a cheap rate. In fact, about every large farm-house there are extra services required which are not paid in money but in other ways equally advantageous; or perhaps they even prove more beneficial, for the labourer receives in kind articles which he could not easily procure for money.

The following items may be added to the five preceding heads, for the purpose of facilitating inquiries into the labourer's condition. The payments or gifts in kind are generally:—1, Beer. 2, Milk. 3, Garden Stuff. 4, Fuel. 5, A Pig. 6, Food for a Pig. 7, Road-lands for Potatoes, &c. 8, Allotments of Land at a low or nominal rent. 9, Gleaning. 10, Cottage at a low rent, or rent-free. 11, Gifts of malt, hops, bacon, wheat, &c. at harvest. The inquiry into the state of the agricultural labourers of any particular district will be incomplete, unless it embraces the period antecedent to the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act. Under the operation of the new law, the improvement in the condition of the labourer arises—1, From the increased employment at the same nominal rate of weekly money wages. 2, An increase in the actual amount of money wages. 3, An increase of piece-work. 4, An increase in the price of piece-work. 5, Employment of children capable of working. 6, Increased allowance in kind. 7, Diminution of cottage rents. It has been seen, that with relation to labourers with large families, having some children capable of working, their condition, in consequence of the children having been taken into employment, combined with the operation of the first four causes above mentioned, has improved. It is said that the condition of the labourer, with a family of small children

incapable of working, has been seriously injured by the withdrawal of out-door relief. But it must be recollected, that under the old system, relief was generally only given in the case of the second, third, or fourth child; so that with respect to the families of labourers with children incapable of working, which are rarely found to be more than four or five, it was only for one or two children that an allowance would usually be given.

To meet this deficit, there is the increase in the various modes stated in the first five of the above-mentioned causes which the new law has put into activity, and by which this class has been greatly benefited. On but few of these necessary points for consideration, have Mr. Brock, Mr. Butler, or Mr. Dewdney felt it necessary to direct their investigations; and when they have entered upon a case, they have not made any examination into the truth of the complainant's statements, but implicitly taken them for granted. The individuals whom Mr. Brock represented guilty of such 'trifling' offences as poaching and acts of petty larceny, were never suspected by him as being addicted to falsehood; and yet for reasons already alluded to, nothing is more difficult than to ascertain with perfect accuracy not the money wages and payments or gifts in kind of the agricultural labourer, but that of his wife and of his children. The only safe plan, when confidence cannot be placed in a man's veracity, is to adopt the practice of the relieving officers in Unions, and apply to the man's employer. The following extracts from a letter addressed by Mr. Edwards of Framlingham to Dr. Kay, an assistant Commissioner, notices the difficulties which we have pointed out, and at the same time gives one of the most interesting and complete views of the conditions which determine the income of agricultural labourers, which we have yet seen. We insert it here in the hope of its being of service in preventing the exhibition, for the purposes of opposition to the Poor Law, of such worthless cases as many of those which were brought under the notice of the Parliamentary Committee with this object. Mr. Edwards says—

"To obtain the average amount of the income of the day-labourer beyond the nominal weekly wages of the district is impossible. The pockets of the farmer, the soil he cultivates, the intellect and industry brought into action, the mode of employment and payment, are so various even in the same parish, that nothing like a correct estimate can be made.

"Some farmers have nearly all their work done at common day wages; others say such a system will empty the deepest pocket: some give all the piece work possible, and allow from 5 to 20 per cent. extra earnings to be made when so employed; others will put out their task

work so close to the possible industry of the labourer, that no more than day wages are earned, and very few farmers can say the exact time a labourer has been employed at task work in contradistinction from day work, much of the employment on a farm not permitting task work, and the labourer has frequently threshing (barn work) and draining or ditching (field work) in progress at the same time, varied at intervals, at the discretion of the master, and further, the completion of either job postponed by other jobs at day work, which require the man's labour. The labourer takes his weekly nominal earnings, and when either of the pieces of task work concludes he receives the surplus, which is again rendered more troublesome to keep an exact account of, as the master probably allows the man to employ a boy to assist him in his task work, whom he pays at day wages and makes a profit of, which the master does not disapprove, as the boy is employed and learning, and is, perhaps, the man's own son, or one of a brother labourer on the same farm, and as the farmer pays no more than the current price for such work, he is not particular for a few days, more or less, that it may have taken.

"Agricultural labourers are divided into two classes; one of them having the charge of horses, and working with them, make no extra earnings except in harvest time, and are called horse-drivers; the other class, called the labourers, do the field and barn work, make extra earnings by piece-work; but by the most liberal masters must be employed for many weeks in amount at intervals, and sometimes for weeks in succession at day-work.

"Horse-drivers are generally young men fresh married from the farm-house service; and the wife, presenting him with a babe annually, has no opportunity of field-working, and the children are too young to work. As the boys and girls grow bigger they want more bread and more clothing; the woman, not so constantly in the straw or with a babe in her lap, can work in the field and train the children to it, and the horse-driver changes to the character and employment of the labourer. The men in this transition state with a young family, and all too young to work, are worst off; those with large families as labourers, with a considerate master, do no not fare so ill comparatively. Some farmers have their stone-picking, hoeing, and weeding done by gangs: a man hires a lot of children and goes from farm to farm to do these things, and profits by the children's labour. Other farmers allow their own men's wives and children to make these earnings in addition to their men's. The agricultural labourers however are not all at first horse-men; some wrought with their fathers in the field till manhood, and entered at once into the full honors of day-labour.

"With this preliminary exposition you will at once see why so much difference appears in day work and task work of the different parties; and the horse-men, being my cottage tenants, are free of rent. The labourers in my tenantry pay rent, as otherwise it would interfere with the price of task work when working with a man who was differently situated. In harvest both descriptions have, in addition to money, 10 pecks of malt and 2 lbs.

of hops, 21lbs. of pork, 4 bushels of wheat at 6s. per bushel, be the market price what it may, and when reaping wheat or carting white straw crops one pint of strong ale per day, and a good old-fashioned plum-pudding and beef dinner, with plenty of strong ale, at harvest-home. I mention this more as an expense to the master than as an advantage to the man, as extra living on his part does not clothe or feed the family, but merely enables him to get through very hard work and long days in the hot weather. I do not allow horse-men or labourers who are my tenants to keep a pig, but provide them with pork at less than market price in lieu—say to ten stone per annum if they wish it. The pork in harvest is in lieu of dinners, which many give as harvest is in progress.

You will observe that I have put the task work at 11s. per week: it is frequently more, but some of their tools are expensive, and liable to want repairing, particularly those used in draining heavy land. The labourers who are not my tenants can very seldom have a pig in the sty, or bacon in the pickle. Flour, bread and cheese, and hot water, nominally tea, is their chief diet; frequently however a good hot supper of potatoes, which now and then is diversified with milk broth and onions, or a cabbage or savoy from their gardens. Brewing they can only do in hay-making and harvest time. The horse-men have liberty of cutting the exuberant brushwood of the fences for the purpose of heating the oven all the year: the labourers have only what is not sufficiently valuable to keep when a hedge is cut or the ditch scoured in the winter. As to gleanings, no fair estimate can be made of it; if the woman is in the family-way, it is altogether lost, and if the children be small they must be put out at expense; and in this place the advantage of the agricultural population is much diminished from the poor, who inhabit and get their livelihood in the town, competing so powerfully with them. In parishes purely agricultural it is of more advantage to the classes under consideration, depending on the number and capability of the children; they will collect from six pecks to eight or ten bushels. I may add, harvest hours for working are from five in the morning till seven at night, &c. &c."

