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Edwin Chadwick

ART. X.—1. *Extracts from the information received by his Majesty's Commissioners as to the administration and operation of the Poor Laws.* Published by authority. London. B. Fellowes: 1833.

2. *Report from his Majesty's Commissioners for enquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws.* Published by authority. London. B. Fellowes: 1834.

3. *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales.* London. Printed for his Majesty's Stationery Office: 1835.

FROM time to time we have called attention to the progress of pauperism, until further speculation on the remedies for the moral plague appeared to be fruitless. But now speculation is reduced to practice, and an experiment for its cure is in operation on a vast scale, to which the attention of all Europe is directed. We feel it to be our duty to give a statement of the principles on which it is conducted, together with some account of the results already obtained, and of the prospects which it opens for the future.

If we examine the legislative measures which have been applied as remedies for the evils of indigence in England—if, without reciting the statutes before the reign of Henry the Eighth, or the striking accounts of their failure repeated in the preambles of the succeeding statutes, we review the history of the legislation in England from the statute of Elizabeth, we shall find that it is a history of failures fraught with valuable instruction to the legislator. There is scarcely one statute for the administration of relief to the indigent that has produced the effect designed by the legislature, or that has not created new evils, and aggravated the evils which they were intended to counteract.

The chief objects of the statute of Elizabeth were to make the able-bodied, who were indolent and turbulent, conform to habits of industry. The effects of the law, as it was recently administered throughout the country,—were to render the industrious indolent, vicious, and turbulent—to endanger the safety of all property, and by its unequal pressure, and by the temptation which it afforded for speculation, to promote corruption and generate animosities between one part of the community and another. A further object of the statute was to prevent vagrancy and mendicity. We read the early failure of this object in the sanguinary

statute against vagrancy passed in the next reign. The work-houses and prisons have served as nurseries, and the poor rates, as recently managed, furnished a large share of the sustenance of vagrants and mendicants, against whose progress (in default of the police) numerous voluntary associations have in our own times been brought into operation throughout the country. The great number of hospitals, almshouses, and other charitable institutions maintained by voluntary contribution, for the sick, the aged, and the impotent, denote the proportion of the more especial objects of the statute, who, as the law was administered, failed in obtaining the relief which was intended for them by the Legislature.

The objects of the law respecting bastardy were to punish and check unchastity, and to prevent the state being burdened with the offspring of illicit intercourse. The effects of the law, as it was administered, were to add greatly to a wretched pauper population, and not only to license, but to give bounties for the promotion of the vice intended to be restrained.

The objects of the statutes of the 3d and 4th William and Mary, and the 9th Geo. I., were to check the profusion of overseers and to enforce economy. Not only has the law as administered, failed of those objects, but the positive effect has been to defeat a more rigid and economical administration.

The proper object of the legal provisions with relation to settlement, was to prevent any district becoming burdened by fraud or accident with an undue proportion of the indigent, or of those liable to fall into that condition. The immediate object of the first statute was to prevent parishes being so burdened by the immigration of the paupers of a vagrant character. The preamble sets forth :—‘Whereas, by some defects of 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, the largest commons or wastes to build cottages, and the most woods for them to burn and destroy, and when they have consumed it, then to another parish.’ It has been observed by Mr Power, that the evils entailed by this enactment might now be remedied by a provision with a preamble setting forth that ‘Whereas, by reason of some defects in the law, poor people *are* restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore become settled and congregated in those parishes where there is the *least* stock to support them.’ All the legal provisions on this subject have failed of their intention, or have produced mischief. They afforded no useful protection to the weaker parishes, whilst they afforded considerable facilities and temptations to the more wealthy to rid themselves of burdens

by throwing them on the defenceless. By these provisions a large class of labourers were rendered *adscripti parochiæ*, and confined to spots where there was no demand, or where there was the least demand for their labour.

The intention of the clauses in the act of the 5th Geo. IV. cap. 85, under which vagrants are passed from prisons to their own homes after trial, was to save them from the temptations to commit further crime. But the effect was, 'for the benefit of the 'pass,' to convey into prisons paupers and the families of poor persons, as if the Legislature intended that they and their children should have all the terrors of a prison obliterated from their minds, and receive instruction in the worst schools of vice—as if the provisions were made to increase the stock of juvenile delinquents who afflict the country and crowd the gaols. 'It is,' says a gaoler, in giving his evidence before one of the Commissioners, 'a melancholy thing that poor people are sent into prison as 'vagrants that they may be passed home. There is now a mother, a widow with five children, under my care—the boys are 'from five to fifteen years of age. The mother was committed, 'not for any crime, but for having been found sitting in the open 'air. Now what, I beg to ask, can be the effect of sending 'these children with their mother to a gaol? What may they 'not learn? In general vagrants are told that they are sent to 'prison, not for their punishment, but for their benefit. Prisons 'should not in any case (as I humbly conceive) be held as 'places where they are to be *benefited*! The great mischief is, 'that prisons are now looked upon as places of relief, and the 'large class of vagrants are told that they are sent to prison 'avowedly for their *benefit*.'

The ruinous effects of others of the best intended laws for ameliorating the condition of the poor are recited in terms still more forcible.

Parliamentary committee after committee made enquiries into the subject with a view to check the progress of the evil, and, with the exception of the committee of 1817, each enquiry ended, as to any efficient remedy, in mist.

The institution of elective vestries under Mr Sturges Bourne's act, giving to the chief rate payers some better control over the expenditure, in many instances checked the progress of the evil. But from the results of the whole of the cases where select vestries were adopted, it is evident that the general adoption of the measure would have left the evil still progressive, whilst the adoption of the plans of cottage allotments and small farming sanctioned by that committee, would have gone some way to-

wards reducing the rural population to a condition of the population in that large theatre of cottage allotments and small farms—Ireland.

It appeared to Lord Grey's Government, that a commission furnished the most fitting means for ascertaining correctly the state of the administration of relief to the poor, and for devising legislative measures for a subject so important and complex. It was said, however, that evidence enough had been already collected; it was declared that the principles of legislation upon it were clear and undoubted; and the appointment of the unpaid commission was denounced as a job, and a pretext for delay.

Amongst the persons who would have preferred legislating without enquiry, were several able men, who, in their confidence of general principles, would have acted upon them alone; that is, upon principles deduced not from large aggregates of particulars, but (to use the expression of Mr Senior with relation to the subject of political economy) 'deductions from premises which consist of very few general propositions, the result of observation or consciousness, and scarcely requiring proof or even formal statement, which almost every man, as soon as he hears them, admits as familiar to his thoughts, or at least as included in his previous knowledge.' Here they would have remained. Now, admitting the general proposition or principle, that a man will seek that condition which is the most pleasurable to him; or the subordinate proposition or principle, deduced as the main principle of poor law management,—that the condition of the person relieved at the public expense must be made less eligible on the whole, than the condition of the person living on the fruits of his own labour, for otherwise the condition of the pauper will be preferred by the otherwise independent labourer; yet, without staying to enquire how large a mass of facts are included under these propositions, we may ask how extensive an enquiry does it not require to determine what is the relative condition of a whole class of the people; and where the principle may be undoubted, what a mass of evidence is requisite to convince a whole nation! From the results of the enquiry made under the Poor Law Commission, we might question whether there are any acknowledged principles of legislation on which it would be safe to act without a close enquiry as to what circumstances there are which modify the principle itself, or limit the means by which effect may be given to it; whether there are at present any established principles better fitted for extensive practical application, without previous examination, than are the established truths of geometry fitted for practical application without a previous examination of the

weight and density of the substances to which application of them is proposed to be made.

We shall recall attention to some of the principal doctrines which were so far prevalent before the appointment of the Commission, that the Parliament would in all probability have entertained proposals to legislate upon them. These conclusions come out in opposition, and almost in antithesis to, the previously received doctrines. We request especial attention to them; for, besides the important effects dependent upon their adoption, we deem the proceeding of great importance as a question of legislative procedure.

First, we would call attention to the application of the population principle to legislation upon the poor laws.

There was a numerous class of persons who, on the poor laws, as well as on the whole field of legislation applicable to the labouring classes, reasoning from the assumed inevitable tendency of population to increase, under all circumstances, beyond the means of subsistence,—believing in the existence of the necessary consequences of that doctrine when unqualified, a surplus population increasing beyond any conceivable demand for employment, a surplus of people the cause of the reduced wages and depressed condition of those who were employed, and themselves the exposed victims of crime and misery,—saw no prospect of alleviation but in the operation of the natural checks, war, famine, the plague, or their modifications. As a resource against these horrors, emigration was promoted with benevolent ardour. Those who doubted the efficiency of this remedy, advocated the necessity of an absolute abrogation of all legal rights to relief from funds raised by compulsory assessment, contending that this measure, which would operate as a check to the increase of population, was the only remedy which could stay the downward progress of the bulk of the labouring classes, or furnish means for their elevation.

But by the enquiry instituted by the Poor Law Commissioners into the circumstances of the rural population, and by parallel enquiry into the condition of a large proportion of the manufacturing population, instituted by the Central Board of Factory Commissioners, opposite conclusions were established. ‘We can state,’ say the Poor Law Commissioners, ‘as the result of the extensive enquiries made under this commission into the circumstances of the labouring classes, that the agricultural labourers when in employment, in common with the other classes of labourers throughout the country, have greatly advanced in condition; that their wages will now produce to

‘ them more of the necessaries and comforts of life than at any former period. These results appear to be confirmed by the evidence collected by the Committees of the House of Commons appointed to enquire into the condition of the agricultural and manufacturing classes, and also by that collected by the Factory Commissioners. No body of men save money whilst they are in want of what they deem absolute necessities. No common man will put by a shilling whilst he is in need of a loaf, or will save whilst he has a pressing want unsatisfied. The circumstance of there being nearly fourteen millions in the savings banks, and the fact that, according to the last returns, upwards of 29,000 of the depositors were agricultural labourers, who, there is reason to believe, are usually the heads of families, and also the fact of the reduction of the general average of mortality, justify the conclusion, that a condition worse than that of the independent agricultural labourer, may nevertheless be a condition above that in which the great body of English labourers have lived in times that have always been considered prosperous. Even if the condition of the independent labourer were to remain as it now is, and the pauper were to be reduced avowedly below that condition; he might still be adequately supplied with the necessaries of life.’

It might have been added, that the fact of the advance in the condition of the labourers, was confirmed by the general increased duration of life amongst them.

An aphorism deduced from the assumed inevitable tendency of population had gained currency, that ‘ poverty is the mother of crime;’ and as the crime was extensive and increasing, so, it was held, was the poverty by which it was generated. Hence it became necessary to the Poor-Law Enquiry to ascertain what amount of destitution was so far unprovided for by the administration of funds for relief raised by compulsory assessment, as to impel the victims to the commission of crime; and also to enquire how it came to be unprovided for. Neither the prison-discipline societies, nor the association of persons who are so active in exciting the public sympathies, afforded any lights on these questions. The following examinations portray the tenor of the evidence with relation to them:—

‘ Mr Wontner, the governor of Newgate, was asked—

‘ “ Of the criminals thus impelled to the commission of crime by the immediate pressure of want, what proportion, according to the best of your experience, were previously reduced to want by heedlessness; indolence, and not by causes beyond the reach of common prudence to avert?

—When we enquire into the class of cases to which the last answer refers, we generally find that the criminals have had situations and profitable labour, but have lost them in consequence of indolence, inattention, or dissipation, or habitual drunkenness, or association with bad females. If we could thoroughly examine the whole of this class of cases, I feel confident that we should find that not one-thirtieth of the whole class of cases brought here are free from imputation of misconduct, or can be said to result entirely from blameless want. The cases of juvenile offenders, from nine to thirteen years of age, arise partly from the difficulty of obtaining employment for children of those ages, partly from the want of the power of superintendence of parents, who, being in employment themselves, have not the power to look after their children; and in a far greater proportion from the criminal neglect and example of parents."

' Mr Chesterton states, " I directed a very intelligent yardsman, and one who had never, I believe, wilfully misled me, to enquire into the habits and circumstances of all in the yard (sixty prisoners), and the result was that he could not point out one who appeared to have been urged by want to commit theft."

' Mr Richard Gregory, the treasurer of Spitalfields parish, who for several years distinguished himself by his successful exertions for the prevention of crime within that district, was asked—

" We understand you have paid great attention to the state and prevention of crime; can you give us any information as to the connexion of crime with pauperism?—I can state from experience that they invariably go together.

" But do poverty—meaning unavoidable and irreproachable poverty—and crime invariably go together?—That is the material distinction. In the whole course of my experience, which is of twenty-five years, in a very poor neighbourhood, liable to changes subjecting the industrious to very great privations, I remember but one solitary instance of a poor but industrious man out of employment stealing any thing."

