

## APPENDIX.

### A.

#### A REPORT FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE NEW POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT.

FRIDAY, JUNE 30, 1837.

Mr. Fazakerley in the chair.

Members present—Mr. Baines, Mr. Chichester, Mr. Estcourt, Sir T. Fremantle, Bart., Mr. R. Gordon, Sir James Graham, Bart., Mr. Hodges, Sir O. Mosley, Lord J. Russell, Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. P. Scrope, Mr. C. Villiers, Mr. Wakley, Mr. Walker, and Mr. Walter.

The committee deliberated upon their Report.

Motion made (Mr. Walter), and question put, "That the following resolution be introduced into the Report: 'That out-door relief be administered at the discretion of the guardians.'"

Ayes, 1—(Mr. Walter alone); Noes, 12—(Mr. Hodges and Mr. Wakley not voting).

Motion made (Mr. Walter), "That the following resolution be introduced into the Report:—'That the committee do recommend a limitation of the size of the unions; and that no union shall extend beyond the distance of eight miles from the centre, or from the place where the board of guardians meet.'"

Whereupon Sir J. Graham moved the previous question.

Question put—"That the question be now put."

Ayes, 1—(Mr. Walter); Noes, 13 (all the others except Mr. Wakley, who did not vote).

So it passed in the negative.

Motion made (Mr. Walter), and question put—"That the following resolution be introduced into the Report:—'That the officiating clergyman in every parish be *ex officio* a guardian.'"

Ayes, 1—(Mr. Walter); Noes, 12 (Mr. Hodges and Mr. Wakley not voting).

Motion made (Mr. Walter), "That the following resolution be inserted in the Report:—'That the discretion allowed to magistrates of ordering out-door relief to aged persons, shall be extended also to the amount of the relief so to be given.'"

Whereupon Sir J. Graham moved the previous question.

Question put—"That the question be now put."

Ayes, 1 (Mr. Walter); Noes, 13 (Mr. Wakley did not vote).—

So it passed in the negative.

TUESDAY, July 4, 1837.

Mr. Fazakerley in the chair.

Members present—Mr. Chichester, Sir T. Fremantle, Lord J. Russell, Mr. Wakley, Mr. R. Gordon, Mr. Freshfield, Sir O. Mosley, Mr. P. Scrope, Mr. R. Walker.

The chairman read over the proposed Report to the committee.

Motion made (Lord J. Russell)—“That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.”

Amendment proposed (Mr. Wakley)—“To leave out the words after ‘That,’ in order to insert the following instead thereof;—‘the draught Report, now read the first time, be printed, for the purpose of affording the members of the committee an opportunity of examining it before they are called upon to vote either for its adoption or rejection.’”

Question put—“That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question.”

Ayes, 6—Sir T. Fremantle, Mr. Freshfield, Sir O. Mosley, Lord J. Russell, Mr. P. Scrope, Mr. Walker.

Noes, 2—Mr. Chichester, Mr. Wakley.

Main question put, and agreed to.

Report read, paragraph by paragraph.

Motion made and question put (Mr. P. Scrope)—“That this report be adopted.”

Amendment proposed (Mr. Chichester)—“To leave out the words after ‘That,’ in order to insert the words ‘The following report be adopted instead thereof.’”—

“That the committee having only been enabled to examine with a satisfactory degree of completeness the administration of the poor in three unions—in the Petworth, Droxford, and Fareham, selected to prove the injurious operation of the new law in particular instances; having only examined fully the administration of relief in the West Hampnett Union adduced on the other side, and partially in the unions of Nottingham and Bradford, in the whole six unions, out of upwards of five hundred at present in operation, which include eleven-thirteenths of the whole population of England and Wales; having had no opportunity of examining the specific allegations of any one petition against the law, or others in its favour from various boards of guardians; having been enabled to examine only incidentally some of the most important branches of the administration of the law, as, for example, the medical relief to the destitute poor; having been enabled to enter into no examination of the operation of large as compared with small unions; having only examined the evidence adduced on behalf of the poor law commissioners, in answer to a few particular cases and statements; having had no opportunity of hearing any general evidence which might be put forward on any large branch of the subject, or to receive evidence derivable from the experience of all the unions, in answer to allegations and assertions advanced as to the operation of the law in particular unions—your committee do not feel themselves prepared to adopt any general conclusion, or report on any material

points of alteration of the law or of its administration; but under the circumstances connected with the present state of the investigation, they would earnestly recommend that the inquiry should be resumed early in the next session of parliament.”

Question put—“That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question.”

Ayes, 4—Mr. Freshfield, Sir O. Mosley, Mr. P. Scrope, Mr. Walker. Noes, 2—Mr. Chichester, Mr. Wakley.

Main question put—“That the Report be adopted.”

Ayes, 5—Mr. Chichester, Mr. Freshfield, Sir O. Mosley, Mr. P. Scrope, and Mr. Walker. Noes, 1—Mr. Wakley.

And agreed to.

## REPORT.

The Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Administration of the Relief of the Poor under the Orders and Regulations issued by the Commissioners appointed under the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act, and who were empowered to report their opinion to the House, have agreed to the following Report:—

THAT your committee have been suddenly interrupted in their investigation of the matters referred to them by the unexpected approach of the conclusion of the session of parliament.

They would otherwise have been anxious to extend their inquiries generally to those parts of the country in which the Act has been in operation, to large and populous towns where unions have been formed, and to the manufacturing districts, which have hitherto been scarcely brought under their observation. Their attention would also have been more closely directed to some particular questions connected with the administration of the law, and to some interests which appear to be in an especial degree affected by it, and into which they have been only able to inquire incidentally, and in a manner too cursory to justify the expression of any public opinion.

Before they entered on the examination of any witnesses, your committee were anxious, in the first place, to determine what should be the general course of their inquiry. It was suggested that it might be better at once to call before them some of the assistant poor law commissioners, with a view to explain the circumstances and condition of whole counties or districts under their charge. In this way the subject would have been opened to your committee by persons of great intelligence and experience, and who were necessarily conversant with the administration of the law.

On the other hand, some statements having been made in parliament of particular instances of severity and abuse, either in the law or in its administration, your committee thought that they should best discharge their duty by proceeding at once to take those complaints into consider-

ation. They were the more induced to do so from a persuasion, that though their attention might in the first instance be confined to some particular fact, yet that in the course of such an inquiry the whole state of things within the union, and the general operation of the law, would be brought under their notice.