In exposing the injustice of many of the alleged cases of distress in the Sussex and Hampshire Unions, we do not mean to deny the existence of any distress arising out of the discontinuance of out-door relief to the able-bodied. The most sanguine advocates of a vital change of system in the administration of our laws for the relief of the poor—those who would readily have voted for the complete and final discontinuance of the relief of the able-bodied on a given day in 1835—were not prepared to expect that the transition could have been accomplished without many cases of individual suffering. We believe, upon the whole, that the aggregate amount of suffering has been very much smaller than the most cautious of the advocates of the change were ready to encounter. We believe that the suffering has been

very much smaller than under many other of the great transitions which have been necessary in our generation. The transition from the hand-loom to the power-loom alone produced cases of distress, not only much greater in their intensity than the cases under the allowance system, but in numbers certainly as a hundred to one. That was a transition of unmitigated evil for all the hand-loom weavers, and was very slowly compensated by their improved condition as consumers, and by their power of turning to new sources of production. But the case of the labourers formerly receiving out-door relief is one in which the direct evil, even to themselves, becomes almost instantly met by a positive benefit to themselves also, in the shape of increasing labour, increasing wages, employment for children; and all that comfort which is the direct result of depending upon one's own exertions. Mr. Brock would give "pensions" to able-bodied labourers deprived of their allowances;—that is, Mr. Brock would take away at the same time with the allowance all the motive in the allowance to do without it,—and what is a far greater evil, all the inducement for the young to turn to a better provision for their age, by looking to the honest fruit of their own exertions, instead of the utter idleness of the parish workhouse, or the work-in-mockery of the waywarden's heap of stones. The "pensioners" of whom Mr. Brock would have perpetuated the race, if they had not eaten up Mr. Brock and his workhouse and his parish church and his gravel-pit, (as they threatened to eat up Mr. Sockett and Lord Egremont) are of the class described in the following rich morceau of Poor Law table-talk:—

"Do you know a person of the name of Griffin, in your parish?—Yes.

"What sort of labourer was he before the new law?—Four or five years before the Act he might be considered an idle fellow, living on the parish, saying that he was unwell; this is from the man's own statement.

"You personally know the man besides?—I know the man well; he received from the parish about 2s. 6d. a week; he is a single man; when the new law was passed it was taken off; I got the medical man to examine him, and he said there was nothing the matter. I told him if he would come to my house for a month I would give him a beef steak every day and a pint of porter, and then he would be able to go to work; so just before the end of the month I told him I had work for him, and he asked 'Where?' I said, 'In the street opposite my cottage, and you can continue to come here for your dinner;' he said, 'I will not go into the street to work, because, if I do, the people passing by will say, *Ah, Charley, you are going to work; that is the effect of the new law;*' so I got him to work in a private part of the parish, and he is at work now." [Rev. Mr. Cockerton. 9552-4.]

Mr. Griffin has become a wiser man; there is hope even of the advancing knowledge of the pension advocates.

We have been quite ready to admit that many, even of the somewhat fanatical demonstrations of hostility to the New Poor Laws have originated in no worse motives than mistaken benevolence. We are even tempted to respect that benevolence, when it takes such an innocent direction as it took in the parish of Earnley, in the Westhampnett Union. Here, indeed, was a real striving of the rate-payers to remove, or at least mitigate, the frightful evils which were to result from disallowing all out-door relief to the able-bodied. Mr. James Lawrence, a farmer of that parish, came up ready to meet the deepest sympathy of the Committee for his laudable exertions. Mr. Lawrence was the man who stood between the perishing paupers and the terrible destruction of the Poor Law Commissioners. "He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed." "Do you recollect," inquired Mr. Walter, lowering his voice to the true tragic whisper—

"Do you recollect when the order for disallowing all out-door relief came into operation, was it in April 1836?—When it came fully into operation, it was when the out-door relief ceased; it was in April 1836.

"In consequence of that order, did anything relative to the able-bodied take place in your parish, the parish of Earnley?—Yes.

"State what that was.—At a vestry held in the parish, the rate-payers, considering that the not allowing men with large families any assistance would be very distressing to families, therefore made a private rate, which I have now with me, of 3d. in the pound, which we collected to give to those who stood in need of it.

Chairman.—"Did you give it to those parties?—They had a portion of it.

"To what description of families did you apply that rate?—If we had found large families in distress, we should have given them a part of it.

"Did you collect this rate?—Yes.

"What amount was collected?—Thirteen pounds one shilling.

"To what description of poor have you given the money collected under that rate?—Part of it to two boys, they are both in my employ, they have no father, their mother is in the Union poor-house, she is not quite right in her mind.

"Those two boys are in your employ, do you give them any wages?—I do, the same as I do to others.

"To whom does the money collected under the rate go?—Partly to those boys, who are lodging with a woman who washes and mends their clothes for them.

"How much goes to the boys?—One shilling a week to both of those boys, or 6d. a week to each. They are remarkably small boys.

"How is the rest of this rate distributed?—One pound was given to a poor woman in illness.

"Is that woman a parishioner of Earnley?—She is.

"Had she applied to the Board of Guardians for relief?—Yes.

"Had she been refused relief?—No, I should say she had relief.

"Do you know what relief she had?—No, I cannot charge my memory with it.

"Do you know whether she had medical relief?—Certainly she had.

"Do you believe the relief she had was insufficient?—I believe she was in very great distress at the time we gave 1l. to her.

"Was she a single woman?—No, it was a man and wife and three children, or four.

"Will you describe further the distribution of the rate?—A pair of shoes given to one of the paupers.

"What was the condition of that pauper; was that pauper in the employment of a private individual?—The shoes were given to one of the boys.

"One of the boys working for you?—Yes, THAT IS ALL THE MONEY THAT HAS BEEN EXPENDED IN THE SHAPE OF RELIEF.

"Will you state what has been done with the surplus?—At the formation of the Union, the parish had engaged to pay the overseer 5l. a year; of course, according to the new Act, we had no power of paying for it, and therefore we felt ourselves bound to fulfil our agreement, as our parish is a good distance from Chichester, and we paid him two years' salary out of the 13l.

"Then 10l. out of the 13l. went to the payment of an overseer, and not to the relief of the poor?—Yes."—[11,986—12,019.]

The entry in the Voluntary Rate Book may be thus summed up:—

Item. Made a voluntary rate for the relief of the great distress that would arise from denying out-door relief to the able-bodied, which we collected to give to those who stood in need of it.

Item. Collected 13l. 1s. 0d.

Item. They had a portion of it. If we had found large families in distress, we should have given them a part of it.

Item. Paid two boys 6d. a week each—both in my employ—(remarkably small boys).

Item. A pair of shoes to one of the boys.

Item. One pound to a poor woman in great distress.

Item. Ten pounds arrears of salary to the overseer (which we agreed to pay at the formation of the Union, we having no power to make such an agreement.)

Item. That is all the money that we have spent from the voluntary rate for the relief of the great distress that would arise from denying out-door relief to the able-bodied.

We have seen the operations of the waywarden's gravel-pit in

Petworth—we have witnessed the clamours for allowances by the pastors of Soberton and Bishop's Waltham—and we have had glimpses of the inefficiency of the voluntary rate in the good parish of Earnley. At the same time we have seen the effects of the absorption of labour and the rise of wages in the Unions of West-hampnett and Droxford, when the allowances were withheld from the able-bodied. We can, however, understand how some enthusiasts may be dissatisfied with these slow operations, and desire to make a short leap to a state of perfection, not by the ordinary healing and renovating processes of the social system when left to itself, but through the convulsive energies of the social system when under the druggings of the great physicians who have regulated its health for the last forty years,—the magistrates and parish functionaries. Mr. Butler and Mr. Brock have favoured the world with their opinions, as well as their facts; and from their philosophy we may collect "the one thing needful" for the labouring poor. "Something must be done," says Mr. Butler; "there ought to be some plan devised," echoes Mr. Brock. But we must let these gentlemen expound their own creed:—

Mr. Butler.—"Objecting, as you do, to relief being given indiscriminately to persons in consequence of the number in the family, without reference to their circumstances, and objecting to the relief being taken away as it is under the order of the Commissioners, except in the poorhouse, what would you propose to substitute?—That is a subject which I have not considered, and a question which I did not expect to be asked; but I would merely state, upon the evidence which I have brought before the Committee, that it is my opinion that *something must be done for the able-bodied labourers, particularly to give them employment, to make them work and give them fair wages*, because I can see that many of them are getting into debt, and I cannot see what the end will be in the parish."—[5271.]

