

John Locke, 1697 An Essay on the Poor Law

September–October 1697. ‘Draft of a Representation, Containing [a] Scheme of Methods for the Employment of the Poor’. PRO, CO/388/5/86–95, fos. 232–49. Printed in *An Account of the Origin, Proceedings, and Intentions of the Society for the Promotion of Industry* (Louth, Lincolnshire, 1789), pp. 101–49 (from which the text below is taken); Fox Bourne 1876, II, 377–90. There is a draft of part of the text in MS Locke, c. 30, fos. 87–8, 94–5, 111, which includes significant differences, some of which are recorded below. The essay is discussed in Mason 1962; Hundert 1972; Sheasgreen 1986; Beier 1988. It is sometimes referred to as an essay on working schools.

The memorandum was written by Locke in his capacity as a Commissioner on the Board of Trade: in Letter 2398 he refers to it as ‘my project about the better relief and employment of the poor’. He continues, ‘It is a matter that requires every Englishman’s best thoughts; for there is not any one thing that I know upon the right regulation whereof the prosperity of his country more depends.’ It was presented to the Board in October 1697, and in due course rejected. A minor enactment ensued: 8 and 9 W. III, c. 30. See also Letter 2084.

Locke’s plan was to reinvigorate and amend the Elizabethan Poor Law (39 Eliz., c. 4; 43 Eliz., c. 2), under which each parish was obliged to provide work for able-bodied men and subsistence for the poor, and could levy a poor rate. He proposed to replace the authority of individual parishes by that of groups of parishes (‘hundreds’ in the countryside and corporations of the poor in the towns). These bodies would punish vagrants and set up ‘working schools’ – wool spinning factories. Fifteen cities secured Acts of

Parliament to establish corporations of the poor between 1696 and 1715; they were, in part, Whig devices for circumventing Tory parish control. In London the leading lights were Sir Robert Clayton and Locke’s friend Thomas Firmin. See Macfarlane 1982. Similar schemes to Locke’s were mooted in Firmin’s *Some Proposals for the Employing of the Poor* (1678), Sir Matthew Hale’s *Discourse Touching Provision for the Poor* (1683), and John Bellers’s *Proposals for Raising a Colledge of Industry* (1695) (see Clarke 1987). Locke refers to Firmin in his draft (c. 30, fo. 87).

I have added numeration to mark the clauses of Locke’s proposals. Clauses 1–8 concern the punishment of vagabonds; 9–10 the provision of work; 11–16 the provision of working schools for children; 17–22 the schools’ manufactures and their oversight; 23–6 the powers of guardians of the poor; 27–37 the establishment of corporations of the poor in cities and towns; 38–40 are miscellaneous.

Locke refers to several traditional aspects of local government. The least familiar are the ‘hundred’: a group of parishes, a subdivision of a county; the ‘vestry’, a parish committee; the ‘quarter-sessions’: a court held quarterly by justices of the peace; the ‘tithingman’, a chief officer or constable of a tithing, a district containing a few households (nominally ten). In Locke’s time one pound (£) was made up of twenty shillings (s), and a shilling of twelve pence (d).

May it please your excellencies –

His majesty having been pleased, by his commission, to require us particularly to consider of some proper methods for setting on work and employing the poor of this kingdom, and making them useful to the public, and thereby easing others of that burden, and by what ways and means such design may be made most effectual, we humbly beg leave to lay before your excellencies a scheme of such methods as seem unto us most proper for the attainment of those ends.

The multiplying of the poor, and the increase of the tax for their maintenance, is so general an observation and complaint that it cannot be doubted of. Nor has it been only since the last war¹ that this evil has come upon us. It has been a growing burden on the kingdom these many years, and the two last reigns felt the increase of it, as well as the present.

¹ War against France was waged from 1689 to 1697.

If the cause of this evil be well looked into, we humbly conceive it will be found to have proceeded neither from scarcity of provisions, nor from want of employment for the poor, since the goodness of God has blessed these times with plenty, no less than the former, and a long peace during those reigns gave us as plentiful a trade as ever. The growth of the poor must therefore have some other cause, and it can be nothing else but the relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners; virtue and industry being as constant companions on the one side as vice and idleness are on the other.

The first step, therefore, towards the setting of the poor on work, we humbly conceive, ought to be a restraint of their debauchery by a strict execution of the laws provided against it, more particularly by the suppressing of superfluous brandy shops and unnecessary alehouses, especially in country parishes not lying upon great roads.