With this view, and at the suggestion of the hon. member who made the statements alluded to, your committee proceeded first to inquire into the union formed at Petworth, in Sussex. They examined, among other witnesses, some members of the board of guardians, the rector of Petworth, and several labourers residing within the union. The evidence of these parties would lead your committee to believe that the introduction of the new law has been attended with considerable improvement in the character and condition of the poor. The aged and infirm are relieved, whenever they prefer it, at their own homes, or at the houses of relations or friends with whom they live; and by the general testimony of the witnesses, their condition has been improved by an increase of pay (Question 2644)\*. The employment of agricultural labour appears greater (804); the morals and conduct of the labouring poor are said to be improved (Questions 779, 1480, 2943); they have become more provident, and more anxious to obtain and keep their places. On the other hand, the labourers with large families under an age fit for work are said to feel severely the loss of the allowances which they formerly received in proportion to the number of their children, and of the payment of a great part of the rent of their cottages. Wages have been in some degree raised, but not more than in proportion to the increased price of provisions (Questions 441 and 2846); the rent of cottages appears also to have fallen in some instances, but not generally, or to any great extent. One man, a pauper, said that he still paid 8*l.* a year for his house (2425), an expense which no ordinary rate of labourers' wages can supply. To meet these difficulties the members of the board of guardians seemed generally inclined to take into the workhouse a certain number of the children of parents married before the change of the law. This has been done in particular instances, with the permission of the Poor Law Commissioners.

Your committee then proceeded to examine the clerk of the West Hampnett Union, which adjoins Petworth. In that union the wages appeared to be higher than in Petworth, being 11*s.* instead of 10*s.* for the average class of labourers; and a strong statement was made by this witness of the advantageous operation of the new law, and of the great improvement in the condition and employment of the poor. Your committee did not at that time continue to prosecute their inquiries into the West Hampnett Union, being desirous of directing their attention to some cases of great abuse said to have occurred in the unions of Fareham and Droxford, in Hampshire. Three children belonging to Droxford had been placed temporarily in the Fareham workhouse, until that at Droxford should be finished. It appears from the evidence that these children were treated with great neglect and

\* The figures in the Report refer to the evidence as numbered.

inhumanity, their food improperly reduced, and their health for a time impaired. The guardians of Droxford and Fareham, and the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, instituted an immediate inquiry into these facts. The master of the workhouse, the schoolmistress and the medical officer, appear to have been in different degrees to blame; they have been severely censured by the Fareham board of guardians and by the Poor Law Commissioners.

Your committee entertain a doubt whether any of the parties implicated in this transaction should have been allowed to retain their situations; and they cannot refrain from observing that the management of the workhouse, on which the administration of the new law so much depends, and the condition and treatment of their inmates, will at all times require the most vigilant care from the commissioners and boards of guardians; they think that in no case should children have any reduction made in the amount of their food by way of punishment. In the Fareham workhouse (9028), and at West Hampnett (15,501), books appear to be kept, in which strangers are permitted to enter their remarks. This practice seems likely to be a useful check on mismanagement. Perhaps some regulations for the admission of strangers might be desirable.

Your committee entertain no doubt that those establishments are in all respects infinitely superior (6486, &c.) to the old parish poor-houses and workhouses; and in those instances which have been brought under their notice, they have been generally satisfied with the provision made for the health and comfort of their inhabitants. In the cases of old persons and of children, they are inclined to think that, under proper regulations, and subject to the control of the commissioners and guardians, permission might safely and advantageously be given occasionally to go beyond the limits of the workhouse. They have reason to believe that this has been done in some instances without inconvenience. It would obviously be more difficult in towns than in the country; and in all cases the propriety of such an indulgence must of course depend on the character and conduct of the poor, and in some degree on the situation of the workhouse, and of the extent of ground attached to it.

With respect to the general circumstances of the Droxford Union, your committee examined at great length several witnesses in different conditions of life, and of various opinions, members of the board of guardians, clergymen, medical practitioners, farmers, and labourers. In this instance, as in all others, your committee have examined all persons who were desirous of giving evidence, or who were said to be able to substantiate any ground of complaint; they have never refused a summons to any one. The Board of Guardians of Droxford, composed generally of the owners and occupiers of land, appear to be perfectly convinced of the great improvement effected by the alteration of the law, and to wish for no further change. They, and some of the other witnesses (*vide* Mr. Harrison's evidence and others), describe in strong terms the evils of the former system; the indiscriminate allowance on account of children (3970, and following answers), without

reference to the amount of wages; that their allowance was demanded as a right (3998); that inferior labourers, owing to these allowances, were sometimes better off (6636) than superior ones. They also state that a great increase of agricultural employment has generally taken place (6695, 6841, 7603, 9918, &c.); that wages have been raised (6597, 7625); that children are more employed (8475); that the work is done better, and with better feeling (8129); and that the general character of the men has been improved (6705). The relieving officer in the Droxford Union visits every parish twice a week (10,445), a practice which must evidently be attended with advantage; in this union the visits are made on fixed days and hours, which seem to your committee to be a better plan than that of leaving the time uncertain.

These statements have been met by the production of particular instances in which the rules of the commissioners are said to have operated with severity, principally upon labourers with numerous families of children too young for work. It is impossible that the withdrawal of parish allowance in such cases should not have been attended with privations, unless met by a rise of wages, by more constant work, or greater employment for the family. The evidence received by your committee leads them to believe that these results have followed the alteration of the law; wages have risen, and the amount of employment has confessedly, and by the admission of adverse witnesses (9928), increased. But your committee cannot pretend to say that, in any state of things, or in any condition of society, the possession of a numerous family dependent on the efforts of their parents for support will not be felt as a serious incumbrance. Much must always depend upon the disposition and means of the employers of labour, much upon the character and exertions of the labourers; and in these important respects the law appears to your committee to have placed both parties reciprocally upon a better footing. Bad habits of long standing are, however, not easily eradicated. The inclination to make the parish fund contribute to the payment of wages may for a time prevail with the employers of labour, and the labourer's disposition to rely on so easy a resource may not at once be changed for greater activity and exertion; but it is to be remarked that the new law has a direct tendency to produce a better state of things, the employers of labour having an immediate pecuniary interest in avoiding the expense of maintaining whole families in the workhouse, and at the same time the labourers are necessarily stimulated to increased efforts, and to greater regularity of conduct, in order to avoid the necessity of going there. While, therefore, it is most desirable to employ all practical means for the alleviation of particular instances of pressure, great care should be taken not to introduce in any shape the old system of allowances, which had a decided tendency to lower wages, and to deprive the labourer of his independent character. The aged poor in Droxford, and in all the unions which have come before your committee, do not appear to be materially affected by any rules which have been issued for the regulation of their relief. In no instance have they been compelled to reside

in the workhouse; and in those cases in which they are, it is owing to the circumstances of their having no home or friends with whom they could conveniently lodge, or from their own choice. The same parties, before the change of law, would have been found in the parish poor-houses. They generally receive their pay at the place where they live, and the amount seems, upon the whole, to have been increased rather than diminished.

Your committee collect from several witnesses in the unions to which their inquiry has extended, that there has been a decrease in the number of bastards (911, 953, 6569, 7094), and no complaints of any moment have been made to them on that branch of the subject.