Mr. Brock.—"Your opinion is, that labourers such as you have described, thatchers, carters, and men in constant work or otherwise, receiving from 12s. to 16s. or 17s. a week, as the aggregate earnings of their families, should become parish pensioners, and receive weekly pay to assist them to maintain their families?—I think that, when out of employment; I mention Charles Steel's case, because he had an order to go into the workhouse; I think it a hardship that he should go into the workhouse; I should not say that he ought to become a parish pensioner, nor would he wish it; but before the parties give an order to go into the poorhouse, with a respectable character, they ought to say, *there is such work, take it*; if he refuses to take the work, it is very just that he should go into the workhouse.

"You do not think that any evil would arise from allowing those persons to become parish pensioners?—I do not recommend that they should become parish pensioners; *there ought to be some plan devised,*

whereby work should be at hand, or if not at hand, that it should be certain, so that the guardians or parties concerned in the relief of the poor, should say, "There is such an employment, on such and such terms," and on such terms that the poor could really accept it; but they are driven about the country on an uncertainty."—[7512—13.]

When an educated gentleman says, "something must be done" to give the labourers employment, and not only to give them employment but to obtain their work (to make them work as he expresses it), and to obtain that work upon a proper exchange of capital for labour,—*"fair wages,"*—it should be presumed that this educated man understands that there is a natural fund for the maintenance of labour which is to produce these beneficial results. It should be presumed that he is aware of the fact that this fund cannot be increased but by the addition of the results of *more* profitable labour; and that whatever is paid out of the fund for the support of unprofitable labour, has a direct tendency to lower the rate at which the profitable labour is paid,—to prevent the payment of *"fair wages."* When another educated gentleman tells us, "there ought to be some plan devised whereby work should be at hand," we presume he does not forget the "plan" which requires no devising, because our necessities are constantly calling it into operation,—the natural law of exchange, which makes "work at hand" wherever there is capital to pay for it. We rather apprehend, however, that these gentlemen do forget these things, and that they refer to some fund which they suppose to be in the hands of "guardians or parties concerned in the relief of the poor," which is a different fund from the ordinary labour fund. This fund, according to them, is to work a sort of labour-miracle—Mahomet is not to come to the mountain, but the mountain is to come to Mahomet. The labourers are not to seek for the fund "about the country on an uncertainty;" but the work for the labourers "should be at hand"—"it should be certain." This clearly is not the ordinary labour fund. That is neither always at hand, nor is it always certain. It shifts its place according to its necessity for use; it is uncertain in proportion to the demand upon it. The fund of Mr. Butler and Mr. Brock is clearly not the labour fund, it is the *want* fund; and the mistake that these gentlemen and many others have fallen into, is, that the want fund has qualities of far greater powers of usefulness than the labour fund; that the parish purse is the purse of Fortunatus, always full; that the parish labour field is like the tent of the Indian queen in the Arabian tale, you could carry it in the palm of your hand, and yet it would give shelter to an army of thousands. We should

have thought that the prospect of the all-devouring mouths of Petworth, who would have lunched upon Lord Egremont, would have disabused his neighbours of Droxford of this fallacy. No. The wages of labour, they still think, if left to their natural operation, will give nothing but starvation to the labourer; the wages of labour if turned out of their accustomed channel to flow through the parish pay book, are to make the labourers fat and happy. But the "ready at hand" labour advocates, and the "certain" labour advocates say, we have no wish to pay people for nothing, "there is such an employment on such and such terms." The process by which they would effect the good is a simple one. They would take a portion of the labour fund as it exists in the hands of those whose interest it is to employ the labourer to the most advantage, to put it in the hands of those who are enabled to employ him to the least advantage. This plan proposes to encourage labour by a diversion of the labour fund; and, in the encouragement, it admits the claims of the idle, the dissolute, and the improvident, to the larger portion of the same fund. It does so, for the contract with the labourers is not one in which the labour exchanged for the capital is taken into consideration; it is the semblance of labour which is desired by those who think that "work should be at hand" for all who apply for it; and therefore the idle and the improvident are as much qualified to be exchangers of their semblance of labour as the true labourer himself. This is the system which was equally impoverishing the capitalist and the labourer in our southern counties; this is the system over whose destruction by the supporters of the real labour-fund, the only dispenser of plenty and happiness, the Brocks and Butlers now weep, and in their lamentations over the ruins of their idolatrous city of refuge still exclaim, "Something must be done,"—"some plan devised."

The order for discontinuing out-door relief to the able-bodied, in the Droxford Union, was issued in September, 1836. The period for issuing that order was well considered;—it had reference to a principle that lies somewhat deeper than the philosophy which holds that a labourer is well off when he is receiving a large allowance from the parish purse, and badly off when he has to look about him for his support directly from the labour-fund out of which the parish purse is supplied. The philosophers of Droxford saw the allowance stopped when winter was approaching; and famine was hovering, therefore, all around them. Mr. Brock is thus examined on this point by Mr. Walter:—

"A peremptory order for prohibiting all out-door relief to able-bodied paupers took effect in your parish in September last; are you of opinion that the month of September was favourable to the introduction of so

great a change in the social relations of the labouring classes in your neighbourhood?—I should say that that was the last season of the year that should have been fixed on for the enforcing of that order; it presses exceedingly heavy on the labouring classes with large families, and the distress that has been occasioned by it, in my opinion, is considerable.

"Then the eve of winter, in your judgment, is not the fitting period when labourers with large families should be thrown on their own resources?—Certainly not.

"In winter is the price of provisions more reasonable than at other periods of the year?—I should think it is higher; this winter certainly they have been much higher, owing to the rise in the price of corn.

"Is not fuel more in request?—Fuel is also dearer.

"Is labour more in demand in winter than in the other three quarters of the year?—It is much more difficult for the poor to obtain labour in the winter than in the summer.

"You are not of opinion that the verge of winter was well chosen for placing your Union on what had been termed by the Assistant-Commissioner 'this advanced state of improvement'?—I should say the winter was the most unfavourable time to have fixed on."—[6225-30.]

The Rev. Mr. Dewdney holds the same opinions upon this subject as the Rev. Mr. Brock:—

"In the Droxford Union, you are aware that the peremptory order for granting no relief to the able-bodied out of the workhouse took effect from September last; was that period, in your judgment, well chosen?—I should say it was not.

"Upon what peculiar class did that order most hardly press?—Upon those men who had large families; it always must press upon them, at any time of the year, but that time is peculiarly unfit for its commencing.

"Are there many families of that character in the Droxford Union?—A good many.

"Supposing it to have been the intention of the Legislature, by the Poor Law Amendment Act, to have raised the condition of the independent labourer above that of the labourer in the workhouse, has that intention been effected?—No; they have not taken the mode of doing it."—[10265-88.]

Upon this subject let us hear Col. A'Court, the Assistant-Commissioner at whose suggestion the order was issued. Was it a refinement of cruelty that induced Col. A'Court and the Commissioners to select this period, when provisions are dearer, when fuel is dearer, when labour is less in demand? We apprehend not:—

"The Commissioners issued an order to the Droxford Union, refusing relief out of doors to able-bodied labourers?—At my suggestion, they did.

"When was that order issued?—I think I attended the Board of

Guardians on the 9th of August, and it was issued on the 19th of that month, to take effect from, I think, the 25th of September in the year 1836.

"What were your reasons for suggesting the issuing of that document?—I had reason to fear that, in many parishes of that Union, immediately after the harvest, the wages would be lowered, and I considered it as a measure essentially protective of the poor man's interest to have that order out as soon as possible. The guardians were aware of my motive, and I do not think there was a dissentient voice; they agreed to receive it, and the order was issued.

"Your reason for suggesting the issuing of that order was, that you thought it would have the effect either of raising wages, or at least of preventing their being lowered?—I did not look to raising wages, for I never knew an instance of wages being raised in the fall of the year.