A source of the misplaced sympathy to the pauper classes arises from the impressions produced by the weekly bankruptcy list, and the belief created that numerous respectable families are reduced to pauperism by the vicissitudes of trade. There is a great mass of statistics when thus presented, which admit of whatever assumption as to their effect any person who uses them may choose to make. Whilst the Poor-Law Enquiry was proceeding, there was an enormous outcry about the distress which was said to pervade the trading classes in the metropolis—distress arising from the decay of trade, and that from the pressure of the assessed taxes, which it was contended must be repealed for the public preservation. It was roundly asserted, that in a populous street in the metropolis (Regent Street), every third

shopkeeper was, in consequence of this distress, either a bankrupt or an insolvent. The fact was also assumed to be an indirect but potent element of pauperism.

The truth, however, is, that the total amount of the cases of bankruptcy and of insolvency which are carried through the courts are trivial in themselves, as compared with the whole of the trading population, and form a decreasing quantity; but from some questions put to the official assignees, who must necessarily examine every case, it appeared that cases of blameless distress in trade were almost as rare as cases of unavoidable and blameless poverty. Mr Green, one of those officers, gives the following return:—

‘As far as I can collect from the books and documents furnished by the bankrupts, it seems to me that 14 have been ruined by speculations in things with which they were unacquainted; 3 by neglected book-keeping; 10 by trading beyond their capital and facile means, and the consequent loss and expense of accommodation-bills; 49 by expending more than they could reasonably hope their profits would be, though their business yielded a fair return; none by any general distress, or the falling-off of any particular branch of trade.

Another officer states,—

‘The New Court has been open upwards of eighteen months, during which period fifty-two cases of bankruptcy have come under my care. To the best of my judgment, not one of them can be attributed to what may be termed general distress. It is my opinion that thirty-two of these have arisen from an imprudent expenditure, and five partly from that cause, and partly from a pressure on the business in which the bankrupts were employed. Fifteen I attribute to improvident speculations, combined in many instances with an extravagant mode of life. Among these fifteen I find a tailor, in a very small way of business, borrowing money to become the owner of a West-India ship, trading to Jamaica, a concern of which he was totally ignorant; consequently he was cheated in every way, and speedily ruined. A London publican, having a slight knowledge of science, neglects his business here, goes over to France for the purpose of entering into a contract with the French authorities for the supply of Paris with water. A working goldsmith, never having had L.10, takes Saville House, Leicester Square, and engages singers and musicians, for the purpose of establishing concerts. The thirty-two classed as failing through imprudencies in their mode of living include many whose necessities leading them to resort to accommodation-bill transactions; have become the prey of money-lenders, and their attendant harpies, the inferior class of solicitors.’

These are exemplifications of the general tenor of the whole mass of returns, which were fully corroborated by enquiries re-

specting the cases of insolvency brought within the cognizance of the Insolvent Debtor's Court.

So, when enquiries were made in workhouses for persons of respectability, 'tradesmen, or creditable rate-payers,' who have fallen into decay, the instances were equally rare. In one large parish in the metropolis, comprising forty thousand inhabitants, it was determined by some benevolent officers to make separate provision for the paupers of deserving character, and give them appropriate rooms and treatment. Commencing with this intention of finding the class of objects, they nevertheless could not get more than *seven* cases out of about six hundred paupers, for whom a separate apartment could properly be assigned; and these were cases in which no *prima facie* objection was perceptible, rather than cases where the facts sought were established. Extensive investigations of other receptacles of paupers were corroborative of the conclusion derived from this particular instance. Age of itself, as being indicative of helplessness, is a circumstance which engages the popular sympathies, and in the course of the administration of relief, usually shuts out all enquiries as to preceding desert. But in such an investigation such considerations would be an obstacle to the ascertainment of truth, and could not properly have place. The aged inmates of workhouses were not found to be, as a class, such as poetry had represented them to be—the parents of meritorious and industrious labourers; but, with the exception of the cases of helplessness arising from disease, they were found, whenever they were examined, to be the parents of the worst part of the population, of the felon, the prostitute, the poacher, or the smuggler, who have no filial sympathies, having deserved none, and who had by misconduct worn out their welcome at every friendly home.

The operation of the great mass of public charities was also examined, for the purpose of determining how far the cases of those to whom they distributed relief were cases of unavoidable poverty, for which the compulsory system of relief failed to provide. The result of this examination was, that the present system of voluntary charity tends to create the distress which it proposes to relieve, but does not relieve all the distress which it creates. One of the Commissioners of Enquiry declared upon this evidence, that if any trustee of a public charity for the distribution of doles, instead of distributing the substance as intended, consumed it in good cheer for himself and friends; and that any trustee of a charity for foundlings, who, instead of applying

the substance to those purposes, kept a mistress with it, really produced less immorality by such a course of proceeding, as compared with a literal administration of the trust, and was *pro tanto* a benefactor to the public.*

Another opinion was that which insisted that it was requisite to establish Poor Laws in Ireland, not for the sake only of the Irish, but to protect the English labourers from being further depressed by the irruption of the Irish surplus. These inferences will elsewhere be dealt with: we only advert to the opinion upon which measures were prepared for the Legislature, that the English labourers were depressed, and depressed by the emigration of Irish labourers in our towns, and in the rural districts. The facts were brought out in examinations to the following tenor:—

‘Mr Joseph Whittle, one of the guardians of the poor and overseers of the poor, in the parish of Christchurch, Spitalfields, stated—In our parish it is a very rare thing to find any labouring men working for less than twelve shillings a-week: indeed, the average rate of wages throughout the year is not less than from fifteen to twenty shillings a-week. A man could not be obtained to work job work at less than three shillings a-day. Are there many Irish labourers in the parish?—Yes; there is a great proportion of them, and especially about Spitalfields Market. Do they usually receive the average wages you mention?—Yes; they do. Why are English labourers not employed—or why are Irish labourers preferred?—Because English labourers are not to be had for love or money to perform the labour. I am sure, from my knowledge of the circumstances of the place and the employment, that there is not a sufficient supply of English labourers to take the work at any such wages. I believe the wages must be doubled to attract a sufficient supply of English labourers from other sources in the metropolis. Are you not aware that, within a day’s walk from any part of the metropolis, there are to be found English labourers, working as hard, or much harder than any other class of workmen, for wages of about one-half the amount of those received by the labourers in the metropolis?—Yes; I am acquainted with all the agricultural districts within twenty miles round the metropolis, and I know that is the case. Why do not whatever superabundant labourers there may be in those parishes, remove and avail themselves of the demand for labour now supplied by Irishmen?—Thousands of instances may be given, where the labourers will not stir for fear of losing their parishes. I think the law of settlement is the great means of keeping the English labourers confined to their parishes. It appears to them to be like running away from their heirlooms, or their freeholds. I am sure, from my own knowledge of the Whitechapel and other adjacent parishes, that there are not

* See, as to the voluntary charities, the evidence of the Rev. H. Stone, the Rector of Spitalfields. Extracts, p. 283.

enough of English labourers to be had for such wages, to perform the labour. Seven-tenths of the cases of alleged distress relieved are cases of imposture."

'Mr T. J. Holland, some time vestry-clerk of Bermondsey, stated,—There are great numbers of Irishmen employed in our parish; but they are only employed because English labourers cannot be got to do the same work for the same wages. And what sort of wages are those?—Not less than from ten to fifteen shillings a-week. An English labourer might live upon this. But English labourers would have more wages, if they were to be had for the work, because they are worth more.'

The persons who still acted upon the belief of the depression, were asked to explain the process by which the Irishman, working in the streets of London at sixteen or eighteen shillings a-week, depressed the English agricultural labourer, who belonged to one of the Middlesex rural parishes, who worked in his own parish at wages as low as eight or nine shillings per week. The operation of this emigration upon the agricultural districts was further investigated. It was shown that very few Irishmen ever obtained settlements, and that they generally came in in consequence of a demand, and generally worked at such high wages as entirely to exclude the suppositions of their depressing the wages of the English labourers below a proper level.

The enquiry was carried out into the manufacturing districts by Mr George Lewis, as an assistant commissioner to the Irish Commission of Enquiry, whose able report confirms the conclusion obtained under the English enquiry, and establishes the fact that the more cheap but adequately paid Irish labour brought into the manufacturing districts, has had much the same effect as machinery, in sustaining the skilled labour of the English workman. As the use of machinery has been extended, the amount of capital distributed as wages has been increased. Similar economical results have existed concurrently with the migration and settlement of the Irish labourers within the manufacturing districts. In the rural districts, the number of Scotch and Irish who had settled were found to be too few to have produced any effect on the rate of wages. The wages of many English labourers might no doubt have been increased by the scarcity of hands; but the increase was uncalled for by any serious privations, and, regarding the state of labour in other countries, would have diminished the demand for labour, and reduced the amount of wages distributed. There are, doubtless, moral and political evils connected with the permanent settlement of so undisciplined a race of people amongst

our labourers. These results were cited as illustrative of the effects of the allowance system, and the law of settlement in England. If they had their due weight, they would, of course, dissipate so much of the projects for legislation with regard to Ireland, that are founded upon the supposed mischievous effects of the immigration of Irish labourers into England.

The state of the facts on all the main points as to the condition of the population and causes of pauperism were found upon the detailed examination to be at all points essentially different from the prevalent notions of them. There were dangerous congestions of pauperism in particular places, but no real or general surplus beyond the average demand for employment throughout the year. These congestions, the apparent surplus of population, gave way under numerous variations of circumstances, where the parish was made the hardest taskmaster and the worst paymaster within the district. It has rarely been found that more than three or four per cent of the claimants sustained this test even temporarily, and this residue has been rather of cases where the real causes of distress could not be ascertained, than of cases which were proved to be of the character of which the mass of pauperism was assumed to consist. The Commissioners hailed, as one of the most encouraging results of their enquiry, the proof of the degree in which the existing pauperism arose from 'fraud, indolence, or improvidence.' 'If,' say they, 'it had been principally the result of unavoidable distress, we must have inferred the existence of an organic disease, which, without rendering the remedy less necessary, would have fearfully augmented the difficulty of the cure. But, when we consider how strong are the motives to claim public assistance, and how ready are the means of obtaining it, independent of any cause arising from real necessity, we are surprised, not at the number of the paupers, but at the number of those who have escaped the contagion.' To use medical language, the disease was pronounced to be, not disease of structure, but disorder of the functions.

It was asserted by Mr Ricardo, and has been maintained by many authors, that a compulsory system of relief must ultimately annihilate all property unless it were abolished; and this doctrine is plainly set forth in what is called the philosophical portion of the report of the committee of 1817.

The Commissioners of Enquiry defend the principle of a compulsory system of relief. The following is their statement of the principles of the remedies which they suggest:

‘ If we believed the evils stated in the previous part of the Report, or evils resembling or even approaching them, to be necessarily incidental to the compulsory relief of the able-bodied, we should not hesitate in recommending its entire abolition. But we do not believe these evils to be its necessary consequences. We believe that, under strict regulations, adequately enforced, such relief may be afforded safely and even beneficially.

‘ In all extensive communities, circumstances will occur in which an individual, by the failure of his means of subsistence, will be exposed to the danger of perishing. To refuse relief, and at the same time to punish mendicity when it cannot be proved that the offender could have obtained subsistence by labour, is repugnant to the common sentiments of mankind; it is repugnant to them to punish even depredation, apparently committed as the only resource against want.

‘ In all extensive civilized communities, therefore, the occurrence of extreme necessity is prevented by alms-giving, by public institutions supported by endowments or voluntary contributions, or by a provision partly voluntary and partly compulsory, or by a provision entirely compulsory, which may exclude the pretext of mendicancy.

‘ But in no part of Europe except England has it been thought fit that the provision, whether compulsory or voluntary, should be applied to more than the relief of *indigence*, the state of a person unable to labour, or unable to obtain, in return for his labour, the means of subsistence. It has never been deemed expedient that the provision should extend to the relief of *poverty*; that is, the state of one, who, in order to obtain a mere subsistence, is forced to have recourse to labour.

‘ From the evidence collected under this commission, we are induced to believe that a compulsory provision for the relief of the indigent can be generally administered on a sound and well-defined principle; and that under the operation of this principle, the assurance that no one need perish from want may be rendered more complete than at present, and the mendicant and vagrant repressed by disarming them of their weapon—the plea of impending starvation.

‘ It may be assumed, that in the administration of relief, the public is warranted in imposing such conditions on the individual relieved, as are conducive to the benefit either of the individual himself, or of the country at large, at whose expense he is to be relieved.

‘ The first and most essential of all conditions, a principle which we find universally admitted, even by those whose practice is at variance with it, is, that his situation on the whole shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class. Throughout the evidence it is shown, that in proportion as the condition of any pauper class is elevated above the condition of independent labourers, the condition of the independent class is depressed; their industry is impaired, their employment becomes unsteady, and its remuneration in wages is diminished. Such persons, therefore, are under the strongest inducements to quit the less eligible class of labourers

and enter the more eligible class of paupers. The converse is the effect when the pauper class is placed in its proper position, below the condition of the independent labourer. Every penny bestowed, that tends to render the condition of the pauper more eligible than that of the independent labourer, is a bounty on indolence and vice. We have found, that as the poor's-rates are at present administered, they operate as bounties of this description, to the amount of several millions annually.