Could all the able hands in England be brought to work, the greatest part of the burden that lies upon the industrious for maintaining the poor would immediately cease. For, upon a very moderate computation, it may be concluded that above one half of those who receive relief from the parishes are able to get their livelihood. And all of those who receive such relief from the parishes, we conceive, may be divided into these three sorts.

First, those who can do nothing at all towards their own support.

Secondly, those who, though they cannot maintain themselves wholly, yet are able to do something towards it.

Thirdly, those who are able to maintain themselves by their own labour. And these last may be again subdivided into two sorts: viz., either those who have numerous families of children whom they cannot, or pretend they cannot, support by their labour, or those who pretend they cannot get work, and so live only by begging, or worse.

For² the suppression of this last sort of begging drones, who live unnecessarily upon other people's labour, there are already good

² Locke's draft begins here: 'The poor that cannot work, these must be maintained. The poor that can work but will not, these are only wandering beggars which therefore instead of being relieved should be carefully punished. The laws against these I think are such as would suppress that sort of drones. But laws without execution being but waste paper, and the officers being fallen into a general neglect of their duty, it would be convenient that a proclamation . . .'

and wholesome laws, sufficient for the purpose, if duly executed. We therefore humbly propose that the execution thereof may be at present revived by proclamation, till other remedies can be provided; as also that order be taken every year, at the choosing of churchwardens and overseers of the poor, that the statutes of the 39th Eliz. Cap. iv and the 43rd Eliz. Cap. ii be read and considered, paragraph by paragraph, and the observation of them, in all their parts, pressed on those who are to be overseers; for we have reason to think that the greatest part of the overseers of the poor, everywhere, are wholly ignorant, and never so much as think that it is the greatest part, or so much as any part, of their duty to set people to work.

But for the more effectual restraining of idle vagabonds, we further humbly propose that a new law may be obtained, by which it be enacted:

[1] That all men sound of limb and mind, above 14 and under 50 years of age, begging in maritime counties out of their own parish without a pass, shall be seized on, either by any officer of the parish where they so beg (which officers, by virtue of their offices, shall be authorised, and under a penalty required to do it), or by the inhabitants of the house themselves where they beg; and be by them, or any of them, brought before the next justice of the peace or guardian of the poor (to be chosen as hereafter mentioned [§23]), who in this case shall have the power of a justice of the peace, and, by such justice of the peace or guardian of the poor (after the due and usual correction in the case), be by a pass sent, not to the house of correction (since those houses are now in most counties complained of to be rather places of ease and preferment to the masters thereof than of correction and reformation to those who are sent thither), nor to their places of habitation (since such idle vagabonds usually name some very remote part, whereby the country is put to great charge; and they usually make their escape from the negligent officers before they come thither and so are at liberty for a new ramble). But, if it be in a maritime county, as aforesaid, that they be sent to the next seaport town, there to be kept at hard labour,³ till some of his majesty's ships, coming in or near there,

³ Locke's draft makes clear that hard labour means 'lump breaking', the breaking of stones for road building.

give an opportunity of putting them on board, where they shall serve three years under strict discipline, at soldier's pay (subsistence money being deducted for their victuals on board),⁴ and be punished as deserters if they go on shore without leave, or, when sent on shore, if they either go further or stay longer than they have leave.

[2] That all men begging in maritime counties without passes, that are maimed, or above 50 years of age, and all of any age so begging without passes in inland counties nowhere bordering on the sea, shall be sent to the next house of correction, there to be kept at hard labour for three years.

[3] And, to the end that the true use of the houses of correction may not be prevented, as of late it has for the most part been, that the master of each such house shall be obliged to allow unto everyone committed to his charge 4d per diem for their maintenance in and about London. But, in remoter counties, where wages and provisions are much cheaper, there the rate to be settled by the grand jury and judge at the assizes; for which the said master shall have no other consideration nor allowance but what their labour shall produce; whom, therefore, he shall have power to employ according to his discretion, consideration being had of their age and strength.

[4] That the justices of the peace shall, each quarter-sessions, make a narrow inquiry into the state and management of the houses of correction within their district, and take a strict account of the carriage of all who are there, and, if they find that anyone is stubborn, and not at all mended by the discipline of the place, that they order him a longer stay there and severer discipline, that so nobody may be dismissed till he has given manifest proof of amendment, the end for which he was sent thither.

[5] That whoever shall counterfeit a pass shall lose his ears for the forgery the first time that he is found guilty thereof, and the second time, that he shall be transported to the plantations, as in the case of felony.