With respect to the burials of paupers, some questions arose in the Petworth and Droxford Unions. These related principally to the place of burial, to the use of a pall, the tolling of a bell, and the payment of fees. Your committee having heard various statements from witnesses, made some inquiries from the Poor Law Commissioners on these points; they have printed, in the appendix to their 12th Report, several letters, and they have examined the secretary of the commission. In a letter from the Commissioners to the clerk of the Langford Union, dated August 15, 1836, they say, "that they do not direct the disallowance of the charge for tolling the bell and the use of the pall at the funerals of paupers, and presume that the auditor will not do so, unless he considers them excessive, with reference to the custom prevalent in the district in which the union is situate." And in another letter also from the Poor Law Commissioners to the clerk of the Dunmow Union, dated March 8, 1837, there are these expressions: "Although the Commissioners are of opinion that all expense which partakes of the character of imposition, or which may be incurred for the purpose of unnecessary display, should be avoided in the funeral of paupers, still they think they ought in no way to differ from those of individuals of the labouring classes when conducted at the expense of their families, assuming always that that expense does not exceed such an amount as is necessary to provide for a funeral according to those forms of decorum and decency which the customs of the place may have sanctioned."

The secretary of the Commission (12,607, 15,576), with reference to these letters, stated to your committee, that these were the rules by which, in the opinion of the Commissioners, the funerals of paupers should be conducted. With respect to the place of burial, and the fees to the clergy, the Commissioners, in a letter to the clerk of the Pewsey Union, dated January 30, 1837, propose that paupers dying in a workhouse should, if it were thought desirable, be buried in the parishes to which they belong, and for this purpose they propose the use of a small hearse, drawn by one horse. They say that the law with respect to the payment of fees is in some respects obscure; but that, without giving an opinion on that point, they will not direct the disallowance of such a fee as is usually paid for a person dying in his own parish. (*Vide* Appendix to the 12th Report.)

Your committee cannot but express an opinion that great care has

evidently been bestowed on the consideration of this subject, and the conclusions at which the commissioners have arrived, and the directions they have given, are in strict accordance with the religious feelings and habits of the country.

Your committee observed with regret in the case of Droxford, that the *ex-officio* guardians were rarely in the habit of attending the meetings of the board (6728, 6761). Any appearance of a disinclination on the part of magistrates to assist in the administration of the law must be attended with bad effects to all the interests concerned. Their advice might often be valuable, and their presence might add weight to the decisions of the board. And in this great change of the law, affecting the condition of so large a part of the community, and from its nature so liable to misapprehension, it is scarcely possible that the administration of it should be satisfactory, unless assisted by the co-operation of all classes of society.

From Droxford your committee returned to the consideration of the case of West Hampnett. The general circumstances of this union do not appear to differ materially from those of Droxford; there is the same evidence of the bad state of things under the former law (14,554), and of improvement under the change. The moral conduct of the labouring classes is said to be improved and a better feeling to exist between them and their masters. The amount of agricultural employment has greatly increased, and in some parishes large numbers of men, formerly employed by overseers and waywardens, in an unprofitable manner, have either emigrated, or found work. The numbers of a large benefit society (13,706), composed chiefly of agricultural labourers, have increased in a remarkable degree within the last two years.

There are also the same statements as in the other unions, of the severity with which the rule prohibiting all out-door relief to the able-bodied has pressed in particular instances on men with large families, and on widows with young children. Some witnesses express an opinion that mendicancy has increased (14,177), and that in many cases the labourers are more in debt (14,554).

A remarkable illustration of the main principles of the new law is afforded by the practice of a board of guardians at Chichester, under a local act. They have recently, and with eminent success, adopted nearly the same rules of relief as those which prevail under the orders of the Poor Law Commissioners. In cases of bastardy their rule is the same (14,974); the classification in the workhouse is the same, or nearly so (14,988): they have, since October, 1833, put an end to out-door relief to the able-bodied (14,991). All this has been done of their own accord without the interference of any other authority; they have reduced (15,002 and 15,010) the general expenses of the establishment for the poor, from 6399*l.* in 1831, to 2216*l.* in 1836; and within the same period the out-door relief has fallen from 3427*l.* to 564*l.* The persons who formerly received this out-door relief are said to be more decent in their appearance, and seem to be better off, from improved habits of life, than they were before (15,011-12 and 15,032).

In the early part of the year 1836 there prevailed a considerable mortality in the workhouse at West Hampnett. This is attributed by the medical officers principally to the character of the season, and some of the complaints are supposed to have been aggravated by the too frequent washing and ventilation of the house. Your committee are desirous of referring to the evidence of this medical officer, and to that of a physician who was called in from Chichester, for a proof of the care and abundance with which the paupers in the workhouse were provided, not merely with medical attendance, but with every comfort and advantage of diet which could have been commanded by their more wealthy neighbours.

Having concluded their inquiries into these unions, your committee were desirous of ascertaining what had been the effect of the administration of the law in some manufacturing districts, among dense masses of people, with habits very different from those of the rural parts of England, and exposed to more sudden and extreme vicissitudes of fortune. With this view they selected Bradford, in Wiltshire, that being the manufacturing district in which they were informed the new law had been longest in operation. They had, however, scarcely commenced this part of their inquiry, and had been only able to hear one day's evidence with respect to Nottingham, where the law has been exposed to a severe trial from an extreme depression of trade, when the approaching termination of the session obliged them abruptly to put an end to their own proceedings. Whatever impression may have been produced by the evidence which they heard on that subject, and to which, from its valuable character, they beg to call the attention of the House, your committee do not feel that they can express any opinion with reference to the manufacturing districts. They regret, that with respect to other parts of the country, they have not had the opportunity of making a more extended inquiry; they have given to the subject an unremitting and laborious attention from their first appointment, and if it should appear that in some instances much time has been occupied in the investigation of minute details, your committee can only say, that, considering the nature of the subject, the great public interest which attached to every part of it, and the complaints which have been made, they were above all things anxious to leave no points in the case before them unexamined or unexplained.

Upon the whole, and speaking of those unions to which their evidence relates, your committee are distinctly of opinion that the operation of the new poor law is satisfactory, and that it ought to be maintained. They entertain no doubt of the wisdom and efficiency of its provisions. They think also that the administration of the law has been, in the main, judicious. The boards of guardians appear to be most attentive to their duties, and to be generally very sensible of the great improvement resulting from the change. It is obvious that boards so constituted must bring to the consideration of cases connected with the circumstances and character of the poor a degree of intelligence and experience unknown before, except perhaps in a few rare instances. The distribution of relief, and the superintendence of



the poor by the relieving officers, are among the most important parts of the system. The propriety of their frequently visiting their respective parishes has already been adverted to; no pains should be spared to render their agency as efficient and perfect as possible. An opinion has been expressed that the poor may not be always sufficiently aware of the cases in which, in the absence of the relieving officers, they may apply to the churchwarden, overseer, or to the magistrate; some of the parish officers themselves may possibly be not much more familiar with the provisions of the law. In so great a change it is natural that for a time some uncertainty should prevail; but as inconvenience and unnecessary suffering may be the consequence of any ignorance on this point, your committee are anxious that information respecting it should be conveyed to every parish. The authority of the Poor Law Commissioners has, in the opinion of your committee, and as far as they have had an opportunity of observing it, been exercised with great discretion. A more difficult task could scarcely have devolved on any department of government.