'The standard, therefore, to which reference must be made in fixing the condition of those who are to be maintained by the public, is the condition of those who are maintained by their own exertions. But the evidence shows how loosely and imperfectly the situation of the independent labourer has been enquired into, and how little is really known of it by those who award or distribute relief. It shows also that so little has their situation been made a standard for the supply of commodities, that the diet of the workhouse almost always exceeds that of the cottage, and the diet of the gaol is generally more profuse than even that of the workhouse. It shows also, that this standard has been so little referred to in the exaction of labour, that commonly the work required from the pauper is inferior to that performed by the labourers and servants of those who have prescribed it: So much and so generally inferior as to create a prevalent notion among the agricultural paupers that they have a right to be exempted from the amount of work which is performed and indeed sought for by the independent labourer.'

We believe that modern history scarcely furnishes an example of a verbal ambiguity by which greater mischief has been done, than by the ambiguity of the word 'poor.' We are not amongst those who believe that the framers of the statute of the 43d Eliz. saw the main tendencies of its provisions; but that statute is not chargeable with the mischiefs which have crept into the administration by the indefinite and ambiguous use of the word 'poor.' By that statute it was provided that the overseers should take order for setting to work 'all persons using *no* ordinary and daily 'trade of life to get their living by,'—and these words must be taken to exclude those who are in work, and 'who *do* use an 'ordinary and daily trade of life,'—in short, to prohibit any thing of the nature of the allowance system. The further words of the statute, for providing for 'the necessary relief of the lame, 'impotent, old, blind, and such other among them being poor 'and *not* able to work,' as well as those 'who have no means to 'maintain them,' excludes those from relief who have *any* means, and confines the relief to those who are destitute. But all those who are not possessed of wealth being called 'poor,' the law has been supposed to comprehend them, and to render it the duty of the Government to provide a sufficiency of wages, and to become

the universal insurers of all classes against all the evils of indolence and improvidence. Out of this ambiguity has arisen no small proportion of the ignorant but honest opposition to amendment on the part of many of the wealthy classes. The Commissioners, having in view the paupers, or persons actually dependent on parochial relief, have described the frauds practised by them, and cited evidence in proof of their indolence and other vices of their condition. In answer to this evidence, pamphlets have been written to vindicate the 'poor' (meaning the bulk of the population) from these aspersions, and to prove that virtue and industry still exists amongst them. So, when measures are propounded for the regulation of the relief to the 'poor' (meaning the 'destitute'), as when the abolition of all out-door relief is spoken of, those good persons, whose hearts are larger than their heads, and who have fostered the notion that the State is the great dispenser of wages—in other words, that all the labouring population are to be maintained from some inexhaustible fund, regard such a proposition with horror, and are vehement in the expression of their conviction, that the 'poor' will not permit the 'poor' to be oppressed, or yield to a scheme for putting the 'poor' (meaning still the whole of the labouring population) into workhouses. The Commissioners might have added, that poverty, as above defined, is the natural, the primitive, the general, and the unchangeable state of man; and that as labour is the source of wealth, so is poverty of labour. Banish poverty, you banish wealth. Indigence, therefore, and not poverty, is the evil, the removal of which is the proper object of Poor Laws. Indigence may be provided for—mendicity may be extirpated; but all attempts to extirpate poverty can have no effects but bad ones.

Amongst other sources of mischief, was the habit prevalent throughout the country of governing the administration of relief by notions of the character of the applicants. A large proportion of the public having no sympathies for the indolent and vicious (who are assumed to be the exceptions), were willing that those classes should be placed under restrictions: but were desirous that the 'deserving,' the worthy and deserving labourers, should be well relieved, if not rewarded. Conceding that merit were a proper element of consideration in a compulsory system of relief, and that it were desirable to reward virtue, one thing established was that the parish vestry was not a tribunal where moral conduct could be well investigated. Even where clergymen who were chairmen did not see all the virtues in

their own poor, and hateful vices in the followers of the Dissenters, and where the small shopkeepers did not testify to the superior virtues of their own customers, all systems of relief upon the principle of rewarding the virtuous were pronounced to be entire failures.

‘I found,’ says one of the Commissioners, ‘that most attempts to administer public relief according to character, even when those attempts have been made under circumstances apparently the most favourable, have created great dissatisfaction. Character being made up of habits, and habits being made up of series of simple acts (which we sometimes find it difficult to determine on in our courts of law, even with all skilled appliances), it is not surprising that persons in wealthy or superior stations, who have rarely the means of observing or knowing the daily arts of the labouring classes, usually fail of estimating them, so as to adjudicate justly, according to the estimation of the claimants. The Rev. W. Bishop, the rector of Upton, Berks, stated to me: “When first I came to this parish, I instituted rewards for virtuous conduct amongst my parishioners, but I soon found that I did more mischief than good by the proceeding, and I was compelled to abandon it. I found that my parishioners, from their situation, knew more of the objects whom I selected for reward than I possibly could. They saw actions of which I could obtain no knowledge. With all my desire to do justice, there were actions which I forgot to take into account; and of those which I did take into account, they probably often made a more correct estimate than I could: under these circumstances, I probably was led to decide unjustly, and excited more ill feeling by my decisions than emulation by my rewards.” He gave up entirely the idea of rewarding according to character, and adopted other courses of proceeding.

‘In more rude hands, such attempts often excite fierce discontent, by the inequalities of the distribution amongst claimants, who conceive themselves at least equal in merit. I did not find one magistrate of extensive experience who had found it practicable to take character into account except on rare occasions.’

“I,” said the Rev. Mr. Whately to me, “always refuse a worthy man relief (meaning out-door relief), because I know him to be a man of good character, and I therefore think he deserves from me the refusal to allow him to be made a pauper.” And others of the best informed witnesses considered the practice equally mischievous, and at variance with correct principle. “One man,” it has been said, “may be a very worthy, good sort of man, but so ought we all to be; and if every man who is so were to bring in his bill for being so, who would there be to pay it? Another may be a very worthless fellow; but if he is really so, and can be made out to be so, it must be on account of this or that act of worthlessness that he has committed. If it be a crime, he will be punished according to the crime; if it be less than a crime, it will be too much to punish him with death by starvation.”

The Commissioners laid it down as a principle, that it was

ruinous and demoralizing to offer to persons of the best characters more than a simple subsistence, and that the person of bad character, if he were allowed any thing, could not be allowed less. By this means a self-acting test was established, and a line was drawn between those who do and those who do not need relief. For if the claimant does not comply with the terms on which relief is given to the destitute, he gets nothing; and if he does comply, the compliance proves the truth of his claim, namely, his destitution. It is impossible to state briefly how much the practical working of this subject is facilitated by the clear perceptions and steady undeviating application of this principle. Not only every prevalent doctrine as to the condition of the labouring classes, but every prevalent doctrine as to the measures to be adopted as specifics for the disease of pauperism, were, upon close examination, proved to be unsound. It was urged by Mr Breereton and others, that if the power of the magistrates were abrogated, and the administration of relief were left entirely to the overseer, all would be well. On examination, it was proved that in whole districts this was done—that the power of the magistrates was never exercised—and that these districts were amongst the most degraded and pauperised. A favourite system, proposed and urged by agricultural associations, was the allotment of lands to the labourers, the preservation of the rights of common, and the application of the cow and single acre hypothesis, the pig and half acre hypothesis, and a multitude of others. On examination, it was proved that the population bordering on commons, and possessing these so called advantages, were, as compared with the labourers of the same class living in villages and possessing none of them, morally, socially, and physically, in a worse condition. It was proved also, that the owners of allotments were as frequently on the parish books as any other class, and were often the most wretched. It was demonstrated, the labouring man never works for so bad a master as when he works for himself; that the poor man must make a poor master, and that it is better for himself that he should serve a rich one; that it were as absurd that he should attempt to raise all his own food for the sake of independence, as that he should manufacture the cotton of his shirt, or tan the leather or forge the nails of his shoes, or make pins for the sake of ‘independence.’ One doctrine was, that the area of administration should be made smaller, and parishes divided. It was proved that the smallest parishes were the most pauperised, and that the great course of amendment, to which we shall subsequently advert, was to enlarge the

districts and the scale of management. The labour-rate hypothesis—the parish-farm hypothesis, though maintained by eminent statesmen, were proved to be practically unsound and mischievous.

The Commissioners declared that the heads of settlement might be reduced and simplified, the expense of litigation might be diminished, the procedure before the magistrates might be improved, a uniform system of accounts might be introduced, less vexatious and irregular modes of rating might be established, systematic peculation and jobbing on the part of the parish officers might be prevented, the fraudulent impositions of undue burdens by one class upon another class, the tampering with the labour market by the employers of labour, the abuse of the public trust for private and factious purposes,—all the other collateral and incidental evils might be abated; but they declared that if the vital evil of the system, relief to the able bodied on terms more eligible than regular industry, were allowed to continue, pauperism, with its train of evils, the demoralization of the labouring classes, the deterioration of their labour, the reduction of the demand for their employment, the decrease or efflux of capital, and the destruction of property, and all the elements of prosperity must steadily advance, as they were found to be advancing, in districts where all or most of those collateral and incidental evils enumerated were by incessant vigilance and exertion avoided or mitigated.

It was demonstrated that, to carry this principle, or, indeed, any uniform principle of administration into execution, a new machinery was requisite. We pass over the steps of the proofs of the necessity of the establishment of new agency, and of a central and independent control,—namely, the want of appropriate knowledge on the part of the overseers; the division of their authority, and conflicting action; the impermanency of their authority; the inadequacy of their motives to support a correct administration; the strength of their interest in abusive administration; and intimidation on the part of the rate receivers. We pass over as matters still prominent and fresh in the public memory, the proceedings in Parliament by which the measure was carried; observing, however, that it is now admitted by all, that it could have been carried by no other than a Reformed Parliament. To those, if any such there were, who, for any purpose, aided that change with the view of obtaining, instead of a stronger, a weaker government, we would submit for study the observation of Hobbes: ‘And whosoever

‘ thinking sovereign power too great, will seek to make it less, must subject himself to a power which can limit it : that is to say—TO A GREATER.’

But every care befitting the present circumstances of the country was taken to obtain the strength of public opinion, of which we deny that the newspapers were the organs. Many thousands of circular letters were issued to the chief parishes, and to the benches of magistrates throughout the country. In these letters, opinions as well as facts were requested; and the facts and opinions were digested, examined, and weighed. Every district was thus consulted, and many thousands of individuals brought to a council, where each had an opportunity of being heard. (See the digests of the answers in the Appendix to the Report). The Commissioners and the Assistant Commissioners examined *in situ* the matters in question, and reported to the central board. The substance of each of the reports was, at the instance of Lord Brougham, printed in a cheap form, and many thousand copies were distributed. One of the Commissioners' Reports contained an exposition of the principles of the chief remedial measures which were afterwards adopted. The Report of the Central Board supplied a complete exposition of the evils of the old system, and an ample exposition of the remedies. More copies of these Reports were sold than perhaps of all the State Papers put together that have ever been placed within the reach of the people; and, including those which were distributed to public officers, upwards of twenty thousand copies were put into circulation. The proceeding may be held out as an example, that, when any public evil is thoroughly probed, and the remedial measures are clearly expounded, and manfully supported, the course of proceeding by the influence of facts and reason upon the understanding, rather than by the action of power on the will, is most potent and enduring, and may be applied to the strongest prejudices.

The new Commissioners have proceeded much in the same spirit, and with the like success. It will be recollected that they are armed with the power of forming parishes into unions without the consent of any of the owners, rate-payers, or inhabitants. The Commissioners state in their first Annual Report:—

‘ It has been a general practice with each assistant Commissioner, before finally determining upon his recommendations with relation to any district, to convene a meeting of the parties the most deeply interested in the proposed arrangements, namely, the principal owners, and rate-payers, and parish officers. At this meeting, he has explained the mea-

asures which it was his intention to recommend to the Board for adoption, and has invited the exposition of any objections, and the suggestion of any additions, to those measures. It is satisfactory to us to be enabled to state, that in scarcely any instance have the measures thus submitted for a change of system in any district failed of obtaining the concurrence of a large majority of the meeting. In the greater proportion of cases the measures proposed have met with almost unanimous approbation. Where dissent has been expressed in regard to the measures finally recommended by the assistant Commissioner (and such cases which have hitherto occurred in some single parish dissenting from a union with adjacent parishes), we have made it a practice to hear the statements of the dissentient parties, and to weigh any evidence which they have adduced upon the arrangement in question.

The effects of the measure, so far as it has hitherto been carried, have fully answered the most sanguine anticipations of its proposers.

About nine months of the time of the Commission at its commencement were spent in preliminary enquiries and other preparatory measures. At this time 6841 parishes are placed under the superintendence of new boards of guardians. As the worst managed parishes have been chosen for the first proceedings, the expenditure of more than one-half the rates is placed under the control of the Commissioners. But they have also acted extensively upon the parishes which remain ununited.