"In point of fact, what was the effect upon the wages, in any parish in the Droxford Union, of issuing that order?—What led me, in the first instance, to recommend its issuing, was having witnessed its effect in the parish of Warnford, where a proprietor, not much used to rural affairs, was diverting a piece of water, and employing a vast number of labourers, at wages on which they could not exist as they ought to do. The Board of Guardians, then, having no workhouse, and only those miserable parish-houses, wrote to the gentleman at Warnford, stating, that if he could not raise his wages, we should be compelled to take them into the workhouse, and the consequence was that the wages were raised; we heard no more of the men, therefore we supposed that they were satisfied. About three months after the order was issued, the parish of Exton did attempt to lower the wages, while in the other parishes they continued the same. The guardians said to those labourers, 'No, we do not interfere between master and man, but if you come to us, you cannot come in the double capacity of paupers and labourers, and we advise you to take the poorhouse;' two of the three did take it, and were taken out in three or four days, upon an increase of wages, which was the object that I had in view; and I must also state, that I had another object, though it was a minor object, which was that of coercing a certain number of idle people, who had been out of employ. In the preceding year, when I formed the Droxford Union, there were upwards of 200 able-bodied men out of work, 60 or 80 of them in the parish of Hambledon. In the course of a few months, the 60 or 80 were reduced to 30 or 40, and we formed the Union in March; and when the barking season commenced, which would be at the end of April, they began to look out and to seek for work, which they never had done before; the first I heard of them was, some of them being at work 25 miles off.

"Those were exertions which, before the introduction of that rule, the men were not in the habit of making?—They had not the slightest idea of making those exertions; I never saw so pauperized a district as that was, when I first entered it.

"What was the state of the Droxford district when you first went into it?—I think it is impossible to imagine a district more utterly

pauperized and demoralized, than that district of Droxford, when I went there."—[8907-13.]

The measure produced an effect which even Colonel A'Court did not anticipate; he did not look to raising wages, for he had never known an instance of wages being raised in the fall of the year. But, in point of fact, the wages did rise in the Droxford Union, even in the fall of the year. The following is Mr. Woolridge's testimony to this point:—

"You stated that the wages rose about last November; your Union took place on the 30th of March, 1835?—I suppose that was the time.

"When did the order, stopping out-door relief to the able-bodied, take place in your Union?—I think in September, 1836.

"Then very soon after that order took place you thought it necessary to raise the amount of wages?—We did so.

"Then it was not altogether owing to the rise of the price of provision, but owing to the operation of the new law, that the amount of wages was raised?—Yes.

"In consequence of stopping out-door relief?—Yes.

"Did you usually pay less wages to single men than to married men?—We used to do it; I do not now. I pay mine 9s.: we used to pay them only 6s., and I have known them hired for 4s.

"You make no distinction in the amount of wages between the married and the single labourer?—Not if he is as good a labourer."—[6994-7000.]

In the preceding evidence of Colonel A'Court he has emphatically pointed out the direct benefits to the labouring population which have resulted from the system of administering relief to the able-bodied by the workhouse, and the workhouse only. As a test of destitution, there can be no doubt of the all-sufficiency of this powerful engine. It gives an assurance that, whatever privations may be endured, no one can starve. The workhouse opens its doors to all who knock; but when they enter, it subjects all who have knocked to its wholesome regulations. There are shelter, food, clothing, fire; everything for health, but nothing for indulgence. But there is not strong liquor, nor gambling, nor profane talk, nor license of every sort. The workhouse is irksome to all but the aged and infirm, to whom its quiet and order and cleanliness are happiness; and to the children, to whom its sufficient meals, its cheerful exercise, and its considerate instruction, are blessings. The able-bodied, then, seldom enter the workhouse, and seldom stay when they have entered; but it is of the last importance to their individual interests, and to the interests of their class, that its doors should be open to them at all times, and that there should be no relief to themselves, or to any portion of

their families, except within its doors. A very short residence within the workhouse walls produces the good which they desire, and corrects the evil which they have fled from, provided they are not disqualified by infamy, or incorrigible idleness, from earning their own living. If they are, they must remain in the workhouse; they must remain there for the good of those who are independent of the workhouse; they must remain there that they may not encumber the labour-market and depress the rate of wages; they must remain there that they may be maintained out of the want-fund, with the least possible drain upon the labour-fund. But if they are able and willing to work—if they have fled to the workhouse as a protection against an attempt to reduce wages below the natural level, which is determined by the average of the district—or if, the average of the district being lower than the average of other districts, they have fled to the workhouse to restore the balance of the supply of labour, which can alone restore the rate of wages,—they will not long remain in the workhouse. The evil will have been corrected; and they will return to their independent exertions, not depraved and contaminated, as they used to be, by the parish-pit, but with the lessons of order, punctuality, sobriety, and general decency of conduct, which they have practised and experienced in the workhouse, strongly impressed upon them. The case is not an imaginary one; it has been mentioned by Colonel A'Court; but we must give it more in detail.

The Rev. Mr. Sockett, arguing from the irksomeness of the workhouse to an able-bodied labourer, was of opinion that, as regards wages, he would be ground down to anything before he would go into an Union workhouse (187). Mr. Sockett considered the workhouse was an instrument for grinding down wages; for he had been so long accustomed to the wholesale grinding process, by the instrumentality of unprofitable parish employ, that he could not imagine a state in which the partial attempts to grind to a minimum must be subjected to the general laws of supply and demand, if those laws were left to their own operation. Colonel A'Court states the principle of the workhouse grinding somewhat differently from Mr. Sockett:—

"You consider there is no unwillingness in the Board of Guardians to offer the workhouse to those who can, by their labour, obtain only wages of so low a rate as not to afford the ordinary strength and comfort to a British labourer?—None whatever; and I can instance a case where 98 people had the offer of the house on one day, because the wages were inadequate, and directly that was known to the rate-payers, for it was communicated to them, they met, and I think of the whole number only four came into the house, and only two remained: the wages rose directly that took place in the Board of Guardians, and they judged it best to give the fair rate of wages of that district."—[8947.]

The value of this system may be better estimated by contrasting it with the operation of another system, which has been tried under the New Law. In the Appendix to the Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners a letter is given from the Chairman of the Amesbury Union, which contains the following account of a plan adopted by the Guardians of that Union for defeating a combination of farmers to lower wages:—

"One other circumstance connected with the well-working of the new system I am desirous of mentioning, as its practical result has been strongly exemplified in this Union. I allude to the employment of labourers by the Board of Guardians at full wages, who have been thrown out of work in their own parish without any fault of their own, and compelled to ask the relieving officer for work or support. This matter was, if I recollect right, explained to you when you last visited us, and was partially illustrated by the two cases you inquired into yourself.

"It has not been of rare occurrence for a score of labourers to be all at once thrown upon the parish from a quarrel amongst the farmers about employing their fair proportion of men.

"This occurred at Durrington. We directed the relieving officer to employ the whole body so dismissed in lowering a hill in the parish of Bulford, charging the work to the parish of Durrington.

"They held out a fortnight; but from that day to the present no labourer has been out of employ in that parish. Indeed they have stirred themselves with such good effect, that a month since they shipped upwards of 20 as emigrants to Canada.

"The parish of Amesbury played the same game for one week, and then uttered their *peccavi*.

"The parish of Idmiston is now striving to beat us on the same question; they have for a fortnight been paying for 16 labourers working on a road in Winterbourne Gunner. They have threatened us with counsel's opinion, and the vengeance of the law, and I dare say will appeal to the Central Board."

The employment of a number of labourers at full wages, by a Board of Guardians, or any other *public* employer, is not calculated to produce good under any ordinary state of things, except at a cost which greatly diminishes the labour-fund. Colonel A'Court very properly says that, although this plan was adopted as a matter of expediency, at Amesbury, because there was no workhouse, such a practice has a mischievous tendency, in its interference with the labour-market. He then proceeds to the workhouse system:—

"Supposing it should happen that, in consequence of the operation of the New Poor Law, the farmers of the parish should find that they have the labourers entirely in their power, so that they can make them work on their own terms, what other mode could the guardians of the

poor adopt in order to compel those who do employ the men to give them fair wages, other than by some such system as is alluded to in this letter from Amesbury?—There is a much better system—that of the poorhouse, in which case the expense is much larger to the ratepayer, and he will find it is his bounden interest to give the labourers 1s. or 2s. a week more than usual, to keep them out of the house; for the expense of maintenance in the workhouse is very serious; you cannot put it at less than 2s. 6d. or 3s. a week. Take a man and his wife and six children, making together eight, there will be 24s. for the maintenance of such a family; supposing the wages to be 8s. or 9s., it would be better worth his while to give 1s. or 2s. more wages than to allow the man and his family to go into the workhouse; and in that way it operates indirectly in raising wages, without any interference with the labour-market.