Your committee have now only to recommend that in a future session of Parliament this subject should be resumed, and the following points appear to them to deserve especial consideration as matters for further inquiry:—

The situation of widows with several children too young to work; that of able-bodied labourers married before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, with large families under an age fit to work, and in districts where employment should not be readily obtained.

The circumstances by which the size of unions should be determined, and the state of medical relief as to the qualifications, number, mode of appointment, and remuneration of the medical officers.

Whether in any and in what cases it might be better that the medicines should be supplied by the union.

The propriety of rating the owners, rather than the occupiers of cottages, under a certain value, has also been pressed on your committee from various parts of England by magistrates and private individuals. Many suggestions also have been made of alterations in several particulars of the law; with respect to these and the numerous petitions which have been referred to them, your committee would have felt it their duty to consider them with attention; and they will take care to make arrangements by which they may be preserved as materials for any future inquiry which may be instituted by the House.

#### B.

##### (1.)

Fareham Union, 3rd March, 1837. Copy of a MINUTE entered on the occasion of Colonel A. A'Court attending to investigate the circumstances of the removal of three children from Fareham Union workhouse to the Waltham poorhouse.

Col. A. A'Court, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, attended

the board, a deputation of four of the Droxford guardians being present. The board entered on an investigation of the case of three pauper children, Withers, Cooke, and Warren, of the Droxford Union; and after a careful examination of all the individuals who could give any information respecting the complaint of ill-treatment of the three pauper children (their depositions having been taken upon oath) before Col. A. A'Court, Assistant Poor Commissioner, it appears to the board that great neglect has existed on the part of Mr. John Blatherwick, the medical officer of the Union workhouse, by his own admission, with respect to those children, in never inquiring into their diet, nor examining their persons carefully, although seeing them very frequently in bed in the day-time.

Benj. P. Rubie, Clk.

##### (2.)

“Poor Law Commission Office, Somerset House,  
March 13th, 1837.

“The Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales have had under their attentive consideration your Reports, Nos. 292 and 298, containing the result of your inquiries as to the treatment and condition of the three pauper children, Withers, Cooke, and Warren, adverted to by Mr. Walter in the House of Commons on the 24th ult. Although, as regards the inmates of the Fareham workhouse generally, there seems no ground for doubting that they are supplied with adequate food and properly attended by the various officers of the workhouse, yet there are serious errors in the management of the house, with respect to the mode of enforcing discipline amongst the children in the house; and as regards the individual children above mentioned, the Commissioners perceive much to regret and great cause for dissatisfaction and blame. After a careful examination of the evidence with which you have furnished the Commissioners, they have arrived at the following facts and conclusions:—1st, That the children, Withers, Warren, and Cooke, when removed to the Bishop's Waltham workhouse, were in too weak a state to admit of their removal without serious risk to them. 2nd, That they did not receive adequate medical attendance whilst in the Fareham workhouse. 3rd, That as the parties having the care of the Droxford children must have perceived that they were labouring under physical infirmity, they should have resorted to medical assistance, and not to punishment, for the purpose of curing the children of their habits of dirtiness. 4th, That the modes of punishment adopted for children in the Fareham workhouse, namely, the putting them on half allowance of food, and the placing them in the stocks for long periods, are decidedly objectionable, and that the first of these modes was peculiarly improper with reference to children in such a weak state of health as Withers, Warren, and Cooke. The Commissioners have anxiously considered the conduct of the several officers and servants of the union, who had the charge of these children. With regard to the schoolmistress, the Commissioners are of opinion that it would be unjust to attribute much

blame to her, inasmuch as, in punishing the children, she acted under the direction of the master and with his sanction; and as respects the particular mode of punishment, under the impression that it was sanctioned by some of the guardians. With regard to the master of the workhouse, the Commissioners concur in the view taken of his conduct by the board of guardians of the Fareham Union, namely, 'that the master of the workhouse has not used a sound discretion, in so extensively and repeatedly reducing the quantity of food to the three children in question, without making a specific report to the board of guardians on the subject, and that he has greatly exceeded his authority, and has neglected his duty, in sanctioning the extent of punishment inflicted without the cognizance and previous approval of the guardians.' In reference to this subject, the Commissioners have to point out to the guardians of the Fareham Union, that although, for the purpose of preserving order in the workhouse and obedience to the rules of the establishment, it may be occasionally necessary to resort to the mode of punishment pointed out by the rule, namely, 'by such alteration of diet as the board of guardians shall direct by any regulations for that purpose;' yet, in making such alteration, care should be taken to give the party affected by it an adequate supply of food, and the alteration should be made by the withdrawal of the soup, meat or cheese, or other similar articles, and a substitution of a proper amount of bread for those articles. The Commissioners have also to observe, that the application even of such corporal punishments as is usual in schools, to boys and children in the workhouse, should be watched by the board of guardians with the greatest care and jealousy, and every case of such punishment should be promptly and accurately reported to them; the whole tenor of the treatment of the Droxford children furnishes a strong example of the tendency of such punishments to degenerate into abuse. With respect to Mr. Blatherwick, the Commissioners agree with the board of guardians, 'that great neglect has existed on the part of Mr. John Blatherwick, the medical officer of the union workhouse, by his own admission, with respect to those children, in never inquiring into their diet or examining their persons, although seeing them frequently in bed during the daytime.' It was probably this neglect on his part that led him into the serious error of permitting the removal of the children to the Bishop's Waltham workhouse, in the weak state of health in which they then were, a step which might have produced results fatal to the children, and very painful consequences to Mr. Blatherwick; although, from the impression the Commissioners have received of Mr. Blatherwick's general performance of his duties, they do not consider themselves called upon to require his dismissal, yet they wish the board of guardians to convey to him their disapproval of his conduct with regard to the Droxford children, and to state to him, that unless, in the future performance of his functions, he exercises greater vigilance than he has shown on this occasion, it will not be possible for Commissioners to sanction his continuance in his office. The Commissioners have likewise to state their opinion, that it is the duty of the medical officer having the charge of the workhouse to keep

a watchful eye on the general state of health of its inmates, and upon perceiving any indications of malady in any of them, to give such advice and directions, where necessary, without waiting for a formal notice from the master of the workhouse that his attention is required.