We shall state first the more important effects upon the labourers.

The effect of the progressive discontinuance of the allowance system, and the entire cessation of out-door relief to the able-bodied, has been to cause the absorption of almost the whole of the surplus of able-bodied labourers. For example, in the four following unions in the county of Kent, the effects of the measure have been as under mentioned :—

Name of Union.	Total number of able-bodied Paupers at the formation of Union.	Number of able-bodied Paupers in June instant.	Population.
Milton, .	291	1	10,689
Bridge, .	272	1	9,244
Blean, .	241	1	10,639
River, .	150	2	10,837
Totals,	954	5	41,409

Close enquiries have been made as to what has become of these labourers, and it is found that nearly the whole of them

are accounted for as at work within their parishes. Only about half-a-dozen men in each union have quitted it in search of work elsewhere. These were fellows whom no one would intrust in their farms. It is presumed, that they have most of them gone to places where they may renew their characters. One or two of them have gone to seek glory and pay in the service of the Queen of Spain.

The county of Sussex is the one which was the most deeply pauperised in the whole country, and from recent official returns from that county, we are enabled to furnish a more complete exemplification of the operation of the new law.

Name of Union.	Population	Average Annual Rates at the formation of the Union.	Rates for the Quarter.	Rate of saving on Year.	No. of able-bodied Paupers at the time of forming the Union.	No. of able-bodied Paupers in March last.	No. of able-bodied Paupers in June inst.
Uckfield, .	16,109	16,643	1,479	61½	218	8	—
Cuckfield, .	12,017	17,139	2,136	46½	419	45	—
Chailey, .	6,977	9,576	1,114	30½	139	33	15
Eastbourne, .	7,823	11,964	1,410	40	265	12	—
Hailsham, .	11,825	18,351	No retn.	—	350	69	—
West Fisle, .	2,364	2,957	539	26	40	15	—
Tinhurst, .	18,347	10,915	1,569	50	360	12	1
Battle, .	12,068	14,235	1,413	33	608	—	—
Lewes, .	9,297	5,770	912	36	175	4	2
East Grimstead, .	11,476	12,053	3,162	—	658	43	3
Hastings, .	13,280	6,969	1,319	24½	266	13	6
Rye, .	11,418	11,588	1,377	52	372	42	14
Westbourne, .	6,585	8,095	1,753	32	90	6	—
Steyning, .	11,071	9,339	1,120	15	236	11	30
Thakham, .	7,311	9,796	1,313	30	542	25	—
Horsham, .	12,270	14,663	1,776	57	454	51	1
Medhurst, .	12,239	17,536	1,478	66	306	20	—
Petworth, .	9,042	12,226	995	32	382	71	52
Westhampnett, .	15,017	16,457	1,687	49	216	18	—
Newhaven, .	4,400	3,371	492	41	64	11	—
Totals,	205,936	229,643	27,044	45	6,160	554	124

The following return represents the results of the measure in the unions of the several counties which have come into tolerably complete operation.

COUNTIES.	No. of Unions.	Number of Paupers Relieved.			Workhouses.			Quarter's Expenditure up to 25th March last.	Estimated Annual Expenditure under the New Law.	Average Annual Expenditure previous to the formation of the Unions.	Saving on the Average Annual Expenditure.	Rate per cent of Saving.
		Indoor.	Outdoor.	Total.	Old.	New.	Room for					
Buckingham,	5	514	6,421	6,935	14	2	1,385	9,118	36,669	79,758	43,089	54
Berks,	11	923	7,555	8,478	22	6	4,142	17,687	63,649	128,434	64,785	51
Kent,	21	2,597	20,416	23,013	51	14	10,104	28,891	118,292	241,726	123,434	51
Oxford,	4	139	5,343	5,482	8	4	1,650	7,158	33,577	70,687	37,110	50
Bedford,	6	682	5,792	6,474	18	6	2,575	9,492	42,427	83,532	41,105	49
Cambridge,	4	186	3,927	4,113	4	2	420	6,039	23,006	45,032	22,026	49
Dorset,	9	326	4,862	5,188	4	4	1,290	6,508	27,262	53,372	26,110	48
Worcester,	2	65	1,750	1,821	2		100	1,826	7,304	13,628	6,324	46
Sussex,	18	2,199	10,022	12,221	52	4	5,440	27,223	110,102	198,639	88,537	44
Wilt,	15	1,003	14,872	15,875	22	6	3,601	17,041	78,089	139,917	61,828	44
Middlesex,	1	133	318	451	2		150	1,263	4,920	8,568	3,648	42
Essex,	12	1,138	10,404	11,542	61	3	3,589	21,742	94,179	162,164	67,985	42
Northampton,	10	319	9,906	10,225	21	6	2,181	11,535	60,829	104,927	44,098	42
Suffolk,	12	1,423	13,572	14,995	57	3	5,718	24,909	123,236	205,571	82,335	40
Somerset,	3		4,326	4,326		2	140	3,424	22,866	38,279	15,413	40
Herts,	10	1,464	4,634	6,098	26	3	2,745	12,663	50,654	84,480	33,826	40
Hants,	22	1,623	14,181	15,804	42	7	4,780	28,824	93,997	151,484	57,487	38
Lincoln,	4	610	2,152	2,762	18	3	1,836	4,940	23,539	36,422	12,883	35
Gloucester,	6	579	3,093	3,672	11		990	5,511	22,046	32,699	10,653	32
Norfolk,	5	51	6,576	6,627				11,211	36,844	53,124	16,280	31
Leicester,	2	64	2,413	2,474	2		230	2,528	16,736	21,676	4,940	23
Devon,	5	15	1,888	5,564	8	2	625	4,798	42,832	52,980	10,148	19
Totals,	187	16,053	154,423	175,030	445	82	55,196	264,331	1,133,055	2,007,199	874,044	43

An hypothesis, prevalent at the commencement of the enquiry, was, that the smaller the area for the distribution of relief the better; inasmuch as it enabled the distributors of relief to ascertain the real wants and character of the applicant, and to adjust the relief accordingly. The principle of the distribution of relief upon opinions as to the character of applicants has already been disposed of. The Commissioners of Enquiry stated upon this part of the subject—

‘But when instances are now of frequent occurrence where a pauper is found to have saved large sums of money, without the fact having been known or suspected by the members of the same family, living under the same roof, how should a neighbour, much less a parish officer, be expected to have a better knowledge of the real means of the individual? We are not aware that our communications display one instance of out-door pauperism having been permanently repressed by the mere exercise of individual knowledge acting on a limited area. What our evidence does show is, that where the administration of relief is brought nearer to the door of the pauper, little advantage arises from increased knowledge on the part of the distributors, and great evil from their increased liability to every sort of pernicious influence. It brings tradesmen within the influence of their customers, small farmers within that of their relations and connexions, and not unfrequently of those who have been their fellow workmen, and exposes the wealthier classes to solicitations from their own dependents for extra allowances.’

The acknowledged inconveniences of the law of settlement were, it is said, counterbalanced by high and peculiar advantages arising from the circumstance of the obligation to maintain the destitute being commonly charged on narrow localities. These advantages were, that it gave to the wealthy an interest in taking care of the poor (meaning the labouring classes), in promoting their prosperity, in order that they may not become burdensome to their parishes. A further advantage stated was, that it gives to those at whose expense a superabundant population must be relieved, an interest in checking population, or preventing improvident marriages.

On a close examination of the facts, these hypotheses, which were advocated by writers of high character, and by members of the legislature who were prepared to act upon them, were proved to be unsustainable upon any sound theory; and their practical application was every where fraught with mischief. It was seen that the interest created by the law of settlement, or by the imposition of the burden upon the proprietors in the narrow locality, was not interest to do all these things, any more than it could be said to be an interest on the part of a landlord to teach his tenantry geometry, if, by learning geometry or any thing else, a man might be enabled to gain his own livelihood; the interest really

created was simply an interest in getting rid of the burden, and that, too, by the shortest means. Unfortunately, the shortest means were constituted by shifting the burden; and unhappily this process of shifting was always accompanied by the creation of additional burdens. From the operation of this much valued interest arose the extensive undue removals of paupers, and the great mass of expensive litigation, as part of the warfare. From that interest, moreover, arose the great mass of forced pauper marriages, which it were moderate to compute at one forced marriage per annum, and a pauper issue per parish in each of the fifteen thousand places separately managing their own poor in England and Wales. From this interest also arose the shifting of burdens by the parochial apprenticeships, and the demoralization produced by the mode in which the children were subjected to a legalized slavery. Notwithstanding the fact prominently brought out by the Commission of Enquiry, that those parishes in which this interest was (according to the hypothesis) the strongest—namely, the smallest parishes—were the most deeply pauperised, it has been actually proposed to apply the same hypothesis to Ireland. The excess of money expended beyond the lowest amount of the charge was every where an index of the excess of evil done. It appeared, upon examination, that of all England and Wales, the burden on the 100 absolutely largest parishes was 6s. 7d. per head of the population; in the 100 parishes intermediate between the largest and the smallest, it was 15s. per head; in the 100 absolutely smallest parishes, where, according to the hypothesis, the burden should have been the least, it was L.1, 11s. 7d. per head.

The results in practice have justified the soundness of every one of the principles upon which the large unions were devised. These results are indicated by the pecuniary savings in the larger, as compared with the smaller unions, which have been for any length of time in operation.

Of the 120 unions which have been the longest in operation—taking the 20 unions which are positively the largest as regards the population, area, and rates, and comparing them with 20 of the smallest unions—the results are as follows:—

20 Largest Unions.

Average Expenditure.	Saving.	Rate per cent.
L.336,172	204,618	60½

20 Smallest Unions.

Average Expenditure.	Saving.	Rate per cent.
L.121,475	85,371	29

On extending the classes from which the results are taken, the effects of management upon a large scale appear to be proportionately striking. On comparing the effects of the 30 positively largest, the 30 intermediate, and the 30 positively smallest unions out of the 120, the results appear to be as follows :—

30 Largest Unions.

Average Expenditure.	Saving.	Rate per cent.
454,496	269,840	59½

30 Intermediate Unions.

Average Expenditure.	Saving.	Rate per cent.
£.282,090	121,808	43¼

30 Smallest Unions.

Average Expenditure.	Saving.	Rate per cent.
£.192,033	60,597	31½

It is expected that the total amount of savings effected in the year 1836, as compared with the year 1834, will be about two millions sterling.

The Commissioners of Enquiry stated that the effects of the application of their principles of administration upon the pauperised labourers would be as follows :—

1. That their industry would be restored and improved.
2. That frugal habits would be created or strengthened.
3. That the permanent demand for their labour would increase.
4. That the increase would be such, that their wages, so far from being depressed by the increased amount of labour in the market, would in general advance.
5. That discontent and crime would abate, and their moral and social condition would be improved.

Our space does not enable us to present the complete exemplifications of the working of the measure upon each of these points, but we can state that upon none has it failed.

We cite from the evidence of farmers, landowners, and others, their accounts of the absorption of this surplus. Mr G. Wickens, a farmer of Rotherfield, in Sussex, being asked to what he attributed this extraordinary absorption of the labourers, states—

‘ The reasons why the labourers get employment better than they did before the new Poor Law came into operation are many, and many little make a large amount. The pauperised labourer now being put upon his own resources, comes to ask his employer for work in a differ-

ent way from what he formerly did ; when he formerly came to him, he would ask him in that off-handed manner that you knew he did not intend to do you justice if you set him to work—he would perhaps go to two or three in the parish in this way (and those two or three where he thought most unlikely to set him to work), then go to the parish officer for an order to go on the road, which was where he wanted to get, and make the parish officer pay him for his day going round the parish asking for work, and perhaps half the day at work in his own garden, or spending money at a beer shop. *Now* he will come to you and say, “don’t you want somebody to do such and such a job? I shall be glad to do it for you;” and the employer, finding he has not got half the rate to pay he formerly had, sets him to work, and the man going on better than he formerly did, induces his employer to keep him on. One instance I know of this in my next neighbour, a small farmer, employing one labourer formerly through the summer (excepting two living in his house), and turning him off the greater part of the winter. He one morning came to my house; I said to him, “Do you keep Farnes on to work for you this winter?” he said, “Yes, I have set him to draining; he (Farnes) said he did not know what he should do if I turned him off, and I, finding I had not half the poor rate to pay I have had, I thought I would keep him on.” I have known many of our rate payers send men to the surveyor to set them to work on a wet day, and tell them to come back again when it was fine; *now*, if they turn them off on a wet day (if they are good workmen), I think, perhaps, they would not know where to find them on a *fine* one.”

The following is an extract from the report of the auditor of the Uckfield Union, which details the operation in this same parish more fully.