[6] That whatever female above 14 years old shall be found begging out of her own parish without a pass (if she be an inhabitant

⁴ Locke's draft proposes three-quarters pay, one-third deducted for subsistence, payable at the end of three years.

of a parish within five miles distance of that she is found begging in) shall be conducted home to her parish by the constable, tithingman, overseer of the poor, churchwarden, or other sworn officer of the parish wherein she was found begging, who, by his place and office, shall be required to do it, and to deliver her to the overseer of the poor of the parish to which she belongs, from whom he shall receive 12d for his pains; which 12d, if she be one that receives public relief, shall be deducted out of her parish allowance; or, if she be not relieved by the parish, shall be levied on her, or her parents' or her master's goods.

[7] That, whenever any such female above 14 years old, within the same distance, commits the same fault a second time, and whenever the same or any such other female is found begging without a lawful pass, the first time, at a greater distance than five miles from the place of her abode, it shall be lawful for any justice of the peace or guardian of the poor, upon complaint made, to send her to the house of correction, there to be employed in hard work three months, and so much longer as shall be to the next quarter-sessions after the determination of the said three months, and that then, after due correction, she have a pass made her by the sessions to carry her home to the place of her abode.

[8] That, if any boy or girl, under 14 years of age, shall be found begging out of the parish where they dwell (if within five miles distance of the said parish), they shall be sent to the next working school, there to be soundly whipped, and kept at work till evening, so that they may be dismissed time enough to get to their place of abode that night. Or, if they live further than five miles off from the place where they are taken begging, that they be sent to the next house of correction, there to remain at work six weeks, and so much longer as till the next sessions after the end of the said six weeks.

These idle vagabonds being thus suppressed, there will not, we suppose, in most country parishes, be many men who will have the pretence that they want work. However, in order to the taking away of that pretence, whenever it happens, we humbly propose that it may be further enacted:

[9] That the guardian of the poor of the parish where any such pretence is made, shall, the next Sunday after complaint made to him, acquaint the parish that such a person complains he wants

work, and shall then ask whether anyone is willing to employ him at a lower rate than is usually given, which rate it shall then be in the power of the said guardian to set; for it is not to be supposed that anyone should be refused to be employed by his neighbours, whilst others are set to work, but for some defect in his ability or honesty, for which it is reasonable he should suffer; and he that cannot be set on work for 12d per diem, must be content with 9d or 10d rather than live idly. But, if nobody in the parish voluntarily accepts such a person at the rate proposed by the guardians of the poor, that then it shall be in the power of the said guardian, with the rest of the parish, to make a list of days, according to the proportion of everyone's tax in the parish to the poor, and that, according to such list, every inhabitant in the same parish shall be obliged, in their turn, to set such unemployed poor men of the same parish on work, at such under-rates as the guardians of the poor shall appoint; and, if any person refuse to set the poor at work in his turn as thus directed, that such person shall be bound to pay them their appointed wages, whether he employ them or no.

[10] That, if any poor man, otherwise unemployed, refuse to work according to such order (if it be in a maritime county), he shall be sent to the next port, and there put on board some of his majesty's ships, to serve there three years as before proposed; and that what pay shall accrue to him for his service there, above his diet and clothes, be paid to the overseers of the poor of the parish to which he belongs, for the maintenance of his wife and children, if he have any, or else towards the relief of other poor of the same parish; but, if it be not in a maritime county, that every poor man, thus refusing to work, shall be sent to the house of correction.

These methods we humbly propose as proper to be enacted, in order to the employing of the poor who are able, but will not work; which sort, by the punctual execution of such a law, we humbly conceive, may be quickly reduced to a very small number, or quite extirpated.

But the greatest part of the poor maintained by parish rates are not absolutely unable, nor wholly unwilling, to do anything towards the getting of their livelihoods; yet even those, either through want of fit work provided for them, or their unskilfulness in working in what might be a public advantage, do little that turns to any account, but live idly upon the parish allowance, or begging, if not

worse. Their labour, therefore, as far as they are able to work, should be saved to the public, and what their earnings come short of a full maintenance should be supplied out of the labour of others, that is, out of the parish allowance.