"Signed, by order of the board,  
"E. Chadwick, Secretary."

### C.—PETITIONS AND ADDRESSES.

THE Parliamentary inquiry has naturally called forth numerous and, in some instances, very decided public declarations of opinion, for and against the new law. The allegations against the measure are embodied in petitions to Parliament; and there are many counter-petitions in favour of the law. The opinions in support of the law are, however, principally contained in addresses to the Secretary of State for the Home Department and to the Poor Law Commissioners.

The petitions against the measure are generally from places where the new law has not been tried; from promiscuous assemblages. Where the petitions are from places in which the law has been in operation, they are (with few exceptions) from persons who have very limited means of judging of its effects, and from single parishes: the addresses are from persons actively engaged in the operation of the law; from bodies of the representatives of parishes, which bodies comprehend some of the highest and most responsible persons in ability, property, and rank in the country. The petitions against the introduction of the new law express apprehensions as to what will be its effects when introduced: the addresses from places where it has been in operation attest from experience what have been its effects, and this attestation is from a body of witnesses, of known responsible persons of all parties, so numerous and so respectable as to render their testimony impregnable.

Many of the petitions against the measure propound wild and unsound theories. Some of them (the petition from Oldham for instance) talk vaguely of a right of the poor to subsistence from the soil; as if alms and doles and the bread of charity, and not the fruit of industry obtained by wages in return for honest productive labour, were the proper means of support for the labouring population. The same petition, and others upon its pattern, from the same part of the country, talk of the new law as an attack upon the liberties of the subject; as if the liberty of paupers in living in indolence as hangers-on upon the industrious labourers, as well as the income of the rate-payers, and all the abuses

which the new law was intended to remove, formed part of the liberty of the subject. In some of the petitions relief in the workhouse, that is, giving relief to the able-bodied who are destitute and in danger of perishing for want, warm lodging, warm clothing, ample nutritious food in return for labour; and giving all these with medical attendance and fitting comforts to the sick, the aged, and the impotent, without any return of labour, is stigmatised as cruelty; and the necessary disciplinary regulations, such as are essential in all communities living in large numbers, whether on board ships, in barracks, or in boarding schools, are denounced as oppressive and as punishments for poverty; and such relief to the destitute, with liberty to all who choose to quit the workhouse at three hours' notice, if they can provide better for themselves, is stigmatised as imprisonment. Though the knowledge of all those who have petitioned may be questioned, it is impossible not to acknowledge the evidence of sincerity which appears on the face of the greater number of petitions, especially in the statements of those who deny that their own management can be surpassed by the extended administration, although guided by the principles sanctioned by the legislature. The petitioners from the ward of Leath in Cumberland, for example, set forth that the people are satisfied with their management, and add, "That the population of Leath ward is entirely agricultural, and during many seasons of the year farmers and others in want of labourers could not get their necessary work done without the aid of those who in other seasons, for want of work, are then necessarily assisted out of the poor-rate. That those, by the Union, will be obliged to go to distant workhouses, and their township or parish will be deprived of their labour when materially wanted."

Here the vicious principle of the former abusive administration of the southern counties in maintaining a stock of labourers on the poor-rates in winter, for the convenience of the farmer, is unconsciously avowed to be in action, whilst the same petition complains "that they, the petitioners, have no need of the Act; although they are treated in the same way as where the wages of labour were paid out of the poor-rate, which it is presumed are the districts the Act was more especially intended to relieve."

So again the petitioners from the manufacturing town of Llanidloes, which consists of upwards of 3000 operatives engaged in the flannel trade, object to the introduction of relief in the workhouse; that at the present crisis "the operatives maintain themselves and families upon their small earnings with a trifling sum of money weekly, and an allowance for rent, as the select vestries deem prudent."

The petitioners from Merthyr Tydvil (where the law is now, we

trust, in prosperous as well as peaceable operation), whilst they declare that they abhor from their very souls the control of the Commissioners, yet they (the petitioners) will consent to a greater exercise of power than it has ever been proposed to give the Commissioners; for, says the petition, "this, the Poor Law Amendment Act, does not compel the idle and profligate to industry, and they (the petitioners) would see another act passed, to compel all such idlers to be put on board transports, to send to such countries as may stand in need of their example."

Other petitions, as two from Yorkshire, frankly avow as one ground of their opposition, that under the new system, where goods are purchased by contract, the parish (i. e. the shopkeepers who are petitioners) will be impoverished by the purchase of supplies out of it.

The addresses in favour of the Act, it will be found, eschew inflammatory epithets and vague reports, and state only their own experience. Some of these statements are made with a degree of clearness, simplicity, and ability, which, we believe, has rarely been seen before in this branch of public administration, and augur most favourably for its future progress.

The important improvements in the moral habits of the labouring classes is particularly attested by the Guardians of the Unions of Blything, Abingdon, Weymouth, Barnstaple, Okehampton, St. Faith's, Woodbridge, Docking, Bradfield, Biggleswade, Amptill, Woburn, Leighton Buzzard, Bath, Henstead, and Risbridge.

The change of the social condition of the pauperised labourers from idleness, turbulence, and improvidence, is emphatically stated in the addresses from the Unions of Hoxne, Cosford, Barnstaple, Royston, Freebridge, Lynn, Hartismere, Swaffham, Aylsham, Hailsham, Thanet, Guilteross, Aylesbury, Farringdon, and Bath.

The guardians of Thetford, Freebridge, Lynn, Wycombe, and Leighton Buzzard Unions bear witness to the fact that the labourers of this class are now convinced that they must depend upon their own labour for their support; and the guardians of the Blything, Abingdon, Freebridge, Lynn, Woodbridge, Cookham, Guilteross, and Woburn Unions, agree in their evidence that the labourers are more zealous to obtain and keep employment; and the guardians of the Blything Union state that the labourers are more careful of the property of their employers. The Unions of Blything, Cosford, Royston, Luton, and Malling, point out as the natural result of this state of things, that the means of employment have increased and the employment become more permanent; and



the guardians of Mitford and Launditch, of Docking, of Malling, and of Pershore, bear testimony to the fact, that better feelings exist between the labouring and the other classes; whilst the guardians of Blything, Weymouth, Okehampton, Thetford, and Malling state that the wages have increased, as they necessarily must have done, since the operation of the Act. The guardians of Abingdon, the first Union formed, and the guardians of the Swaffham Union, take the lead in declaring, that these results have been obtained without the use of undue harshness. The guardians of Colchester come forward to maintain that there is more kindness than formerly bestowed on the really destitute. In Andover, Bourn, and Hemel Hempstead, the guardians are struck with the phenomenon of the disappearance of the able-bodied paupers; and the Unions of Hartismere and the Isle of Thanet point attention to the absorption of the surplus population. That the social condition of the labouring classes is improved, is testified by the guardians of the Swaffham, Erpingham, Woodbridge, and Docking Unions; and the guardians of Cosford, of Woodbridge, of Luton, Bath, and Hemel Hempstead, indicate, as the evidence of improved habits, the increase in the number of depositors in savings-banks, and of members to benefit societies. Whilst these results are obtained for the adult labouring population, the amended system of administration has regard for the education and training of the rising generation who have been subject to old and pernicious influences. This is attested by the guardians of the Blything, Abingdon, Royston, Mitford and Launditch, Woodbridge, Woburn, Malling, Bourn, and Hemel Hempstead Unions.