‘ When the overseers met in vestry, in November, for the purpose of making a rate for the winter half-year, it was found that instead of a 5s. or 6s. book, as had hitherto been the case, a rate of 1s. 6d. would be amply sufficient, it was much doubted whether it would have been necessary to have made a rate at all, had it not been to meet the sum assessed for the county rate, as, from the appearance of the Union accounts, the contribution called for to meet the expenditure for the quarter ending December 25th, would, contrary to all expectation, be sufficient to last to Lady-day, and it is probable that there will be a balance remaining in favour of the parish even at Midsummer next.

‘ Here, then, was upwards of one thousand pounds left in the hands of the rate payers, to meet the demands of such labourers as were willing to earn it; on the other hand, there were the two houses for the able-bodied men, who were out of employment, with regular hours, regular diet, no beer, no tobacco, strict supervision, with the *sedentary*, and, therefore, to the agricultural labourer, *irksome*, employment of picking oakum.

‘ The effect was almost magical,—the rate payers who had been most violently opposed to the Union, had now substantial proofs in their own

pockets of its advantages, and the labourers, as well those who deserved that name, as those who had hitherto been only known by it, began to think, to use their own expression, it was high time "to look out." Employment was now sought after,—the farmers were reminded of the reduction,—their feelings were appealed to,—they honourably answered the demand, without taking advantage of circumstances to reduce the wages, and the gratitude of the workman was evinced by his civility, his attention, and his industry.

‘ I shall now quote from the memoranda I have by me, a slight examination of a small farmer in this parish, which I trust will satisfy the most sceptical of the effect produced, and the beneficial manner in which those who were formerly wasting their time are now employed.

‘ Q. What has become of the parish men and all those who used to be so constantly out of work?—A. It is difficult to tell, sir.

‘ Have they left the parish?—A. No.

‘ Q. Have you heard of any increase of pilfering or robberies in the parish?—A. No; and I don't think the hedges are pulled so much as before, for when they used to be *lopping* (idling) about on the roads they left off at what time they liked, and pulled the hedges in their way home till they had got a good bundle.

‘ Q. Then, as they don't live by pilfering, and have not left the parish, how do they obtain their subsistence?—A. They shift about and get work.

‘ Q. How is it they get work now, when formerly they could obtain none?—A. Why, you see sir, there's two things,—first they look out for jobs, and the farmers think that as they don't pay so much rate as they used to do they have a right to employ them.

‘ Q. And they do employ them?—A. Yes.

‘ Q. You say they all look out for jobs; now, when they are all applying for work, don't you think that will have a tendency to lower wages?—A. No; the wages are not lower, a good workman will always get work.

‘ Q. But surely where there are so many applicants, the wages must be lowered?—A. No, they are not. Take such a man as ———; that man was always an idle man until now, and used to draw his 12s. or 13s. a-week in flour and money, from the parish; he always was out of work; he never would work till now; he can neither reap nor mow, plough nor sow, thresh, cut wood, nor make hedges; he is only fit for what I call *fore-right* work, such as filling a dung cart, hop digging, and such as that.

‘ Q. Then how does he get work?—A. Why, he goes to a farmer for instance, and "puts it to him,"—he has got a large family, and they give him that sort of work which he can do.

‘ Q. Then, that description of persons does not interfere with what I call the skilled labourer, and his application does not lower their wages. Threshing at so much a quarter, hedging at so much a rod, and the prices of wood-cutting remain as before?—A. Yes.

‘ Q. But this *fore-right* work was formerly done by these labourers, and if that is taken away of course there is so much the less labour to be

performed by them?—A. There never was no want of work, *the thing is to get the money to pay for it*; and as I said before, *now the farmers have not got so much rate to pay, of course they can employ more people, and that gives every body a chance.*

‘Q. Do you know of any out of employment at present?—A. No, sir.’

The following extracts from the evidence of farmers in Berks will show the tenor of their statements as to the operation of the change:—

Mr Thomas Forshall, Malseyhampton, Cirencester Union, says—

‘I have farmed in this parish for the last ten years, and I find my labourers greatly improved since the Union. I have men working for me now who used to be always grumbling and insubordinate, and good for little as labourers—now they are contented and trustworthy, and go whistling to their work as happy as birds.’

Mr J. Frampton, Bradfield, says—

‘It is not necessary now to look after the labourers; you can give your orders in the morning, and come home in the evening and find them executed.’

Mr G. Smyth, Bradfield, says—

‘There has been a considerable change in the condition of the agricultural labourers generally since the Union was formed. Formerly the good and the inferior workmen were equally well off, and character was of little consequence to a man; now, character is of great importance, the inferior men are worst off, they receive less wages, and are not in such constant employment.’

Mr Thomas Godrich, farmer and tanner in the parishes of Bradfield and Stanford, says—

‘The wages must rise; if we don’t raise the wages we must lose all the good men; because, under the new system, they will go where they can make most advantageous terms. I asked a man, by name Hutchins, to work for me the other day—he had nothing to do. “He said he could come, but wished to know how long the job was to last.” I told him one or two days. “He said then I shan’t come, I shall go and find constant work somewhere.”

‘I think the effect of the new system, as regards bastardy, will be to raise the moral feeling of the people. Young people are less frequently to be seen in the public houses than they were, and many girls are now in service, who would never have left home under the old system; the parents are very much more anxious to obtain situations for their children.

‘It is considered a disgrace to go to the workhouse. There has been a wonderful alteration as regards improvident marriages; the poor are now much more careful not to marry till they have made some provision beforehand.’

Mr Newton of Pangbourn, in Bradfield Union, says—

‘As the labourers have improved, the masters have certainly become more considerate, and I think that whenever a man shows a disposition to exert himself, the master endeavours to meet it;—this is much more the case now than it was. The children are now sent out into service very early, and removed from temptation of idleness. There have been fewer improvident marriages lately than there used to be; young people do not like to marry without a provision, now that the workhouse is the only resource.’

Mr G. Godfrey, Basildon, says—

‘The surplus labour has already disappeared, the men will go now where they can get best off; and as the labour becomes scarce in the market, which I think it will as the measure works on, prices must rise. This makes the masters more careful to keep up a regular supply of men through the winter, as there is no parish supply to fall back upon; and if they did not provide for the summer in this way, they would be without hands.’

One distinct individual case will serve to aid the conception as to the operation of the change of circumstances upon the class of indolent and turbulent labourers.

‘Thomas Pocock, of Maple-Durham, in the Bradfield Union, single man, had been employed by the rector, Lord Augustus Fitzclarence, for nine months, at ten shillings per week. He left his master at harvest 1834, to better himself, with two suits of clothes, and two pounds which his master had saved for him from his earnings. Immediately after harvest he applied to the overseer in distress, having squandered all the savings and his harvest wages. He was admitted as a parish pauper, and remained on the overseer’s books from that time to the formation of the Bradfield Union (February 1835). At the end of January 1835, he went one night to the overseer’s house, after they were all gone to bed, and said that he must have some money, that he would have blood or money. The overseer and his wife reasoned for a time with him out of the bedroom window, and tried to get rid of him without money, but in vain. He said that he would fire the premises if they did not give him what he wanted. Terrified with the threat, the overseer’s wife persuaded her husband to throw him out two shillings and sixpence. The night was dark and Pocock could not find it, and he declared that he would burn the house and all in it, unless they found that money for him, or gave him more. They were so much alarmed at his conduct, that the overseer’s wife came down stairs in her night dress, and found the money for him, when he went away, satisfied for the night. How far this man’s conduct has been influenced by the operation of the new poor laws since the formation of the Bradfield Union, will be seen by the following account from Mr Hutchins, guardian of Maple Durham:—

‘Early in July 1835, Thomas Pocock applied to me for work. I employed him in turnip-hoeing; he worked very well, and has been going on very steadily for some time. He is much more civil and industrious than ever he was before. When the hoeing was finished, I gave him some reaping to do. One day when I was in the field, he came up to

me and said, "I should like to keep on for you, sir, if you please. I can go a-threshing, or any thing."—"Well," said I, "Tom, this is something new! This is a change! How comes all this about?" He began smiling. "Come, Tom," said I, "speak out, and tell me the truth."—"Why, sir," said he, "'tis regular work now." He has been working for me ever since, and he continues to be perfectly civil and industrious, and is very anxious to please. About a fortnight ago his wife (for he has married since he has been in regular work), came to me and said, "I am afraid, sir, my husband will be drawn in again to his old habits; he has been to the public-house twice lately, and I wish, sir, you would be so good as to speak to him about it. There is nothing he minds so much as the thoughts of that workhouse—'tis that which keeps him to his work; and if you would only tell him that you will discharge him if he goes to public-houses any more, I think he would be very careful how he got on; but don't you tell him that I told you." I complied with her request, and told Pocock that I would certainly discharge him if ever I heard of his going to the public-house again. He said he had only been to have one pint, but he would not do so any more; and, from his manner, I am inclined to think he will keep his determination.'

The testimony of clergymen as to the effect of the change in those districts where the principles of the new measure have been *strictly* applied is to the tenor of the following:—

The Reverend Thomas Pitman, minister of Eastbourn, says—

'Among the labouring classes there is a decided and progressive alteration; even the farmers themselves have observed to me that there is in the general conduct of the agricultural labourers, a civility of manner and attention to their master's wishes, which of late years has been little perceptible, and which, as we must acknowledge it to have been not only a useless but unwise conduct under a system which rewarded vicious deportment, has grown out of the present Administration, because it is one which, instead of upholding, punishes vicious behaviour. Perhaps the most marked difference in the lower orders, observable by us as clergymen, is the almost total cessation of early and improvident marriages, the necessary consequence of a well-timed and successfully operative plan which no longer makes the man the fittest claimant for relief who can present the largest number of ragged and miserable children. I should not forget also to mention, that, as far as I can form a judgment, there is also a decided improvement in the marriages that do take place. The altar is not, now, as heretofore, disgraced by the appearance of a woman to take upon her the solemn obligation of matrimony in the last stage of pregnancy, a fact which I think goes far to show that the morals of the people are undergoing a change for the better, and promises that, ere long, we may hope for all that domestic happiness among our poorer neighbours which results from a match of pure affection, in the place of all that wretchedness, discord, and misery, which are the too sure produce of a marriage commenced in sin, and fostered only by a hope of procuring a means from the parish of carrying on, from time to time, sinful indulgences.'

The domestic habits of the pauperised labourers are equally changed as regards their offspring.

Mr Ticehurst, clerk to the Battle Union, says:—

‘It may already be perceived that parents are more anxious to get their children into service than formerly, and encourage them to continue there: that boys, and young men under twenty, are now learning all sorts of husbandry work, being employed with their parents, and bringing their earnings to the common stock: that they are anxious to get and to continue in such employment, and are aware that a good character is *now* of vital importance to them. The money earned in harvest and hop-picking was not last year dissipated as it often used to be; in short, the complaints which are general by the keepers of public-houses and beer shops, that it is the worst bill ever passed for them, will bear out that assertion.’

The Reverend James Beard, the Rector of the Parish of Cranfield, in Bedfordshire, thus sums up an account of the operation of the measure within the district in and adjacent to his parish—

‘Every thing about us was paralysed by pauperism; the land was cultivated by it—the children were nursed and rocked in the parish cradle, and mendicancy was the first thing they were instructed in by clothing them in rags, and turning them upon the high-roads without restraint. The farmers said “if we cannot manage the poor, I wonder who can;” and the overseers were so alarmed, by anonymous letters, and the constant dread of fire, that they dared not, in most instances, refuse a sturdy pauper’s demand.

‘Now the land is better cultivated—the labourer better paid—the children under better control—and I hope, ere many years have passed away, that the English labourer will be restored to what he was before 1796: that bees and poultry may be attended by the wife, the cottage garden cultivated in surplus hours by the husband, and we shall then have our places of worship filled with women dressed in red cloaks, the men in good coats with nosebags in their button-holes, and I am sure the general feeling will then be “to help those who help themselves.”’

Whatever impels a man into a course of steady industry must of necessity diminish crime. If a man be driven to work hard during the day, it is no small security that he will not be habitually upon the prowl as a pilferer or as a poacher during the night. It might have been expected that some of the more desperate characters would have endeavoured to support themselves wholly by plunder, and in this they would be arrested by a police; but although persons who have been opposed to the change of the law have ascribed to its operation every new variety of crime, yet it is well ascertained that the amount of crime is on the whole steadily decreasing in the new districts.