“Is not that process attended with great individual suffering to the party who is compelled to leave his cottage, sell his furniture, and go into the house, in order that he may be taken out again?—But you assume that he sells his furniture: I never knew an instance of that happening; they are not sold out in my district; I never knew such a case, and certainly I should set my face very much against it, if I did.”—[8935—6.]

“Do you think a farmer in moderate circumstances will be disposed to give the labourer 10s. a week, if he can get his labour for 7s., merely because he thinks that there will be an increased payment to the parochial fund if the labourer go into the workhouse?—I think it will operate, and I know that it does operate. I will give an instance: at a meeting in Devizes, at which a member of this Committee was presiding, the point was disputed, whether it would have the effect of raising wages or not: it was proved, in that Union, that of 20,000 souls there were only eight families to which the rule would apply. I then requested any one of the relieving officers to be called in, and begged him to give the name of any individual with a large family from whom out-door relief had been withheld: he did so; and when he was asked the result, he stated that, on the very following day, the master who employed the parents and the children increased the wages of both, and that he himself was induced, in the course of the week, to get out two of the children, whom he never dreamt of getting out before.”—[9073.]

The evidence of Colonel A'Court may probably not be thought quite conclusive, because he is a philosopher after another fashion than the learned men of Petworth and Droxford. Such persons consider the *relief* of want, in whatever form it may present itself, as their only duty. It is for theorists alone, in their opinion, to talk about the *prevention* of want. People that write books and make speeches, they say, about the funds for the maintenance of labour, and the necessity for keeping a balance between those funds and the number of the labourers, are not only silly but wicked. “God is good; and wherever he sends mouths

he will provide food for them.” And so God would, by the natural workings of the great laws of society, if it were not for the pretensions of those who have so long been interpreting these laws by their own presumptuous prejudices. But we are digressing, and must give the philosophers of Sussex and Hants something from the evidence of their own “practical men.” We will first try Mr. Shapley, a witness in his general opinions adverse to the operations of the Amended Poor Law:—

“Do you know any parishes in the Westhampnett Union in which, three or four years ago, there were a number of unemployed labourers?—Yes, of course I do.

“Do you know whether the same number of unemployed labourers are to be met with now?—No, not the same number, because a great number have emigrated and migrated.

“Independently of those, do you believe that the amount of agricultural employment has not increased within the parishes of the Westhampnett Union?—Yes, it has in some particular instances, and I will tell the Committee why; because those men were taken away from the gravel-pits and roads, and thrown into the Hampnett workhouse, and the farmers would rather take them at any employment on the farm than have to keep them in the workhouse, which they knew they must do in the end if they drove it to an extremity.

“Supposing that to be the motive governing the farmers, still, in point of fact, from that or some other motive, the farmers do employ more men than they did before the law?—They do: it was a matter of indifference at one time how the farmers paid their men, but now their inclination is to keep the men from the parish as much as possible, and to have as much work done as they can on their farms, such as grubbing hedge-rows and levelling; those jobs are going on before their eyes.

“Since when has this change taken place?—Since the Poor Law.”—[16891—5.]

Mr. Stares (of the Droxford Union) speaks to the case of Exton, mentioned by Colonel A'Court:—

“Is it not the interest of the occupiers of land to give them wages which will enable them to maintain their families out of the workhouse?—Certainly it has that effect. I know that there was a case at Exton, a parish within our Union, some time since; three of the paupers applied for relief, stating that their wages were not sufficient to support them; they were married men with large families. I asked them the rate of wages they were receiving: the impression upon my mind is, that it was lower than the general rate of wages in the neighbourhood, and, as I was sure that the men could not live upon that, I said, ‘You had better have an order, and go into the Fareham house; I am sure you cannot live upon the wages.’ Two of the three families went into the house: they had not been long there when the way-wardens of the parish applied to me to know if they could not have them out again. I

said, 'Certainly, we have no power to keep them there; after three hours' notice to the master, they can leave: what is your motive for employing them?' They said that they were keeping them at a great expense in the house: 'we must have them out again.' I said, 'You are come to that now, are you? I am very glad of it.' They then took them out, and I have since heard nothing of the families. By the by, I did hear that one of the men was employed at 2s. a week more than he had before he went in, but we have had no complaint to the Board since from any one of the families.

"Your impression therefore is, that they are earning more wages than they were before?—Yes, or we should have heard a complaint from them.

"And it is in that way that you consider the present system has a tendency to raise wages?—Most assuredly."—[7648—50.]

The tendency of the system to raise wages is the tendency of the system to maintain the labourer at that standard of diet and of comfort which inevitably prevents a general depression of the rate of wages. It prevents the labourer being driven from wheaten bread to rye bread, and from rye bread to potatoes, as the staple of his diet. Mr. Goldsmith, of the Droxford Union, speaks to this point:—

"You stated that there were some men to whom you gave orders to go into the workhouse, in consequence of their not receiving wages enough to maintain their families; do you mean that their wages were insufficient to maintain their families with bread and other necessaries?—Yes.

"What were they?—Very low, I recollect, not sufficient to support themselves and families.

"Do you think they were sufficient to support their families upon a potato diet?—I do not know; the potato diet would be very cheap, it is true.

"You were a member of the Board of Guardians at that time?—Yes, I was.

"And the board took into consideration that their wages were not sufficient to maintain them upon a wheaten diet?—We considered that the wages were not sufficient for their support.

"Upon the principle of their receiving bread to eat?—Yes, bread and other necessaries.

"Therefore, in that instance, the offer of the workhouse, under the new system, was employed, and successfully, to restore wages to a rate which would maintain those large families upon a wheaten diet?—Yes.

"Therefore the new law, in that way, has the effect of keeping up wages to the scale required by the wheaten diet?—I think that is a proof of it, certainly, because immediately upon their being ordered into the house they were taken out again by the farmers, and employed at better wages."—[8636—43.]

Those who desire to raise the labourer's standard of enjoyment

have, however, no inclination to lower the standard of the class next above the labourer, or onward through all the grades of society. They reserve that task for the class of reformers who may be supposed to agree with the Hon. Member of the Committee who put the following ingenious questions to Mr. Hawley the assistant Commissioner:

Mr. D. W. Harvey.—"You have stated that, when you are engaged in the country, you receive a guinea per day; what is that intended to embrace?—The general expenses, I imagine.

"What are those general expenses; do they include your living?—Living at inns.

"Will you have the goodness to state to the Committee what is the average daily expense of yourself living at an inn?—From 18s. to 20s.

"Does that include merely the comforts of living?—It does.

"Do you apply in that estimate of 20s. a day to your own comfort of living your view of 6s. a week being enough for the comfortable subsistence of a labouring single man?—I hardly know how to answer that question."—[1468—72.]

Mr. Hawley might well say he hardly knew how to answer this question, for a complete answer to it could scarcely be made without entering into the whole theory of the interest which the labouring classes really have in the maintenance of wealth,—a most valuable exposition if it could be made, and understood by the labouring classes, who, paradoxical as it may appear, have an interest even in the maintenance of luxuries. Abolish luxuries, and you destroy the motive to the labour for extra production by which luxuries are obtained, and a multitude of artizans engaged in producing the luxuries are supported. Abolish luxuries, and there will be fewer agricultural labourers, and the whole body of the agricultural labourers will be degraded into the condition of savages. Abolish luxuries in England, and if the rest of the world follows the example, how much of the population of Birmingham, Manchester, and our manufacturing districts will escape destruction? Without luxuries, how much of the higher labour constituting civilization would be undertaken? The pseudo poor man's advocate and orator could not perceive that in the questions, *ad invidium*, to the Assistant Commissioner, he implied a theory in the highest degree ruinous to the classes whose interests were supposed to be involved. The Assistant Commissioner is a skilled labourer, whose inducement was the *status* of an honourable condition comprehending those same luxuries; and he might have answered the professional gentleman who questioned him, that the justification of his charge of one guinea per diem for living was to be found in the bills of an attorney, in every one of which, when absent from home, and by professional rule, three guineas is the

charge. When Mr. D. Whittle Harvey shall expound the theory of his professional charges for living, as compared with the charges of a common labourer, when he acts as an attorney in behalf of some objects of charity, then the Assistant Commissioner may be called upon to defend his charge of one-third the amount.