Secondary and subsequent to this are the reductions of the burdens on the rate-payers, which are noticed in each of the addresses. The guardians state that these reductions were effected without privation to the aged or the infirm, and that in many cases their comforts have been increased. This is strongly insisted upon in the Unions of Blything, Abingdon, Hoxne, Cosford, Thingoe, Royston, Hartismere, Okehampton, St. Faith's, Aylsham, Woodbridge, Guilteross, Wycombe, St. Saviour's, Highworth and Swindon, Farringdon, Stow, Bath, Stenstead and Risbridge.

The petitioners against the Act, even some of them who admit the magnitude of the evils to be removed, yet take exception to the machinery necessary for its removal, and object to the powers of the Commissioners as unconstitutional. Not being aware that it has ever been a constitutional practice to appoint special courts, commissions, and functionaries for the performance of new or extraordinary duties, they make objections also to what they term the

novel legislative power vested in this Board: these objections doubtless arising from ignorance of the frequent and sudden changes, and various local modifications and emergencies, which it were impossible to meet by fixed statutory regulations, and from not observing how much of the business of the country is carried on by delegated legislation. These objections, however, are for the most part from districts where the new authority has not been exercised. The expressions of satisfaction derived from actual experience of the early and necessarily imperfect exercise of the new functions—the statements of the advantages resulting from regulations framed on the experience of the whole kingdom, rather than of the particular locality—are most numerous and cordial. The advantages experienced from central agency or control for the use and protection of each separate district, are emphatically stated in many of the addresses, and are set forth in various terms in the addresses of the guardians of the Bath, Hoxne, Thingoe, Royston, Hartismere, Okehampton, St. Faith's, Colchester, Aylsham, Erpingham, Hailsham, Mitford and Launditch, Docking, Thetford, Guilteross, Wycombe, St. Saviour's, Biggleswade, Ampthill, Stoke upon Trent and Risbridge Unions. The importance of uniformity in the administration is acknowledged and enforced by the guardians of the Depwade, Blything, St. Faith's, Royston, Okehampton, Aylsham, Woburn, Bath, and Bourn Unions, and they declare that it is only by central control that it can be secured. The Blything, Cosford, Colchester, and other Unions, give testimony to the temperate and judicious exercise of the powers which are exercised by the agency of the Assistant-Commissioners. The advantages of the central agency, as being the focus of information from all the Unions, are highly appreciated in the addresses from Blything, Hoxne, Cosford, Okehampton, Highworth and Swindon, and Andover.

The points of alteration in the administration of relief are stated variously, as they impress the various Boards of Guardians from whom these addresses have emanated; but there is a general concurrence in favour of the change of system, and the great majority of the guardians of all parties, whether elected or ex-officio, join in strongly deprecating the opposition to the new law, as arising from ignorance, gross misrepresentation, or sinister interests.

We believe that nearly all these documents have already been published and locally circulated. Those to which we have referred have been collected by us from "the Votes" of Parliament, or from provincial papers. The insertion of the whole, or even a large part of them, would unduly enlarge this Appendix; but we have inserted some parallel passages from the Petitions against the Amended Poor Laws, and from Petitions in favour of

these Laws, as well as from some of the Addresses which we have described in support of the New Law.

## COMPLAINTS.

*Liversedge.*

Your petitioners are of opinion that the Poor Law Amendment Act, so called, which the Commissioners are about to introduce into this district, is regarded by your petitioners as a direct innovation on the British Constitution, as complicated and expensive in its machinery, appointing a host of irresponsible Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners, with enormous salaries from the Consolidated Fund, or in other words from the pockets of a toiling and industrious people, the erection of costly Union workhouses, or, as the people call them, bastiles, salaried clerks to the Guardians, and, if these Commissioners so will it, salaries to the Guardians themselves; and, notwithstanding this costly and expensive machinery, which your petitioners consider will, in ordinary times, be quite equal, if not exceed, that of the ancient system, it will inflict innumerable cruelties and hardships upon the indigent poor, produce a strong feeling of disgust and horror in the minds of the people, and uproot the best feelings of human nature.

That your petitioners consider that there can be no justice in any country where the laws of man are contrary to the plain commands of God, by depriving his creatures of their right, by their own toil, to the fruits of the earth. They are led to consider the right of the landlord as a qualified right, but the right of the labourer as absolute and indispensable, being the gift of God.

## TESTIMONIALS.

*East Ward, Westmoreland Union.*

Your petitioners are aware that results beneficial in an equal degree with those which have arisen in the more pauperized districts of England could not be expected to accrue to those counties; nevertheless, your petitioners do not hesitate to affirm that the granting relief upon one uniform system is a most material improvement upon the former plan, as no longer subjecting the poor to the uncertain caprices of overseers, magistrates, and vestries; that the condition of the aged and infirm is more comfortable than under the old administration of the law, both as regards the inmates of the workhouse, as also those who are receiving out-door relief; that medical assistance to the sick is granted with much more certainty and liberality than by overseers, and a more strict attention paid to their wants; that they have the strongest reason to hope that the morality of the country will be improved, particularly as to the evil of bastardy, by inducing the women to impose a restraint upon themselves, and observe a caution and forbearance, which the former system tended rather to discourage than promote; that a certainty will be held out to labourers, to know that each man will enjoy the benefit of his own prudence and virtue, and that he will feel the effects of his improvidence and misconduct, and that thus industry will be encouraged, and idleness visited with its due reward.

## COMPLAINTS.

*Salford.*

Your petitioners knowing well that their title to the property they possess, the title of the landlords to their estates, and that of the peers to their hereditary possessions, rests on the same foundation as the title of the poor to a maintenance in exchange for their labour from the soil which gave them birth, are filled with consternation and dismay at the threats of a Poor Law Commissioner to introduce the Poor Law Amendment Act into this populous district.

Knowing that in the places where that Act has been enforced, men have been forcibly and illegally separated from their wives, and both of them from their children, and have been confined in separate cells, in large prisons called Union workhouses, clad in prison dresses, and reduced by insufficient coarse food, to the confines of starvation.

Knowing, too, that they have the legal right to resist the separation by force, and having learned from Blackstone and other high law authorities, that having no other means of providing sufficient food, they have a legal right to go forth and take it wherever they can find it; they, &c.