With reference to the wages, it is to be observed, that the continuance of the same rate of wages under circumstances where a fall was to be expected, and that increase of the employment be-

yond the usual amount, is to the workman *pro tanto* an increase. The chief means for improving the condition of the agricultural labourers, are those which favour the influx of new capital, and those which favour the afflux of redundant hands from the labour market. Now, an increase in the *steadiness* of the labourer, by which the results may be predicted with certainty, or an increase of the value of his labour in kind to the amount even of fourpence or sixpence a-day to his employer, will constitute the inducement to withhold or to invest large capital in such employments. We have yet to see the entire operation of these beneficial circumstances. The question as to the redundancy of population has been very fully solved in the homely statements of the witnesses. We have selected the exemplifications from the county of Sussex, because the change has not been aided there by any demand for employment on new railroads, or by that migration of the labourers' families from the rural to the manufacturing districts, which the commissioners have endeavoured to promote. The following extract from a report by Mr Hawley, the assistant Commissioner in the county, gives the tenor of the evidence on the subject of emigration :—

‘ It is true that the valve opened by emigration has partially assisted in removing the pressure from some of the most pauperised districts; but this factitious expedient for easing the burdens of the agriculturists has conferred a moral rather than a *relevant benefit* on the community, by removing many of those vicious characters who, steeped in vice and habitual pauperism, have preferred the uncertain advantages of expatriation to honest industry at home. If it be contended, that a *relevant benefit* has been derived from emigration, how happens it that the Petworth District (which is not disproportionately burdened with agricultural labourers in comparison with its acreage), from whence, in the space of the five last years, not less than 1456 individuals have emigrated, and where the Earl of Egremont, with that generous and public-spirited feeling for which he is so remarkable, has employed nearly 150 of the able-bodied poor during the last winter, is notwithstanding the most pauperised of any in the county; and that in the Petworth Union upwards of 70 men besides have been out of employment during the last quarter; whereas, in the Battle and Uckfield Unions, which are quite as thickly populated, and where emigration has scarcely, if at all, been taken advantage of, the surplusage has entirely ceased to exist? How has it come to pass that in the Westbourne, Thakeham, Westhampnett, and other Unions, where emigration has been resorted to on too limited a scale to make the slightest perceptible difference in the pressure caused by an alleged excess of population, the extra hands have all, or nearly so, found employment?’

The institution of this new department, and the investment of the proposed powers, were vehemently opposed, on the ground that it was subversive of that habit of self-government which, it

was said, constituted the distinguishing characteristic and glory of Englishmen. Many of the advocates of the measure defended it on the plea of the necessity of appointing a dictatorship.

Now, in reply to these assertions we make bold to say, that hitherto, in the greater proportion of the country, nothing worthy of the name of self-government has heretofore existed, and that it is by the new act for the first time created in the districts where new unions are formed.

The parochial division, it should be observed, was made solely for ecclesiastical purposes; and the function of the administration of relief to the destitute, as a continuation of the practice of almsgiving, was assigned to the parishes as an incident to the ecclesiastical management. The expression of the 'self-government of Englishmen' usually implies the idea of the exercise of the various functions of a municipality. It is singular that nearly all the local courts—such as the Courts Leet, and the Hundred Courts, instituted for administrative purposes, have fallen into desuetude throughout the country. So much and so general has this hitherto been the case with all local government for the most useful purposes, that, except where corporations originated any measure, which they rarely did, unless the things originated were jobs, when any public work, such as the formation of a new road, or the lighting, paving, or watering of a town is required, it is usually found necessary to institute a new and special body for the purpose, called a 'trust.' All the multitudinous bodies, the lighting and watching, and paving and watering, and road-trusts, appointed at great expense and inconvenience by statute, not to speak of the number of voluntary associations, such as mendicity societies, associations for the prosecution of criminals, may be cited as evidence of the previous absence, *pro tanto*, of local government in those districts, where the trusts and associations were instituted, as well as of the actual absence of such government in districts similarly situated in other respects, where no such trusts or other associations now exist. But, with regard to parishes, a notion may be formed of the absence of the elements of any good government from the fact, that there are 5353 parishes in which the population is from 300 to 800 inhabitants; 6681, in which the population does not exceed 300 persons; 1907, in which it does not exceed 100; and 737, in which it does not exceed 50.

These parishes were generally found to be under the management of knots of obscure individuals, often having no other place of meeting than at public-houses. Mr C. Villiers, the member for Wolverhampton, states that when he acted as revising barrister for North Devon, he found not less than one-fourth of the

overseers unable to read, and one overseer who had not that qualification was intrusted with the distribution of funds to the amount of L.7000 per annum. The following are exemplifications of this so vaunted self-government. The Rev. Robert Ellison, the rector of Slaugham, in Sussex,—

‘ The accounts of eight or ten surrounding parishes should be audited by a person with a proper salary, resident in an adjoining town. It is difficult to get a proper person in villages to audit accounts. My vestry clerk is a pauper, and not a good character ; the two last overseers could neither read nor write. Need I say more ? The rates rose last year 9s. in the pound, which amounted to near L.700 additional. The poor cost upwards of L.1600 ; the population not 800.’

Major General Marriott, an acting magistrate of the Pershore division, containing sixty-six parishes of Worcester, states that some of the overseers (small farmers)—

‘ Can scarcely write their names, and few can keep accounts (witness the returns made to Parliament), and are so ignorant or inattentive to the magistrates’ orders, wishing to slip through their half year with as little trouble as possible, that many appeals against removals and other expenses are very unnecessarily incurred, which would have been saved to the parish by a regular assistant, and at a trifling expense. In the above sixty-six parishes there may be twelve or fifteen where gentlemen or clergymen reside, and take part in parish affairs ; in most of the rest, I fear, I might draw too exact a picture by saying, their affairs are managed by some few principal farmers and landholders, generally at open variance, and formed into two inveterate parties ; the poor parishioners are obliged to take one side or the other, and are favoured or oppressed as their party prevails.’

The following communication, lately received by the Poor Law Board, is an exemplification of the style and spirit of a great proportion of the remonstrances against interference :—

‘ It will never do we any good to alter the law in our parish, as our parish is very small, and there is no probability of altering our kearse at all. There is no persons fitter to manage the parish better than ourselves.
T. T., oversear.’

To talk of this as the self-government characteristic, and the glory of Englishmen, is despicable rant. To vaunt of it as superior to the local government of other nations in this respect is ignorant impertinence. The municipal government on several parts of the continent is, in popular freedom, in purity, in systematized and beneficial operation and efficiency, superior to any which has heretofore existed in our enlightened country. We question whether the village government in India will not in many essentials compete with our own, and whether the local headman there, and the Starost in Russia, who are freely elected by

the people, are not better appointed officers than our overseers, or our parish officers. According to Mr Urquhart, 'they manage these things better even in Turkey.' In England, Englishmen have not the right of appointing their own local administrative officer, the overseer. He is *of right* appointed by what, in speaking of another country, some politicians would call the minion of a satrap of royalty, namely, by the Justice of the Peace, appointee of the Lord-Lieutenant of the county. Compare the appointment and the functions of the officer in England, with the appointment and functions of the local officer in Turkey.

'In Turkey, the inhabitants selected from their own body the fittest persons for filling the office of assessors, collectors, and cashiers; for the collection of the taxes or tribute was the origin of the municipal bodies throughout the country. The absence of all exclusion and restriction under the common yoke left no grounds for strife—all had an equal right of suffrage, and the only question at issue was the personal merit and character of the individuals to be chosen. The Turkish system of direct taxation prevents what we should consider opposing interests from clashing together. Public opinion is made manifest through the public voice, and the elections are concluded in a few minutes, either in the church after the service, or under the village tree, without agitation, and without formality. The elders, when elected, hold their office for one year, yet they may remain in office for years, or even for life, without re-election; but if they lose the public confidence, no returning day of election is waited for—they are immediately ejected and successors appointed. [This is an improvement which we greatly want. We let a man work mischief until the expiration of his period of office.] Their principal functions are—the apportioning the tax imposed upon the whole community, to each individual according to his property. They must, therefore, be accurately acquainted with the property of each member of the community—his means of livelihood, his profits, and his industry. It is their duty, by timely counsel, admonition, or reproof, to prevent the negligence, inactivity, or misfortunes of any individual, from adding to the burdens of the rest. They assess and collect the poll tax, house tax, and land tax, and many others, which in their mode of collection or repartition, vary in almost every village, but always depend on a scale of property. They manage the municipal funds, with which they pay for lodgings and provisions afforded to Turks, soldiers, couriers, &c., passing through the place; for presents or bribes to governors, and other incidental expenses: also the interest of the debt with which almost every community in Turkey is burthened. Their civil functions are the following: These distribute lands left uncultivated, or without an heir. In transactions between merchants and members of the community for cheese, butter, wool, cotton, or any other produce, the contract is legalized by the signature of one or more of the elders, who thus become security for their town's folk. Purchases are only legal when witnessed by them. Together with the priests, they decide on all disputes—settle disputed water courses and successions—and maintain a

species of government rather preventive than repressive.'—*Urquhart's Turkey.*

To the agricultural labourers in the land of pretended liberty, England, under this system of so called self-government, the whole country was a prison. Englishmen were said to be free, and they were taught to believe that no other people were so. But what sort of freedom was that, where three-fourths of the people were confined to the limits of a parish? At this rate, imprisonment in the King's Bench prison may be styled liberty: for the rules of that prison are as extensive as some parishes, and the means of finding employment much greater than in most. We refer to such cases as the following, to serve to give a conception of the real thralldom of a large proportion of the labouring classes.

'The check to the circulation of agricultural labour,' says Mr Hickson, '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 seventy pounds, and had two cows; he had also a sow and ten pigs. He had got a cottage well furnished; he was the member of a benefit club, at Meopham, from which he received eight shillings 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 forty-six pounds, 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.'

A part only of the poor, the improvident, reap the benefit of this self-government of poor laws ; but all the working classes were subjected to these grievous obstructions and heavy burdens. The poor hard-working rate-payer, it has been well described, rises early, and retires late to his rest ; he works hard, and he fares hard, to provide subsistence for his family. He would feed them better, but the prodigal must first be fed. He would purchase warmer clothing for them, but the children of the prostitute must first be clothed. He would, from what he has to spare of his hard earnings, give greater comforts to his own offspring, and to his own aged parents, but the parents of the pauper and of the criminal must first be comforted. It is too frequently seen in these so called local self-governments, a few overlooking the toils of the industrious and provident, indulge themselves in misplaced sympathies, and gratify their love of ease, and love of false popularity, whilst they distribute the produce of others' frugality, in corrupting the laborious and fostering the rapacity of the profligate, to whose condition and conduct they shut their eyes and ears. This unnatural course of exalting the hangers on in condition above those on whom they hang, is a process which the labourers never permit in administering the funds of their own clubs, and it would never have been permitted if the whole community were enabled actually to govern the funds themselves.

The present commissioners state in their Annual Report, that they found the parochial government to be essentially a government of minorities.

‘ In the largest parishes, with the most numerous constituents, and with the greatest facilities hitherto offered to the rate-payers to exercise a general control over the management, we usually find that the greatest number of voters by whom any election is determined constitute only a minority, and usually a small minority, of the whole body of rate-payers ; and in the rural parishes, where the population is widely scattered, we frequently found the management in the hands of a very small knot of individuals, whose residences enabled them to attend without inconvenience the place for the transaction of parochial business. The larger rate-payers and the persons the most deeply interested, those engaged in trade or otherwise occupied, could not abandon their occupations to attend to their interests in parochial management, without greater prejudice to their more immediate interests in the pursuit of their ordinary occupations. The results of these circumstances are too frequently found to be, that the most wanton profusion and jobbing were maintained in a state of notoriety to the whole of the rate-payers ; and this profusion was accompanied by proportionate mismanagement of the paupers, and prejudicial influence exercised upon the condition of the labouring classes.’

This statement might with truth be made much stronger. '*L'état c'est moi*,' said the French monarch. The parish or the people are 'We,' say juntas of a dozen or two of individuals, composed of pot-house clubs, not unfrequently bands of jobbers, who distribute among each other the parochial funds. Originally, the applicants for relief and their wants appear from the older parochial rolls to have been few and simple. The overseer, the 'substantial' householder, assembled some of the aged and decrepit people, the widows of the place, at the vestry on Sunday, opened the poor's box, distributed the contents, saying, perhaps, 'take this and be happy.' As it was soon perceived that the fruits of industry might be obtained by fraud, fraud was resorted to, and ultimately by the employers in pauperising their labourers and paying their wages out of the rates. Revenues equal to those of some of the larger German principalities were left to be administered by promiscuous assemblages, called open vestries. In one large parish, a man, by peculating the sixpences and shillings doled out to the crowds of paupers, amassed a fortune of many thousand pounds, with which he absconded after having actually been put forward as a candidate for the shrievalty of the city of London. It had become a saying amongst the parish officers, that those who had the distribution of casual relief became rich; and instances were presented where men in low circumstances, from their distribution of casual relief, became possessed of rows of houses. The new commission has occupied itself with the work of prevention for the future, rather than in the detection of past frauds, and the pursuit of the offenders. But the simple institution of the control of a board of guardians without any diminution of the relief given to the paupers, has in many instances occasioned a reduction of the expenditure to the amount of nearly one half.