These are of two sorts:

(i) Grown people, who, being decayed from their full strength, could yet do something for their living, though, under pretence that they cannot get work, they generally do nothing. In the same case with these are most of the wives of day labourers, when they come to have two or three or more children. The looking after their children gives them not liberty to go abroad to seek for work, and so, having no work at home, in the broken intervals of their time they earn nothing; but the aid of the parish is fain to come in to their support, and their labour is wholly lost; which is much loss to the public.⁵

Everyone must have meat, drink, clothing, and firing. So much goes out of the stock of the kingdom, whether they work or no. Supposing, then, there be 100,000 poor in England, that live upon the parish, that is, who are maintained by other people's labour (for so is everyone who lives upon alms without working), if care were taken that every one of those, by some labour in the woollen or other manufacture, should earn but 1d per diem (which, one with another, they might well do, and more), this would gain to England £130,000 per annum,⁶ which, in eight years, would make England above a million of pounds richer.

This, rightly considered, shows us what is the true and proper relief of the poor. It consists in finding work for them, and taking care they do not live like drones upon the labour of others. And, in order to this end, we find the laws made for the relief of the poor were intended; however, by an ignorance of their intention or a neglect of their due execution, they are turned only to the mainten-

⁵ The draft adds: 'Now no part of any poor body's labour that can work should be lost. Things should be so ordered that everyone should work as much as they can, and what that comes short of maintaining them that the parish should make up.'

⁶ The draft adds: 'Tis therefore worth everybody's care that the poor should have employment, for I may confidently say that of those who are now maintained by parish rates and begging there is not one of ten, I might I think make the number a great deal less, who could not well earn above 2d a day. Nay, take them all together one with another they might earn 3d a day, which would be above £400,000 a year got to England.'

ance of people in idleness, without at all examining into the lives, abilities, or industry, of those who seek for relief.

In order to the suppression of these idle beggars, the corporations in England have beadle authorised and paid to prevent the breach of the law in that particular; yet, nevertheless, the streets everywhere swarm with beggars, to the increase of idleness, poverty, and villainy, and to the shame of Christianity. And, if it should be asked in any town in England, how many of these visible trespassers have been taken up and brought to punishment by those officers this last year, we have reason to think the number would be found to have been very small, because that [number] of beggars swarming in the street is manifestly very great.

But the remedy of this disorder is so well provided by the laws now in force that we can impute the continuance and increase of it to nothing but a general neglect of their execution.

(ii) Besides the grown people above mentioned, the children of labouring people are an ordinary burden to the parish, and are usually maintained in idleness, so that their labour also is generally lost to the public till they are 12 or 14 years old.

[11] The most effectual remedy for this that we are able to conceive, and which we therefore humbly propose, is that in the forementioned new law to be enacted, it be further provided that working schools be set up in each parish, to which the children of all such as demand relief of the parish, above 3 and under 14 years of age, whilst they live at home with their parents, and are not otherwise employed for their livelihood by the allowance of the overseers of the poor, shall be obliged to come.

By this means the mother will be eased of a great part of her trouble in looking after and providing for them at home, and so be at more liberty to work; the children will be kept in much better order, be better provided for, and from infancy be inured to work, which is of no small consequence to the making of them sober and industrious all their lives after; and the parish will be either eased of this burden, or at least of the misuse in the present management of it. For, a great number of children giving a poor man a title to an allowance from the parish, this allowance is given once a week, or once a month, to the father in money, which he not seldom spends on himself at the alehouse, whilst his children, for whose sake he had it, are left to suffer or perish under the want of necessaries, unless the charity of neighbours relieve them.

We humbly conceive that a man and his wife, in health, may be able by their ordinary labour to maintain themselves and two children. More than two children at one time, under the age of 3 years, will seldom happen in one family. If, therefore, all the children above 3 years old be taken off their hands, those who have never so many, whilst they remain themselves in health, will not need any allowance for them.

We do not suppose that children of 3 years old will be able at that age to get their livelihoods at the working school, but we are sure that what is necessary for their relief will more effectually have that use, if it be distributed to them in bread at that school than if it be given to their fathers in money. What they have at home from their parents is seldom more than bread and water, and that, many of them, very scantily too. If, therefore, care be taken that they have each of them their bellyfull of bread daily at school, they will be in no danger of famishing, but, on the contrary, they will be healthier and stronger than those who are bred otherwise. Nor will this practice cost the overseers any trouble; for a baker may be agreed with to furnish and bring into the schoolhouse every day the allowance of bread necessary for all the scholars that are there. And to this may be added, without any trouble, in cold weather, if it be thought needful, a little warm water-gruel; for the same fire that warms the room may be made use of to boil a pot of it.