*Oldham.*

Your petitioners well know that the right of the poor to a maintenance from the soil of their birth, in exchange for their labour, rests upon the same foundation as the title of the landlords to their estates, and the peers to their hereditary possessions.

Your petitioners are filled with consternation and dismay at the

## TESTIMONIALS.

*Cosford Union.*

That barely fifteen months have transpired since the new measures came into operation, yet the success which has attended them has, in every respect, been such as to excite the surprise and admiration of all who have had an opportunity of appreciating the change.

The management of the workhouse is now conducted with regularity and decorum. Profligacy, idleness, and insolence among the poor have been replaced by sobriety, industry, and civility. Not only the paupers themselves, but the labourers above that class, and persons still further removed from want, have become in a marked degree more frugal and prudent. Under the workhouse system permanent employment has become general where it was before but casual; both the rate and sum-total of wages have consequently greatly increased; and although the poor-rates have been diminished more than 54 per cent. (from 19,223*l.* per annum to 8,823*l.*) we have it in evidence that the general condition of the labouring population throughout the Union is improved, as it regards their means of subsistence and domestic comfort.

That the following are some among many proofs of this improvement:—The demeanour of the labouring population is more cheerful and contented; there is a greater demand for such articles of food and clothing as are consumed by the poor; independent medical clubs are supported by them in almost every parish of the Union; many new members have been enrolled in benefit societies, one of which, having been established at

attempts now making to introduce the Poor Law Amendment Act into this parish, where the Poor Laws have hitherto been administered to the complete satisfaction of the rate-payers and the needy poor.

Your petitioners have been informed that in places where this law has been brought into operation, men have been forcibly, and, as your petitioners believe, illegally separated from their wives, and both of them from their children, and have been confined in separate cells, in large prisons called Union workhouses, and reduced by coarse and insufficient food to the very confines of starvation.

#### COMPLAINTS.

##### *Alstonefield, &c.*

That the rules and regulations promulgated by the said Poor Law Commissioners for the guidance and observance of Unions are contrary to the principles of humanity, against the spirit and character of the English nation, and tending to deprive the poor man, in his old age, of the comfort and assistance he is entitled to receive.

##### *Little Bolton.*

That the New Poor Law makes poverty (in many cases the result of unmerited misfortune) a crime; and buildings, under the name of workhouses, according to the public declaration of one of the Assistant Commissioners, are to be rendered as like prisons as possible, and as uncomfortable as possible.

That that law has a demoralizing and anti-Christian tendency, producing, in numberless instances, starvation, infanticide, and murder.

Hadleigh about six months, has already more than 100 members on its list; the rents of cottages have been more punctually paid this year than they have ever been known to be paid before; the number of small depositors in the Savings' Bank at Hadleigh is on the increase; and the deposits of the two months succeeding Michaelmas this year are greater than they were two years ago, when upwards of 400*l.* was advanced out of the poor-rates of the Union in aid of cottage-rents due at the Michaelmas of 1834.

#### TESTIMONIALS.

##### *Kingston Union.*

That the Union, in addition to the difficulties incidental to a new system, has been tested, within the first year of its introduction, by a season of extraordinary hardship, the winter having been of unusual duration and severity, aggravated by an epidemic disease, which, in some parishes, has spared scarcely a single family, especially of the poorer classes.

It is at the close of such a season that your petitioners state the results of the new system within the sphere of their Union to be:—

1st. A prevailing feeling of satisfaction at the working of the Union among the inhabitants best capable of appreciating the condition of the poorer classes, arising from the conviction, 1st, that the objects of real distress, whether from age, sickness, or casual destitution, are humanely and judiciously relieved. 2nd, That the mode of administering relief secures a degree of care and frugality in

That under that law, in contravention of the laws of God, husbands have been separated from their wives, and members of the same family from each other.

That grievous acts of injustice and oppression are daily occurring under its operation; and your petitioners cannot but view with alarm the consequences of a law which deprives the poor of their natural rights; the lives and property of your petitioners are thereby endangered, and feelings of animosity promoted to an extent which, if continued, must produce civil commotion.

That your petitioners consider the New Poor Law to be every way contrary to the principles of humanity and justice, and dangerous to the whole community; and therefore most earnestly request that the same may be forthwith repealed, and the just rights of the poor restored.

the expenditure, on the part of those who receive it, which was notoriously wanting under the old system of parish relief. 3rd, That by compelling competent relations, bound by law as well as by natural obligation, to support their necessitous kindred, a wholesome moral provision, almost lost sight of under the old system, is in course of being restored. 4th, That the discouragement of relief to able-bodied labourers, except in conjunction with work under proper regulations in the workhouse, must operate, and has operated, to make the labourer hold fast to his work when he has it, and careful of his earnings against the time when work may slacken, not having parish pay to fall back upon, when from any cause wages fail. 5th, That the medical relief of the poor is well provided for by the arrangements of the Board of Guardians, and the zeal and the humanity of medical officers. 6th, That the new management of the workhouse—one central house having superseded the several parochial poorhouses, although in this branch the arrangements of the Board are imperfect—has admitted of a greatly improved system of discipline, care, and moral superintendence of the pauper inmates, especially of the children. 7th, That every representation made to the Board, from whatever quarter, relative to the working of the system in general, or to the case of any poor person in particular, has received, and is sure to receive, immediate and careful consideration.

2ndly. That while these substantive benefits have resulted from the working of the Union, benefits involving important moral influences upon the community at large,

(and the immediate subjects of them, the poorer classes especially) the reduction of pauper expenditure of the parishes comprised in this Union, has been effected hitherto, one with the other, at the rate of 45 per cent. on the average cost of relief of the poor during the three years preceding the approach of the new Poor Law to these parts.

## COMPLAINTS.

*Kirkburton.*

That the working of the bastardy clauses, which has greatly increased the expense to townships or parishes, is most unjust to the female part of society; and that, in the opinion of your petitioners, it will be found upon inquiry to have contributed to the increase of the crimes of infanticide and female suicide.

*Wigan.*

Your petitioners cannot refrain from expressing their decided repugnance to the principles contained in the bastardy clauses of the said Act, offering as they do, in the opinion of your petitioners, a premium to the heartless seducer, and causing, it is to be feared, in many instances, the horrid crime of infanticide, and consigning many helpless and deceived females to permanent degradation and misery.

## TESTIMONIALS.

*Blean Union.*

Your petitioners are perfectly convinced that the bastardy clause is gradually and effectually improving the moral habits of the people. No cases of infanticide have occurred, no children been deserted, and the known cases of bastardy have much decreased.

*Woburn Union.*

Whatever objections may elsewhere be raised against the bastardy clause in the Act, the effect of its working in this union has obviously been to give a check to that open licentiousness which formerly prevailed among the lower classes.