These bands formed in truth petty oligarchies, which we should call job-ocracies, who maintained their hold over the persons of the pauperised labourers, and the purses of the rate payers by pertinacious blackguardism and every low art. Rapine or violence is the characteristic of a rude age; fraud and jobbery of an age more advanced. To the strong and mighty local aristocrats have succeeded the local job-ocrats, and in the strength of the distant, well-instructed, and comparatively disinterested central authority, will the industrious many, in these times, as of old, find their protection from the active and peculating, but most powerful few. One of the ablest witnesses examined, speaking of the general character of the tax, observed, 'Ignorant or interested persons talk about the advantages of people applying their money and managing their own affairs, in opposition to any plan of cen-

‘tral management : but however great the mismanagement of this or any other government that I have ever heard of may be, there never was a tax so harshly and vexatiously levied, or so badly and corruptly expended, as the tax raised for the relief of the poor. It is the only one raised and appropriated immediately by the payers themselves’ [by minorities he should have said], ‘and it is in every respect the very worst.’ But where the administrators are honest and well-intentioned, the state of their interest appears to be at variance with their duties.

The commissioners stated, that

‘Persons engaged in trade have represented the management of parochial affairs to be analogous to the management of a bankrupt’s estate by creditors, where, although each creditor has an interest in the good management of the estate, yet, as the particular creditors who were appointed assignees had not an interest sufficient to incite them to exertions which necessarily interfered with their other and stronger interests, no estates were ever so extensively mismanaged, or so frequently abandoned to plunder, until a special and responsible agency was appointed for their protection. The common fallacy in which the management by overseers, that is, by two or three persons, is treated as a management by the people of the “people’s own affairs,” and an “attention to their own interests,” meaning the affairs and interests of some hundreds or thousands of other persons, may be exposed by a slight examination of the evidence. It will be found that the private interests of the distributors of the rates are commonly at variance with their public duties, and that the few pounds, often the few shillings, which any parish officer could save to *himself* by the rigid performance of his duty, cannot turn the scale against the severe labour, the certain ill-will, and now, in a large proportion of cases, the danger to person and property, all of which act on the side of profusion. And it must be recollected, that the consequences of a large proportion of the existing mismanagement do not fall on the parishes in which they have originated, but upon those against whom, under the present system of parochial warfare, they are aimed, and that much of that mismanagement is, consequently, mismanagement by the officers and by the vestries, not of their own affairs, but of the affairs of other parishes, or of the public at large. Even if the whole power were left to the vestry, and the vestry were composed of the proprietors as well as of the occupiers, it could not be said, except in very small parishes, that the governing body were the managers of their own affairs. Numerous bodies are incapable of managing details. They are always left to a minority, and usually, to a small minority ; and the smaller that minority, the greater, of course, is the preponderance of private and interested motives.

‘It must be added, as indeed might have been expected, that as parochial duties become more arduous, as they require more leisure and ability, those who have that leisure and ability appear less and less inclined to undertake them. This is shown in the great falling off in the number of representative vestries, in consequence of the difficulty of obtain-

ing the attendance of those who were the best qualified; although such vestries are amongst the best existing instruments for systematic management, with the least annoyance to those who perform the duties. It has been stated to us, that in one district where the income of the proprietors was reduced nearly one-half, chiefly by the progressive increase of the rates, several of them declared that they would abandon the remainder rather than encounter the annoyance of having to contend against the system. The property of the whole parish of Cholesbury was abandoned to pauperism, apparently without a struggle.

Such being the prevailing evils of the existing local administration, let the administration by which it has been superseded be examined. Instead of the overseers, or often the single overseer, who unites in his own person, and merges in himself all the checks afforded by the discharge of the functions of assessor, collector, treasurer, relieving officer, clerk, &c., the parish in union will have, at a less expense,

1. A paid collector, who assists in making the assessments, and collects the rates, who follows no other occupation, has no customers or tenants to serve, by excusing or delaying the collection of the rates, which, when collected, are paid into the hands of,

2. A treasurer, who, as he gives security (and in some instances interest will be given for the deposits), the rate payers are exempt from the inducements to profusion to obtain large balances, as well as from the risks arising from the frequent defaults of the unpaid overseers in trade making use of the money, or from the farmer turning it to account during haytime and harvest. This money is administered by,

3. Guardians, chosen, not by promiscuous assemblages in vestry, or by the magistrates, but freely by all the rate payers within the union, on a mode of election which enables every one to vote calmly and deliberately, without sacrifice of time in attending at a polling booth.

The guardians are, in respect of education, interest in good management, and station, far superior to the overseers, as might be expected from the choice being from a wider district. At these local boards, the chief occupiers and the chief owners, the yeomanry, gentry, and, we may add, the nobility, meet and act together. This is the first time, we believe, in the history of the country, that these classes have ever met habitually in the rural districts for the transaction of public business. Amongst the peers who act as chairmen to the Boards of Guardians are, the Duke of Richmond, the Duke of Rutland, the Earl of Liverpool, the Earl of Kerry, Lord Barrington, Lord Radnor, Lord Ellenborough, Lord Salisbury, the Marquis of Exeter, Lord Ebrington, Lord Braybrooke, Lord Northampton, and a number of others

of every party in the state. This intercommunion of the most intelligent men of the different classes and parties within each district must itself be productive of the most beneficial consequences.

These guardians superintend and control the distribution of relief, and execution of the law by a staff of carefully appointed paid officers, consisting of a clerk, and of relieving officers, masters of work-houses, matrons, schoolmasters, who devote their whole time to the performance of their duties. To these are added medical officers and chaplains; and above all, an auditor.

The Boards of Guardians are aided by assistant commissioners, who have no local interests, and who, by visiting various localities, have become acquainted with the most efficient modes of management in each district. It has been found absolutely necessary, that these instructed officers should attend the first meetings of the Boards of Guardians to aid them with advice and instruction as to the management of the public business. 'Ignorance sees no difficulties. Imperfect knowledge describes them; perfect knowledge overcomes them.' It is found that the best informed of the guardians make the most frequent applications for aid and advice from the assistant commissioners, who, from their position, have the means of acquiring the most extensive information. It is also found, that, with few exceptions, districts left unvisited by assistant commissioners, or without instructions from the Central Board, soon display symptoms of a relapse in the management as compared with other districts. The history of the progress of the measure proves that, notwithstanding the continued exercise and mispending of several millions of money annually at the expense of the welfare of the labouring classes, nothing of any value in the way of self-government was learned by the parochial administrators; and that in every thing deserving the name of systematized management the instruction must begin *de novo*. Amongst other things instituted for the first time, upon which instructions have been given, was the commencement of a uniform system of keeping public accounts, comprehending not only the requisite checks against pecuniary malversation as to the amount raised and expended, but the checks against maladministration in the subject matter of the expenditure, and such a record of past occurrences as may measure the extent of the operation of the system and serve for future guidance—in other words, good statistics. The extensive diffusion of the knowledge and practice of this neglected art amongst so many leading individuals must of itself be productive of great advantages. The reports and correspondence of

several of the auditors and clerks of the new unions, will, in point of ability, bear comparison with the workmanship of some of the higher departments of the government.

One ignorant cry set up against the remedies was, that they were unprecedented; (how should they be otherwise?) and that being new they were unconstitutional. Lord Abinger took the lead in expressing repugnance to the unconstitutional character of that part of the measure which went to confer on the Commissioners the power of making rules and regulations, which he treated as an unheard-of delegation of legislative authority!—as if the whole country were not composed of a multitude of subordinate and conflicting legislatures!—as if the most important portion of the law which he himself was concerned in administering—all the rules of court, and all the decisions of the judges upon cases which the legislature has not foreseen, were not subordinate legislation!—as if in administration, the commander-in-chief as well as the Admiralty did not legislate by general orders!—as if the legislature had not habitually, almost in every local act for an incorporation for administering the relief to the poor, conferred the power of making rules and regulations! Amongst the discretionary powers conferred upon these bodies, were powers such as those of ‘letting out the poor maintained in the house’—‘as a servant for one year’—or ‘for work suited to their strength and ability, for such time and at such wages as the guardians may determine.’ ‘The poor or hired out to return to the poor-house with their implements and apparel (if furnished from the work-house), or, in default, to be apprehended and brought back, to be subjected to such punishment as the guardian shall please to inflict.’ In other cases, unrestricted powers of ordering whippings were given to the local boards.

The systems of mal-administration had been made up in detail, and it appeared obvious that they could only be removed in detail. But these details could not be made the matter of legislation by the supreme legislature, because they must be modified according to circumstances, as well as to time as locality; and to effect this, since every district differed, an immense enquiry must be entered into, and by the time it was completed the local circumstances would be so changed as to require a new investigation. The details on which good or bad management must depend were of a nature entirely inappreciable by the members of the legislature, and would absorb their time to the exclusion of other important objects. Unforeseen and *prima facie* unimportant errors in detail might baffle the best plans, if there were not the means of making an immediate alteration. If a general regulation as to diet were prescribed by act of Parliament, and

it were found to be inapplicable in all or in any cases, a year must elapse before the law could be repealed, or in the interval it must be broken.

By bringing all the information upon the subject to the Central Board, and charging the Board with the responsibility of framing regulations upon such information, a security of the highest value to the subject is taken. If the channels of information to the Central Board be well laid and free (a point to which the Parliament should look carefully), their subordinate legislation must be to a great extent self-acting; for the information, when brought to a focus, must indicate the good and the bad results so prominently as to drive the administrators into the courses which are beneficial, and warn them from those which are mischievous. This is an arrangement on which the Commissioners of Inquiry laid great emphasis.

‘ We must again state, that, while there is no province of administration for which more peculiar knowledge is requisite, than the relief to the indigent, there is no province from which such knowledge is more effectually excluded. The earlier part of our report shows the consequences of acting upon immediate impressions, or upon conclusions derived from a limited field of observation. At present the experience which guides the administration of relief is limited to the narrow bounds of a parish, and to a year of compulsory service. The common administration is founded on blind impulse, or on impressions derived from a few individual cases; when the only safe action must be regulated by extensive inductions, or general rules derived from large classes of cases, which the annual officer has no means of observing. Capacity for such duties comes by intuition even to persons of good general intelligence as little as an intuitive capacity to navigate a ship or manage a steam-engine. The influence of the information and skill which any officer may acquire may be destroyed by other officers with whom his authority is divided, and even though he may prevail, it usually departs with him when he surrenders his office. The improvements which he may have introduced are not appreciated by his successor. In petty and obscure districts, good measures rarely excite imitation, and bad measures seldom yield warning.’*

* A curious history might be made of the same plans which have been invented, tried under different names, and have failed without any others than the communication of the experience to other districts. When the Commission was first put into operation, they had volunteer suggestions of this description. We have heard of one instance of an overseer who travelled upwards of two hundred miles on foot to impart to them a plan which he said would put an end to the burden—give the farmers prosperity and the labourers satisfaction; and he demanded a guarantee for a national reward before he imparted the plan. Being

The legislation (if it is so to be called) by the Central Board, is legislation upon the widest experience and the most complete knowledge. Instead of being jealous of the exercise of this power by the Commissioners, the patriotic direction of jealousy on the part of every member of the legislature, and of every subject, would be against any portion of it being exercised elsewhere, or at least being exercised elsewhere without having recourse to this depository of information and experience. In this view, when application was recently made to Earl Spencer, by the Board of Guardians, of which he is a member, to use his influence with the Government in support of a petition for the extension of the time of the repayment of loans for building workhouses, he declined taking that course as improper, stating, that, in his opinion, all such proceedings ought to be addressed to the Central Board, which, as necessarily possessing the greatest knowledge of the subject, should first be consulted upon every alteration of the law. For the same reason, even an adverse application to the legislature should be referred to them to examine and report before it is entertained. By this course ignorant legislation, which has heretofore proved so disastrous, would be checked, and the legislature would save much of its own, or rather of the public time.

The power of the Central Board is in fact the immediate power of the Legislature, and indirectly (inasmuch as the Commissioners are payable by an annual vote from the Commons representatives) it is the power of the public at large, the power of an instructed democracy, as against all local oligarchies or petty and adverse interests. This power will be found to be the best protection of minorities, and the independent labourer's best

informed that the Commissioners had no authority to give such a guarantee, he consented to intrust the plan to the secretary, and, lo and behold! it was a plan of a labour rate on which the overseer had been brooding. In his part of the country it had never been heard of. The secretary was compelled to undeceive him, by placing in his hands the evidence of the failure of all such plans; and of their having not merely failed to do good, but of having created extensive and deep-seated evil, and corrupted the distributors and enslaved and demoralized the rate-receivers. But he consoled the disappointed overseer, by telling him, that, only one year before, the same plan had been entertained by persons of rank and distinction, as members of the legislature—with this difference, however, he might have added, in favour of the poor uneducated man, that several of them entertained the plan in the face of conclusive evidence of its mischiefs presented to them by the Commissioners.

safeguard against any tampering with the labour market. Indirectly also it is the power of public opinion.