To return to the question of labourers' wages. Mr. Goldsmith has stated, in a dozen words, the whole philosophy of the question of wages as affected by a small superabundance of labour, and we here leave the reply to Mr. Sockett's assertion, that the workhouse system will grind down wages to any thing:—

"If a farmer were to offer an able-bodied man what he considers to be an insufficient remuneration for his labour, and he were to present himself to the parish workhouse, that fact being known, would he receive any assistance from the parish?—Not any assistance from the parish; but I should say that it would operate in this kind of way: *if the men had not sufficient wages given them, in all probability they would be ordered into the house, and then we should soon find an insufficiency of labour in the parish, and be obliged to give higher wages on that account to those who remained in the parish.*"—[8489.]

The statute of 1662 (13th & 14th Car. II.), the foundation of the *Law of Settlements*, which existed, with some modification, till the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, enounces the theory upon which the entire labouring population of England were, for more than a century and a half, doomed to be "hereditary bondsmen," "chained to the soil," "dispossessed of the power of acquiring property, or enjoying it openly and honestly." The preamble to that statute says, "whereas by reason of some defects in the law, poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavour to settle themselves in those parishes where there is the best stock." Unquestionably. This is the effect of the great *natural* law of labour seeking exchange with capital; the labour went to the parishes "where there is the best stock;" where the funds for the maintenance of labour were most abundant. In that period of profound legislation, when parliaments decreed that the superabundant produce of our own country should not be exchanged with the superabundant produce of another country, for fear the trade of our own country with countries which had nothing to exchange should be destroyed,—in that period in which it was thought the height of wisdom to declare that commerce should not be free, it was also declared that labour should not go to capital, lest the labourers should become "*Rogues and Vagabonds*," "to the great discouragement of parishes to provide *stocks*, when it is liable to be

devoured by strangers." The parishes therefore kept their stocks (capital) for those who were born and died within the lines of demarcation; and if the rogues and vagabonds ventured within the sacred precincts, they treated them with a taste of another species of stocks, which they could neither eat nor drink,—the

"Dungeon scarce three inches wide;
With roof so low, that under it
They never stand, but lie or sit;
And yet so foul, that whoso is in
Is to the middle leg in prison."

—HUDIBRAS, Part I, Canto 2.

To this ingenious machine for preventing the devouring of stocks by strangers were the labourers of England doomed, if they dared to venture out of their own parish, even when in their own parish they, the natives, had eaten up all the parish could give them. Other humane devices to prevent the desire for wandering, and to reconcile them to starvation at home, were derived from the good old times of branding and whipping. By degrees, however, these exertions to *prevent the labourers wandering* were in great part superseded by the merciful consideration of the old poor law functionaries, who employed a great portion of their time, and a larger portion of the public money, in *carrying the labourers about* from one end of the kingdom to the other, parcelling them out with the nicest adjustment amongst the fourteen thousand little divisions called parishes, and determining that whatever circumstances existed in any one of these fourteen thousand divisions to make the presence of the labourers desirable or otherwise, they should go, and they should stay where they had been born or apprenticed or last lived for a year. The labourers were such tender plants that they could not be acclimated except in their native soil, or where they had taken a little root: and so a perpetual transplantation was going forward, which set the whole country alive with the movements of vagrant carts, and filled the coaches and the inns with burly overseers and fat constables, travelling from all points between the Thames and the Tweed, from Berkshire to Leicestershire, and from Sussex to Cornwall, with labourers and labourers' wives, and astonished children. All this was managed to the great satisfaction of the vestry and the overseers, and the lawyers; under whose auspices it was generally arranged that the labourers, and the wives, and the children, or some of them, with many of their friends and fellow-labourers, should make a journey to the county sessions as witnesses, and after the most solemn inquiry, travel back again to the place whence they came and from whence they had been "illegally" removed. We

know an instance in Berkshire of a man in good employ who had been allowed 2s. a week upon a suspended order, being at last taken, with his wife and eight children, some hundred and fifty miles in the public stage to their place of settlement,—being brought back again at the expense of the parish to which they had been removed, with the intention that they should there obtain a settlement by renting a tenement—so renting the said tenement for a year, and then applying for relief—being again removed, to the infinite delight of overseers, constables, vestry-clerks, and stage coachmen, upon the plea that the tenement so rented was not worth 10*l.* a year, and that it was a collusive renting—and being finally brought back and settled upon the parish from which they had been first moved, after a solemn trial of two days, during which an army of surveyors was produced by the appellants and respondents, to prove the annual value of a cottage consisting of four rooms and a pig-stye. This process occupied about a year and a half, during which period the man's labour was entirely unsettled, and he and his wife and eight children were well-nigh starved. This law of settlement was the great source of amusement amongst the parish functionaries throughout England for the last forty years. It was played at the direct cost to the country of several millions annually, and with an indirect cost in the loss of many more millions of profitable labour. The general consequences of this system are thus shortly stated:—

“Soon after the close of the war, when the agricultural labourers were increased by the disbanding of the army, and the demand for their labour was diminished from various causes, agricultural parishes very generally came to the resolution of employing none but their own parishioners, which ruined the industry of the country, and produced more individual misery than can be conceived by those who were not eye-witnesses: the immediate consequence of this determination was the removal of numbers of the most industrious families from homes where they had lived in comfort, and without parish relief, all their lives, to a workhouse in the parish to which they belonged; and without materially affecting the ultimate numbers in the respective parishes, the wretched objects of removal, instead of happy and contented labourers, became the miserable inmates of crowded workhouses, without the hope of ever returning to their former independence. Since this period recourse has been had to various plans, shifts, and devices, all bad in principle, and seldom affording even temporary relief in practice. It must be obvious that the evil of a superabundant population, even where the excess upon the whole is not large, is greatly aggravated by confining undue proportions within small local divisions.”—*Answers from Sussex to the Commissioners of Poor Law Inquiry.*

The particular consequences of misery, and degradation, and destitution of character to the labourers, may be summed up in

the following narrative, which has been often printed, but which cannot be too often read:—

“The check to the circulation of agricultural labour is too notorious to be talked of. The case of a man who has worked for me will show the effect of 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 only qualify himself for it 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.”—*Mr. Hickson's evidence given in Mr. Chadwick's Report for London and Berkshire, 1833.*

The law of settlements is abolished in its most mischievous workings—settlement by hiring and service no longer exists, and consequently labour circulates—the capitalist is free to employ the labourer without the dread that he may bring a burden on his parish—the labourer is not kept at home, unemployed till he is a beggar, to consume the labour-fund in unprofitable labour. There can be no doubt that the increase of the labour-fund by an end being put to the drains upon it of the want-fund has left a surplus which will absorb all the labour, now that the barriers are removed which prevented the accumulation. Col. A'Court says,—

"When first I began my duties of Assistant Commissioner I made it my province to see all the land-surveyors that I could get hold of, to ascertain their feelings upon the subject of the superabundance of population, and I recollect a very eminent surveyor telling me that he never went over a farm in his life to value it, even in the winter, where he could not put out profitable labour for more servants than he found engaged."

The theory is sustained by the practice. Mr. Woolridge says,—

"You have stated that you used to have eight able-bodied men loose upon your parish in the winter, and you have none now; do you think that the railroad has occasioned those to have employment?—Not one; not one has gone to the railroad out of all of them."