*Royston Union.*

The alteration in the law of bastardy has likewise been found to work well, and to operate as a check upon this growing evil. Not a single instance of mischief has at present occurred, nor do we anticipate any such result; on the contrary, we feel assured that much excitement to evil will be thereby removed, and female chastity greatly promoted.

## COMPLAINTS.

*Derby.*

That the separating of wives and husbands, children and parents, in the new Union workhouses, the treatment of orphans, widows, and aged cripples much in the way of criminals, the short allowance of coarse food, and the preventing all whose unfortunate lot it may be to live within these walls from attending the public worship of God, are evils which your petitioners have reason to think will be injurious to the moral and religious character of the nation.

*Macclesfield.*

That under this law the labourers, although no fault of theirs, are deprived of employment, are not provided with labour, but are compelled to suffer incarceration, and endure the want of food in the poor law prisons, or remain at their homes and die through the want of the most common necessities of life.

Your petitioners feel confident that the united knowledge of the magistrates and the parochial authorities, rightly directed, would supersede any knowledge that any Board of Commissioners could possess, inasmuch as the officers filling subordinate situations under the magistracy must necessarily have a more accurate knowledge of the wants and means of their poorer neighbours, than any set of men possibly can have under any circumstances whatever.

## TESTIMONIALS.

*Blean Union.*

As to the workhouse discipline, the objections to the new system have emanated principally from interested persons, or those whose sympathy, whose charity, and whose pity are limited to paupers, and do not extend to the honest and hardworking labourer, or the needy small rate-payer, the one enduring more hardships to maintain his independence, and the other more privations to pay his quota of rates, than the individual who is actually subsisting upon the proceeds of their industry. The regulations for the management of the workhouse are, in the opinion of your petitioners, founded upon the best principle, whilst no inducement is held out to the idle and vicious to seek the workhouse (as in former times) as a place of rest and luxury: still for those whom poverty and misfortune have compelled to resort to its asylum, every requisite is fully supplied, good wholesome food, warm clothing, well ventilated rooms are provided; and although a separation of families is strictly observed, yet it cannot be regarded as a cruelty when the same observance is imperatively required among classes whose services to the nation (as soldiers and sailors) would induce the legislature to grant them every boon practicable. If more were required to show your honourable House that the objections against this part of the system are undeserving of attention, your petitioners would humbly request your honourable House to contrast the cleanly condition of the well regulated and orderly establishments

now in existence with the filthy and loathsome state of the generally mismanaged sinks of debauchery and vice, which were tolerated under the old law. With regard to the dietary, your petitioners' opinion is deduced from many months' experience, and the testimony of competent persons, and corroborated by the healthy state of the inmates generally, that the quantity of food daily distributed is quite sufficient for their wants.

## COMPLAINTS.

*Chichester Local Union.*

That your petitioners feel perfectly satisfied that, for the proper management of the poor, little else was necessary than to have resorted to the benign and ennobling enactments of the forty-third of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, by which wholesome statute work was to be provided for those who could not otherwise obtain it, the aged and infirm were to be comfortably housed, and the cruel separation of parents from their tender children was not contemplated; whereas by the present law as administered by the Commissioners, industrious labourers are obliged to live on inadequate wages, no remunerating work is provided for such industrious paupers as cannot otherwise obtain it; one hard fate thus awaiting the respectable and the profligate, while from the extent of the Unions medical assistance has not in many cases been attainable with sufficient facility.

Your petitioners feel in duty bound to their fellow-citizens, who prize their present local act, to entreat your honourable House not to give any further power to the

## TESTIMONIALS.

*Bedford Union.*

We observe with feelings of extreme satisfaction, that this considerable pecuniary saving (70 per cent.) has been accompanied by the most gratifying symptoms of increasing industry, civility, prudent habits, and integrity of conduct among the labouring poor, and that it is evident the new law is quietly, but surely, working a great moral improvement in the habits and feelings of this class of the people. Fathers evince greater kindness and thoughtfulness for their children; the able-bodied and vigorous youth, instead of, as formerly, neglecting his aged parents, now contributes willingly to their wants and necessities; and the wretched and degraded pauper, who was formerly existing upon the miserable but certain pittance "allowed by the parish," is now, by the regenerating spirit of the new system, an active and useful member of society, and supporting his family by the honest earnings of free labour; to which may be added the cheering facts, that during the last year friendly societies have rapidly increased,

said Commissioners, being fully convinced that, in order adequately to provide for the pressing wants of the distressed, guardians should not be merely passive instruments in the hands of distant directors, but should have the power of considering in their relief those particular local circumstances which the professed uniformity of operation aimed at by the present law entirely precludes.

*Romney.*

Your petitioners abhor the thought from their very souls of being transferred over like so many poor, degraded, miserable serfs, to the Poor Law Commissioners, to be entirely under their power and control, and absolutely at their will and mercy.

Your petitioners humbly beg your honourable House to prevent those Poor Law Commissioners and their underlings, from doing any further mischief, by depriving them of the immense power conferred upon them, lest in the end these powers may subvert the Constitution.

and commitments to prison have been less by one-fifth than in the preceding twelve months.

*Amphill Union.*

That the mode of administering relief to the poor by the establishment of Boards of Guardians has, under the guidance of the Central Board, proved one of the greatest blessings which has been conferred upon the community at large by any act of the Legislature during the nineteenth century. That no less than 1086 poor persons have, within the last twelve months, personally had an opportunity of stating their situation to the Board, and thereby had an unprejudiced tribunal to adjudicate upon each particular case.

That the guardians feel it to be their duty unfeignedly to express the great advantage they have derived from the able manner in which the Poor Law Commissioners have assisted them in every point of difficulty which has been submitted to them; and consider that they are bound to uphold the benefit which they have derived from appealing to the Central Board, divested as it is of local interest and party feeling.

*Royston Union.*

The alteration in the law of settlement, and the great facilities afforded for avoiding the expenses of litigation, are entitled to our warmest approbation. And another feature of the system which we consider highly beneficial is, that it has brought together men of various grades in society, of different views, habits, and modes of thinking, who were comparatively little acquainted with each



other, and thus imparted to the Boards of Guardians the advantage of each individual's ability, knowledge, and experience. It has united them in the performance of a common and important duty, shown them how nearly allied are the interests of all classes of the community, and how usefully and successfully all may combine in promoting the temporal welfare and moral improvement of their poorer brethren. And lastly, it has secured for the poor and afflicted an intelligent, unbiassed, and almost disinterested tribunal, by which every application for relief is humanely and dispassionately considered and determined.

In conclusion, we feel it our duty to express to your Lordship our high sense of the advantages we have derived from the guidance and assistance of the Central Board of Poor Law Commissioners, and the Assistant-Commissioner of the District, who have been unremitting in their exertions to promote and secure the success of the measure, and by whose judicious superintendence alone can uniformity of procedure and sound principles of action be established and maintained.