We quote further, in connexion with this point, from the Commissioners of Enquiry, who recommended—

‘ That the *same* powers of making rules and regulations that are now exercised by upwards of 15,000 unskilled and (practically) irresponsible authorities, liable to be biased by sinister interests, should be confined to the Central Board of Control, in which responsibility is strongly concentrated, and which will have the most extensive information. Even if the Board were to frame bad regulations (and worse regulations than those now in practice they could scarcely devise), it would be a less mischievous arrangement than the present, inasmuch as the chances of opposition to a pernicious measure would be increased in proportion to the extension of the jurisdiction, and success in such opposition would be success throughout the jurisdiction. Those who are now maintainers of their own errors would be vigilant and unsparing censors of the errors of a distant authority. Under the existing system, when opposition is made to the continuance of a bad practice, and the opposition is successful, the success is limited to one parish, or to one fifteen-thousandth part of the whole field in which the practice may prevail. In the next parish, and in other parishes, the form of the abuse is generally varied, and requires a varied as well as a renewed opposition. These variations elude legislative enactments, and divide and weaken the force with which the opinion of the intelligent part of the community would act against them. But if a bad practice is rendered uniform, it becomes obnoxious in proportion to its extent to the full force of public opinion; the aggregate of its effects, immediate or collateral, which may appear insignificant, and unworthy of attention, in the single and obscure parish, or in any group of parishes, may be correctly estimated, and brought completely within the cognizance of the Legislature.’

Admitting that the range of the exercise of authority should be the range of the distinct perception of the particulars legislated upon, the distribution of the legislative functions may be regulated by considering, first, that there are large classes of facts practically, that is, easily and distinctly, cognizable by the supreme legislature, and which it may therefore, under the assurance of such knowledge, safely legislate upon. The rules deduced from these facts constitute the superior principles of legislation, which it should reserve to itself. Secondly, there are subordinate facts, details, and unforeseen contingencies, which cannot be practically or conveniently brought within its cognizance; but which are cognizable by a body like the Central Board, as being nearer to the field of action. These subordinate details should, therefore, be the province of the so called legislation of the Central Board. The rule prescribed by the supreme legislature may require great skill in the execution. In these cases, if the rule is to be executed, a skilled agency must be appointed to superintend the

execution. The good results arising from the new administration, are derived from the administration of precisely the same law under which the country was pauperised. There are still subordinate particulars which can only be distinctly seen by individuals on the field of action, a knowledge of which is requisite to the application of all rules, both superior and subordinate. There may thus be left a margin for still subordinate rules, which become the province of the Local Board of Guardians, or of the Assistant Commissioner. But the less the Central Board leave of subordinate legislation or of local regulation and discretionary authority in the administration of relief, the greater will be the security of the independent labourer, and of the public at large, against the warps of local interests and passions. Where, indeed, no discretionary regulations are left to be framed by a Board of Guardians, there is still left, unavoidably almost, too wide a range of discretionary authority and exercise of skill in the application of the rules to the hundreds of ever-varying cases of the paupers, submitted to them for consideration and relief.

It should be borne in mind throughout, that the principle of the central control is the very opposite of the *sic volo* despotism which it has been ignorantly and untruly described to be. In strict principle, it is the *Reason* which stands in the place of the *Will*. And the Commissioners should be jealously held responsible for the production of the whole of the evidence upon which they act, together with the *rationale* of every leading measure; so that the adequacy of their evidence, and the correctness of their conclusions, may at all times be determined. They should not be permitted to issue decrees in the style of the Autocrat, saying, 'We—of our ineffable wisdom—declare that this shall be done, or that not done;' but rather thus:—'We—having diligently sought and carefully examined all the information which is obtainable upon the subject, find the following are the chief facts, &c.; and we conclude, for the following reasons, that such will be the most beneficial course; and do, therefore, hereby order,' &c. This principle of action, before an enlightened public, will serve as a test of the capacity of the controlling agency, and of the due performance of its duties, and insure the zealous co-operation of the rational, and suppress the opposition of the ignorant, the passionate, and the interested. The Commissioners owe a great part of their success to the extent to which they have acted steadily upon this principle. They appear at all times to have preferred making requests to issuing orders. 'Self-management,' or 'independence of the central control,' is, in the vulgar sense of the phrase, the sentiment of

presumptuous ignorance, pride, and self-will, which disdains to act upon the widest experience.

It cannot but be obnoxious to many of the inferior benches of magistrates, who have been in the habit of prescribing rules and regulations, which have been acted upon as statutes, and have been called as Acts of Parliament. Such was the celebrated order establishing the allowance system, which act superseded the statute of Elizabeth, and was actually called by the people in Berkshire the 'Speenhamland Act.' It has, indeed, been matter of praise of the local magistrates, who are not lawyers, that they have exercised a sovereign authority by setting aside the statutes, and acting upon law of their own. The clerk of one of the metropolitan offices stated, when under examination—

'If the law were administered by lawyers, it would be requisite to have it skilfully framed; for they (as compared with magistrates who are not lawyers) are in the habit of construing enactments strictly, and following the letter; magistrates, who are not lawyers, are rather in the habit of exercising a sound discretion, and frequently give greater satisfaction by departing from the strict letter of the law.

'[The witness was questioned at considerable length on this point, and the particular instances on which he founded his general statement were examined. In effect, he declared that the multitude of penal statutes which a magistrate had to administer were so badly framed and so oppressive, especially those where the penalties are arbitrarily fixed, that they occasioned much mischief when they were put into execution. Lawyers did execute these laws, considering themselves tied by them; whereas the unpaid magistrates, or the county magistrates who are not lawyers, exercised "a sound discretion," that is, they executed these statutes, or set them aside, or "modified them," (*i. e.* fashioned laws for the occasion), which gave the parties more satisfaction than the law made by the legislature. Such, the witness declared, was the result of his experience for many years at a public office in one of the most populous districts.']* *

The establishment of the Central Board gives the public and the legislature security, for the first time, that an administrative law, affecting the whole population, will be executed in a manner conformable to its intention.

The legislature, in dread of patronage and jobbing by the Central Board, gave the appointment of the paid officers to the local guardians; but confided to the Commissioners the power of prescribing the qualifications and salaries of the officers, and of determining their continuance in office. The paid officers are

thus made the officers of the public at large, rather than the particular locality. This was a subject of outcry : but on whom should the permanent paid officers depend ? On the permanent superior body, charged with the execution of the regulations, and possessing the best information—or upon the annually elected, fluctuating, and least instructed body ? To render them dependent upon the local boards, would be to place them in the position of agents acting as against the wider public authority, and would at the same time expose them to the hazard of displacement by rivals, who provoke annual elections for the purpose. But, in truth, it is found in practice to be the chief security for the fitness of the officer, to render him dependent exclusively on the distant and comparatively disinterested authority, who alone are the fit judges of the proper performance of his duties. Except in extraordinary cases, personal feelings in favour of an applicant, or the dread of personal animosities, always overcome the considerations of public duty. It is a common occurrence, that suggestions are made to the Central Board as to the propriety of withholding a sanction to an appointment of the Guardians,—suggestions made by guardians, who have themselves (upon a canvass or otherwise) voted in favour of the candidate of whose unfitness they were convinced. All the proceedings have tended to establish the soundness of the policy of taking from those who have the right of nomination the right of removal ; for this, amongst other reasons, that, whatever are the causes of a bad choice, pride and self-love join in preventing a better. But the choice of a Central Board must always, and of necessity, be the most pure in matters of personal influence, applied to the affairs of the public at large : for, were they not under high responsibilities in matter of patronage, were they determined to indulge in their private partialities at the public expense, the personal partialities of the few gentlemen constituting the Central Board, are limited and soon saturated—it is the personal influence of one body : but the appointments of public officers by the Local Boards are appointments influenced by as many more circles of undue influence as there are boards : it is as seven or eight hundred to one.

The declamation of the enemies of the measure against the extent of the powers exercised by the board, has been so loud and incessant, as to create an impression that there was some foundation for it : Whereas the organization of the new machinery, for the purpose of completing the reform of the branch of administration to which it is applied, is extremely imperfect. The Duke of Wellington is reported to have declared, that for his part, so far from the commissioners having too much power, he considered it to be the

great defect of the measure that they had not power enough for the complete accomplishment of their object. The attainment of the end—the prevention of all but uninsurable cases of pauperism, having been willed, absurd prejudices and jealousies prevented the concession of the requisite means. Of these, are a more prompt and summary procedure for the execution of the existing duties of the Commission, especially in the prompt enforcement of their orders in distant localities, together with powers of stopping up indirect sources of pauperism. The jurisdiction of any such authority should extend over all the means for the relief of indigence, as well as over the main causes of indigence.

One great source of pauperism is misapplied charity—whether arising from funds obtained from bequests, or from subscriptions obtained by voluntary associations. A very large proportion of the charitable bequests is applied mischievously, and in modes which are essentially at variance with the intentions of the donors, though it is applied honestly but ignorantly by the trustees. The greater proportion of charity property was left with the general object of bettering the condition of the labouring classes; and, where specific application was directed with the view to the attainment of that object, and where such specific application is found practically to defeat the object, we should contend that it was the course of wise legislation to substitute the means which will attain it, and which the benevolent donor would, if he were living and saw his error, assuredly adopt. We should have no right to expect of posterity that our mischievous mistakes should be immortalized. We should expect that effect be given to our greater intentions by all the improved means which subsequent experience may develope. As most charitable estates are administered, they breed pauperism. Wherever a town abounds in charities, be the administration of the poor's rate what it may, it abounds in paupers, and is tainted with the vices and crimes found in the train of pauperism. Most assuredly, power should be conferred to arrest this mischief.

Many of the workhouses would seem to be hospitals or places of retreat for retired vagrants and beggars. The existing constabulary force of the towns, and even that excellent force the metropolitan police, is found not to possess the means of coping with the evil of vagrancy. All penal systems for its repression that have hitherto been tried have failed. But it has been proved that the principle of the poor law administration admits of successful application against mendicity and vagrancy—that the mendicant may be disarmed of his plea of impending starvation—and that the trade of the mendicant, like that of the pauper, may, by means which are not only unexceptionable, but laudable,

on the score of benevolence, be rendered less eligible than regular industry. Without the means of removing these sources of evil, the Commissioners are, as it were, charged with the labour of draining stagnant fens supplied by large and overflowing inlets which they are not allowed the means of stopping. The powers which the Local Boards of Guardians may exercise, are 'only' the same functions that are usually exercised in our rural districts by two ignorant and incompetent officers: namely, the overseer and the constable; yet when these functions are systematically enumerated, they appear to be of vast extent and importance, and to call upon the lover of liberty to ponder on the securities which may be obtained for their exercise.

We have already stated that the evidence of the progress of the measure in some districts tends to show that the humane assurance may be better maintained than heretofore, that no individual shall perish for want, and yet the amount of pauperism be ultimately reduced to a small proportion of cases of destitution from causes which are uninsurable. Were the first reduction accomplished, smaller establishments of paid officers would of course suffice for the relief of the reduced number of paupers. Already the Boards of Guardians of the several Unions where pauperism has been greatly diminished, have begun to suggest the expediency of reducing the number of their relieving officers, and reductions have been made. Hence a feeling is generated amongst the paid officers that they may carry the reductions 'too far' for the safety of their own places; and when a feeling is thus generated, it is in vain to expect that the unpaid officers—those who give occasional attendance, who have comparatively a weak interest—shall effectually counteract those who have the strongest interest, namely, their livelihood, and who can give their whole time and means to its pursuit. It is the main defect of all the arrangements by our police for the prevention of crime, that it is not made the interest of public agency to prevent crime to the uttermost extent, or that it is to the interest of the great body of subordinate agents that a certain amount of crime should be habitually committed. Further, a staff of paid officers must in any case be maintained; the country must be guarded, otherwise our enemies will again rush in upon us, and desolate it with new levies of Dane-gelt. If the paid officers be extensively dismissed, the feeling to which we have adverted must be generated extensively; if they be retained uselessly, then many other evils will be incurred. They who have conducted themselves meritoriously might be usefully and economically employed in officering the new Unions, or in filling up vacancies which occur from death or resignation; and the Commissioners have not the power of

doing this good without contending against the right of patronage in the local authorities. But, allowing for any abatements of adverse interests by the reappointments of the paid officers—admitting that the staff retained would perform its duties efficiently—yet, since it must be maintained (however little it may have to do), the spare time otherwise wasted may be beneficially applied to other objects, and may be so applied with the best effects as regards the chief object, the relief of the really destitute, and the repression of pauperism. We believe that the attention of the members of the Legislature, and of all thinking men, cannot be too early applied to these considerations.

A spirit of improvement in local administration is now abroad. The Poor-Law Commissioners' Report, and the Act to which it gives rise, which carry improvement into the administration of every parish, are now admitted to be of the greatest importance to the community. We trust that the efficiency of the act may not continue to be abated by the interference of half-knowledge actuated by petty jealousies, but that those who devised the measure may be so far requited for their labour and conflicts, that its principles may be followed out firmly and zealously, and all its capabilities for the public advantage fully developed.

many points of view, and although the first volume only has appeared, we have no hesitation in bringing the subject of it before