"Do you know where they are employed?—I can tell several. Mr. Aylward, in the adjoining parish, has got many acres of land in our parish, a farm; Mr. Lillywhite has some land in our parish, and Mr. Stoke has some land, and they will now take our labourers, and before they did not care to take them at all."

"Why?—They do not care whose labourers they take now, it is immaterial; before they only took those of their own parish." [6841-43.]

Most ingenious were the devices for keeping men "in their own parish," as we have shown; and even now those who cling to the pleasure of stinting the labourer's growth by chaining him to the soil, chuckle when they can stretch their authority to employ only their own labourers. The following dialogue between Mr. Scrope (a member of the Committee) and worthy Mr. Ellis of Petworth is amusing and instructive, and therefore our readers will not complain of its length:—

Mr. Scrope.] "You have brought up the account of the *way-warden* of last year?—I have."

"This account is not made up; is that owing to the close of the year not having been come to?—That is the cause."

"Are there any considerable sums likely to be introduced which are not found in this book?—There are."

"I see entered in this account of the 50 weeks of the last year the sum of 331*l.* 19*s.* paid for day labour to able-bodied labourers; were those the labourers that were set on work on the parish account in consequence of their not having work by private employment?—Yes."

"On the other side of the account you have disposed of stones and sand, and other materials, the produce of the labour of those men, to the amount 316*l.*?—Yes, so it appears; I know nothing of the book myself; I received it from the way-warden."

"Then the Committee may presume, from this, that there has been a demand within the parish of Petworth during the last year to the amount of 316*l.* for stone, sand, and other materials which have been supplied by the parish?—Yes, it has been supplied by the parish: there happens to have been, during the last year, a great deal of building going on. Lord Egremont has been laying out a great deal of money upon Tillington church, in enlarging the church and in building a room of his own, and

we have been building a gasometer, and that has enabled us to sell the quantity of stones that have been sold and used."

"If the parish had not undertaken to provide those materials for Lord Egremont and others who have those works in hand, do not you think that persons undertaking those works would have required the same amount of labour, and would have taken those same men into employment which you have interfered yourself to employ, that for the same supply there would have been the same demand?—No, they could not have employed the men, because they could not have had the heath to dig upon: those stones are dug upon private property, and therefore any person employing those men to dig those stones could not have the heath to dig upon, because the heath is rented by the parish at 5*l.* a year."

"But still the persons carrying on those works would have required the materials, and must have procured them from some quarter or other?—Yes."

"And in procuring those materials, they would have created a demand for that surplus amount of labour that the parish have employed?—Precisely so."

"Therefore, is not your employing those able-bodied labourers on account of the parish, and selling the produce of their labour to Lord Egremont and others requiring those materials, perfectly unnecessary, and an interference with the ordinary demand for labour in that neighbourhood?—No; and perhaps I might explain that in this way; that heath which is now rented by the parish, some few years ago, three or or four years ago, was rented by another person, and that person, instead of employing the people of the parish of Petworth, employed very much out-parishioners; therefore, we should not have so much benefited by the employment of our own parishioners if that heath had been in the hands of another person, as we have done by its being in the hands of our own parish."

"So that you have been able to employ your own paupers, and take that employment from some neighbouring parish?—No doubt."

"If you had refused to employ those labourers, do not you think that some of them, by entering into competition with the labourers of other parishes, would have got that amount of employment?—No, I think not; I think that it has been a greater benefit to the parish, the parish being enabled to employ their own people upon that heath: when I speak of the parish, I am speaking of the labourers of the parish."

"At all events, whatever benefits you have conferred upon your own parish, you have injured to the same extent some neighbouring parish?—Yes; but *charity begins at home*; we take care of ourselves first."

"You say that the person who rented this heath was unwilling to employ any person who belonged to your parish; what was the reason for that?—I did not say that he was unwilling to employ our labourers, but that was the fact that he did employ the parishioners of another parish."

Chairman.] "At that time were there a number of parishioners of Petworth out of work?—I have no doubt that there were."

"Do you know what wages he gave?—No.

"Do you suspect that the wages of the out-parishioners were lower than those paid in Petworth?—I suspect that they were.

"Then the person who rented the heath did no more than this, that he obtained the labour that he wanted at the cheapest rate?—Certainly; I do not blame him for it.

Mr. Scrope.] "If the parishioners of Petworth had been willing to labour at the same rate as the parishioners of other parishes, they might have obtained employment upon this heath?—They might.

"Therefore, the result is, that you have undertaken to interfere with the ordinary demand and supply of labour in the neighbourhood, solely with a view to get your labourers employed instead of the parishioners of another parish?—I have no doubt that the way-wardens have taken that heath with the view of getting the parishioners of Petworth employment." [1880—99.]

"Charity begins at home," says Mr. Ellis.—*Charity!*—the relief of want, but not the prevention. If Mr. Ellis and his patrons had left the heath alone, the renter of the heath would have disposed of the stones and the sand at a profit instead of a loss. That profit would have represented the amount of *unprofitable* labour saved, and the saving would have been capital to encourage *profitable* labour. But then "Charity begins at home!"—the labourers of Petworth would have been thrust off the heath by other labourers. And what then? They would have looked out for better work than the heath could supply them. The Rev. Mr. Brock, of Bishop's Waltham, will enlighten us upon this, and several other points:—

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

"Then the tendency of the present law has been this, to lead the superabundant population of the parish to go to look for work in other parts of the country?—Yes; the tendency is, I think, to make them go about seeking for work, when perhaps there is no prospect of obtaining it, to *make them vagabonds over the country*. If there happens to be work in the neighbourhood, it is very well; if there is a railroad near our parish, they may find it, though I think that work is very demoralizing; but in case of want of labour it is a *very great hardship to drive a poor man to search for work when there is a great probability of his not finding it*; he may be tempted to crime, and, while he is searching for work without success, he may become demoralized.

"Are you aware that any labourers from your parish, in search for

work without success, have turned vagabonds?—Many have gone to railroads, and I think the effect of the intercourse of the poor at the railroads is very demoralizing.

"But still you believe that they all have obtained work?—Some have.

"Which they had not before in your parish?—*They might have had it before if the work had been provided for them; it was owing, therefore, to the not giving the work, and not to the change of the law.*

Mr. Scrope.] You state that you think that the employment on the railroad is bad and demoralizing; do you think it as demoralizing as the work formerly given by the parish in the gravel-pits and on the highways?—I think that the old system was very bad, at the same time it need not have been so.

"As demoralizing as the railroad occupation can be?—Yes.

"The labourers on railroads get double the wages that they had when working in the gravel-pits?—They get higher wages; but some of their families have told me that they would rather have them at home, working at lower wages, than working on the railroad at higher wages, because of the expense of their having another house.

"Do you think that they are not better off than they used to be on parish work?—*I do not think, morally, and I think we ought not to consider, in this question, pounds, shillings, and pence, but to consider their religion and their morals.*

"But in respect of their amount of income, are they not better off than they were under the old system of employment?—I should say, not; *because there was an allowance of bread under the old system, and therefore I should say that they were not so well off.*

"Take the case of the single men, who, having no families, had not their wages made up, but were employed at low wages by the parish on the roads; have not those labourers now employed on the railroads a much larger income than they had at that time?—They have. [7417—30.]

Here, then, is the short catechism of the political economy of the rector of Bishop's Waltham: persons who go about seeking for work are vagabonds over the country—it is a very great hardship to drive a poor man to search for work:—they have obtained work, but they might have had it before, if the work had been provided for them—labourers on railroads get higher wages, single men much higher wages, than when employed by the parish, but they are not better off morally, and we ought not to consider pounds, shillings, and pence, but their religion and their morals:—and with respect to their amount of income, they are not better off than under the old system of employment, because there was an allowance of bread under the old system.

The allowance of bread!—

"To this complexion must we come at last."