From this method the children will not only reap the forementioned advantages with far less charge to the parish than what is now done for them, but they will be also thereby the more obliged to come to school and apply themselves to work, because otherwise they will have no victuals, and also the benefit thereby both to themselves and the parish will daily increase; for, the earnings of their labour at school every day increasing, it may reasonably be concluded that, computing all the earnings of a child from 3 to 14 years of age, the nourishment and teaching of such a child during that whole time will cost the parish nothing; whereas there is no child now which from its birth is maintained by the parish, but, before the age of 14, costs the parish £50 or £60.

Another advantage also of bringing poor children thus to a working school is that by this means they may be obliged to come constantly to church every Sunday, along with their schoolmasters

or dames, whereby they may be brought into some sense of religion; whereas ordinarily now, in their idle and loose way of breeding up, they are as utter strangers both to religion and morality as they are to industry.⁷

[12] In order, therefore, to the more effectual carrying on of this work to the advantage of this kingdom, we further humbly propose that these schools be generally for spinning or knitting, or some other part of the woollen manufacture, unless in countries [districts] where the place shall furnish some other materials fitter for the employment of such poor children; in which places the choice of those materials for their employment may be left to the prudence and direction of the guardians of the poor of that hundred; and that the teachers in these schools be paid out of the poor's rate, as can be agreed.⁸

This, though at first setting up it may cost the parish a little, yet we humbly conceive that (the earnings of the children abating the charge of their maintenance, and as much work being required of each of them as they are reasonably able to perform) it will quickly pay its own charges, with an overplus.

[13] That, where the number of poor children of any parish is greater than for them all to be employed in one school they be there divided into two, and the boys and girls, if thought convenient, taught and kept to work separately.

[14] That the handicraftsmen in each hundred be bound to take every other of their respective apprentices from amongst the boys in some one of the schools in the said hundred, without any money; which boys they may so take at what age they please, to be bound to them till the age of 23 years, that so the length of time may more than make amends for the usual sums that are given to handicraftsmen with such apprentices.

[15] That those also in the hundred who keep in their hands land of their own to the value of £25 per annum or upwards, or who rent £50 per annum or upwards, may choose out of the schools of

⁷ The draft has: 'utter strangers to industry, morality and religion'.

⁸ The draft has: 'All children at 5 years old or sooner of parents that receive alms or pay no taxes to be sent to the spinning school there to learn to spin (on the double-handed wheel if practicable) woollen or worsted, and to be continued there from sun rising to sunset only allowing them an hour for dinner, till they are 14, the boys to go prentices, and the girls to service, and no longer.'

the said hundred what boy each of them pleases, to be his apprentice in husbandry upon the same condition.

[16] That whatever boys are not by this means bound out apprentices before they are full 14 shall, at the Easter meeting of the guardians of each hundred every year, be bound to such gentlemen, yeomen, or farmers within the said hundred as have the greatest number of acres of land in their hands, who shall be obliged to take them for their apprentices till the age of 23, or bind them out at their own cost to some handicraftsmen; provided always that no such gentleman, yeoman, or farmer shall be bound to have two such apprentices at a time.

[17] That grown people also (to take away their pretence of want of work) may come to the said working schools to learn, where work shall accordingly be provided for them.

[18] That the materials to be employed in these schools, and among other the poor people of the parish, be provided by a common stock in each hundred, to be raised out of a certain portion of the poor's rate of each parish as requisite; which stock, we humbly conceive, need be raised but once; for, if rightly managed, it will increase.

[19] That some person, experienced and well skilled in the particular manufacture which shall be judged fittest to set the poor of each hundred on work, be appointed storekeeper for that hundred, who shall, accordingly, buy in the wool or other materials necessary; that this storekeeper be chosen by the guardians of the poor of each hundred, and be under their direction, and have such salary as they shall appoint to be paid pro rata upon the pound, out of the poor's tax of every parish; and, over and above which salary, that he also have 2s in the pound yearly for every 20s that shall be lessened in the poor's tax of any parish, from the first year of his management.

[20] That to this storekeeper one of the overseers of the poor of every parish shall repair, as often as there shall be occasion, to fetch from him the materials for the employment of the poor of each parish; which materials the said overseer shall distribute to the teachers of the children of each school, and also to other poor who demand relief of the said parish, to be wrought by them at home in such quantity as he or the guardian of the parish shall judge reasonable for each of them respectively to dispatch in one week, allowing unto each such poor person, for his or her work, what he and the

storekeeper shall agree it to be worth; but, if the said overseer and storekeeper do not agree about the price of any such work, that then any three or more of the guardians of that hundred (whereof the guardian of the same parish in which the contest arises is to be always one) do determine it.