The superfluous labour ought not to go away in search of

capital wanting labour, but stay at home, for the sake of its religion and morals (we have a word or two to say presently on the subject of religion and morals), to find employment out of the want-fund,—and the want-fund, opening its arms to this superfluous labour, does so by the degradation of the labour in the parish that was not superfluous; and, keeping down the rate of wages, pauperizes the whole labouring population, and, according to Mr. Brock, makes them better off, *with an allowance of bread*. Seriously, Mr. Brock, how long could this process of providing unprofitable work, that labourers might not go where profitable work was wanted, and providing allowances of bread, in addition to wages, that those who were employed might be “better off,” have gone on, even in Bishop’s Waltham? Was it, or was it not, this system that had almost eaten up Lord Egremont? If it was, as the age of miracles has past, what would have been done in Bishop’s Waltham with the “multitude,” when the fund for feeding them had dwindled down to “five barley loaves?” “Morally,” when the last loaf was gone (—we speak with reference to their “religion and morals”—), would your own parishioners of Bishop’s Waltham have stopped at the “trifling offences,” as you call them, of “turnip-stealing,” and “wood-stealing,” and “poaching.” We rather fear your own house and larder would have been in danger, Mr. Brock; and then, perhaps, you would have corrected your belief that persons going “about seeking for work” must necessarily be “vagabonds over the country.” “Morally” speaking, if Petworth and Bishop’s Waltham, and parishes which still cling to allowances, could “keep their paupers,” without any increase of their number, at the expense of the patrons of this mode of making the poor happy, and without any degradation of those who do not want “allowances,” we should be content to see the experiment tried, for the reasons stated in the following extract of a letter from a manufacturer in the north, who had engaged above a hundred southern labourers, under the system of migration:—

“The independent migrant answers best, and soon settles down with his family, and provides for himself without troubling us: but the man deep-rooted in pauperism is *like a spoiled child, carried till he has lost the use of his legs*: such of these have been helped till they can help themselves no longer, and give a deal of trouble. I do not wish to be understood to discourage migration to any; but I do think our good wages and improved prospects to the poor people deserve a greater discrimination in those who send them. *We want honest, industrious, quiet people; and the parishes which have made their paupers the contrary should keep them.*”

But Petworth and Bishop’s Waltham could not “keep their

paupers” without an increase of their numbers. There is no balance which can be held between the funds for the maintenance of labour and the number of the labourers, but through the uncontrolled exchange of capital and labour, each operating with perfect freedom and perfect security. Whenever the scales are held by any other power than the natural power of exchange—whenever there is a forced demand for labour produced by a forced supply of capital—the natural proportions of capital and labour are destroyed by a forced addition to the number of labourers. All schemes for “setting the poor to work” by unnatural encouragements to labour assume that “the poor” is a constant quantity;—the unnatural encouragement produces more poor, and the funds that have been diverted from the regular labour-market are devoured in an accelerated ratio. The old Poor Law went further than any other human device for diminishing the funds for the maintenance of labour, and at the same time increasing the number of labourers. Rewards for illegitimate children, rewards for children under improvident marriages, sustenance for the pauper child from the hour he was born, increased sustenance as he grew, a large and liberal allowance for him when he prematurely married another pauper, and the same round again till the next pauper generation was quadrupled in number—this was the system which the Poor Law Amendment Act was designed to put an end to. The process by which it proposes to increase the funds for the maintenance of labour, and by that increase to absorb the amount of superfluous labour, must be a gradual process, but it is a sure one. Its progress is thus stated by Mr. Harrison:—

Mr. Harvey.]—“A man residing at the present time in the parish of Hambledon, and who resided two years ago in the same parish, receiving then 9s. from his employer, and receiving now 10s. from his employer, would be, two years since, in the receipt of 7s. 6d. a-week from the parish, which he is not receiving now?—Yes.

“That is, there is a difference in his weekly means of 6s. 6d.?—Yes.

“And with the knowledge of this fact, do you mean to state to the Committee that you have heard no complaint from the labouring men, and that you believe their condition is improved?—I think it is, I think I can satisfy the Committee that it is. The fact is this: *you are not aware that since the new law took place every man exerts himself to get his children off; whereas before, after married people had had four children, the fifth child became a pauper; it then remained a pauper till it was 11 years of age; then, at the expiration of 11 years, this was the custom: the father used to be in the habit of saying to the overseers, ‘This child I cannot afford to keep for 18d., I must have some more;’ then the overseers said, ‘You must send him to us, and we will employ him;’ and those children have been taken into the*

parish-field, at from 15*d.* to 3*s.* a-week, and remained there till they went to church and got a wife, and then came into the parish-field the next day. I have known several instances of that description, so that they were paupers from their infancy, and remained and died paupers, under the old system.

Sir J. Graham.]—"When this system of payment per head for children above four prevailed, the head of the family had no interest or desire to put his children out?—Not the least; they used to tell me frequently, 'I have got another child for you to keep.'

"Now since the payment has ceased, the head of the family has the greatest interest in getting his children out?—Most assuredly, he goes anywhere; if he sees a chance, he embraces it.

"And, in point of fact, they have not so many of their children remaining in their houses as they used to have?—They have not.

"You have observed that change, that they are put out much more than formerly they were?—Yes."—[4043—49.]

The parish-field is shut up to the children of the able-bodied, and therefore the farmer's field is open; the parish purse is closed to the children, and therefore the string of the farmer's purse is drawn; he has more funds in that purse to employ the children.

"You say that the farmers employ the children now more than formerly: at what age do they begin to employ the children?—At 11 years and upwards.

"Do you employ them younger than 11?—I have employed the child of a labourer myself at the age of 10, and gave him 2*s.* a-week, and very often two or three days in the week, to help to winnow the corn."—[Hayler, 13,584, 85.]

Hear another farmer, Mr. Goldsmith.

"Would you and your brother farmers be able to employ the children, if you paid head-money as heretofore?—I do not think we should, in that case, get the children to work for us as we do now; the father would say, 'He is not big enough or handy enough,' and make a hundred excuses, rather than take the child to work under him.

"What you save in the rate you now expend in wages?—Yes.

"And what you paid in the rate yielded you nothing?—No, it did not.

"Now what you pay in wages yields you a profit upon your farm?—Yes.

"Therefore what was a dead burthen upon you before is now productive to you?—Yes.

"That makes a considerable difference in your situation?—Very considerable.

"Excepting the case of a large family who are all unable to labour, the new law makes no difference to able-bodied labourers?—I do not think it does, except in the case of a family with children all under 10 years of age; it makes some difference there; but where the children

are able to do anything I do not think they are worse off."—[8,586—92.]

And what are the effects upon the characters of the children, as well as on their physical condition, produced by this restorative process?

"You have been asked some questions about their scanty fare diminishing their strength; do you find those boys less strong and healthy since the allowance system ceased, and as they are maintained by their father, partly by their own earnings and partly by his?—No.

"They work as well now?—Yes, and better.

"They are not become sickly?—Not the least.

"Do you find the fathers generally more anxious with yourself and the other farmers to get their sons employed in this way; do they press the employment of their sons?—They are; we could not formerly get them to work, because the parents would say, I shall lose my head-money.

"Are they now earnest in their application to the farmers to take their sons?—Very eager to get them out.

"And all those lads are training up now to be good labourers very fast?—They will be better labourers, at least they will know more of the work that they have to do at 15 or 16, than they used to do at the age of 22 or 24."—[7,888—93.]

Again:—

"Have you observed, that since the alteration in the law the able-bodied men with large families have put their children out more than they used?—A great deal more; they are always anxious now to get them to work.

"Formerly had they that anxiety?—Not the least; the family were always kept at home till they were men and women grown, and good for nothing.

"Had they not an interest to keep them at home?—Yes.

"What was that?—Head-money.

"Since that head-money has been withdrawn, have they an interest to put them out?—Certainly, their interest is just reversed.

"As bearing upon the character and conduct of the children, do you think that it is better that they should be absent from home employed, and earning their livelihood, or residing in their father's house as they heretofore have done, for the sake of preserving head-money?—Employed, most certainly.

"What do you think is the effect of this change upon those children?—That they will become better members of society, and good servants.

"Do you think that there was danger of their becoming themselves paupers when they were kept at home by their parents, in order to preserve head-money?—I can state instances where they have been kept at home till they have become men and women, and they have been paupers always afterwards.