[21] That the sale of the materials thus manufactured be made by the storekeeper in the presence of one or more of the guardians of each hundred, and not otherwise, and that an exact account be kept by the said storekeeper of all that he buys in and sells out, as also of the several quantities of unwrought materials that he delivers to the respective overseers, and of the manufactured returns that he receives back again from them.

[22] That, if any person to whom wool, or any other materials are delivered to be wrought, shall spoil or embezzle the same, if it be one who receives alms from the parish, the overseers of the poor of that parish shall pay into the storekeeper what it cost, and deduct the sum out of the parish allowance to the person who has so spoiled or embezzled any such materials, or, if it be one that receives no allowance from the parish, then the said overseers shall demand it in money of the person that spoiled or embezzled it, and if the person so offending refuse to pay it, the guardian of the poor of that parish, upon oath made to him by any of the said overseers that he delivered such materials to such person, and that he paid for them such a sum to the storekeeper (which oath every guardian may be empowered to administer), shall grant unto the said overseer a warrant to distrain upon the goods of the person so offending, and sell the goods so distrained, rendering the overplus.

[23] That the guardian of the poor of every parish, to be chosen by those who pay to the relief of the poor of the said parish, shall be chosen, the first time, within three months of the passing of the act now proposed; that the guardians thus chosen by the respective parishes of each hundred shall have the inspection of all things relating to the employment and relief of the poor of the said hundred; that one third part of the whole number of the guardians of every hundred thus chosen shall go out every year, the first year by lot out of the whole number, the second year by lot out of the remaining two-thirds, and for ever afterwards in their turns, so that, after the first two years, everyone shall continue in three years successively and no longer; and that, for the supply of any vacancy as

it shall happen, a new guardian be chosen as aforesaid in any respective parish, at the same time that the overseers of the poor are usually chosen there, or at any other time within one month after any such vacancy.

[24] That the guardians of the poor of each respective hundred shall meet every year in Easter week, in the place where the stores of that hundred are kept, to take an account of the stock; and as often, also, at other times as shall be necessary to inspect the management of it and to give directions therein, and in all other things relating to the poor of the hundred.

[25] That no person in any parish shall be admitted to an allowance from the parish but by the joint consent of the guardian of the said parish and the vestry.

[26] That the said guardian also, each of them, within the hundred whereof he is guardian, have the power of a justice of the peace over vagabonds and beggars, to make them passes, to send them to the seaport towns, or houses of correction, as before proposed.

These foregoing rules and methods being what we humbly conceive most proper to be put in practice for the employment and relief of the poor generally throughout the country, we now further humbly propose for the better and more easy attainment of the same end in cities and towns corporate, that it may be enacted:⁹

[27] That in all cities and towns corporate the poor's tax be not levied by distinct parishes, but by one equal tax throughout the whole corporation.¹⁰

[28] That in each corporation there be twelve guardians of the poor, chosen by the said corporation, whereof four to go out by lot at the end of the first year, [an]other four of the remaining number to go out also by lot the next year, and the remaining four the third year, and a new four chosen every year in the rooms of those that go out, to keep up the number of twelve full, and that no one continue in above three years successively.

[29] That these guardians have the power of setting up and ordering working schools as they see convenient, within each corporation respectively, to which schools the children of all that are

⁹ Draft: for every town 'except such as have already Acts'.

¹⁰ The draft specifies a 'general court to consist of the inhabitants that pay at least 2d per week to the poor'.

relieved by the said corporation, from 3 to 14 years of age, shall be bound to come, as long as they continue unemployed in some other settled service, to be approved of by the overseers of the poor of that parish to which they belong.

[30] That these guardians also have the sole power of ordering and disposing of the money raised in each corporation for the use of the poor, whether for the providing of materials to set them on work, or for the relieving of those whom they judge not able to earn their own livelihoods; and that they be the sole judges who are, or are not, fit to receive public relief, and in what proportion.

[31] That the said guardians have also the power to send any persons begging without a lawful pass to the next seaport town or house of correction, as before propounded.

[32] That they have likewise power to appoint a treasurer to receive all money raised for the relief of the poor; which treasurer shall issue all such money only by their order, and shall once a year pass his accounts before them; and that they also appoint one or more storekeepers, as they shall see occasion, with such rewards or salaries as they think fit; which storekeepers shall in like manner be accountable unto them, provided always that the mayor or bailiff, or other chief officer of each corporation, have notice given them that he may be present (which we humbly propose may be enjoined on all such officers respectively) at the passing of the accounts both of the treasurer and storekeepers of the poor within each respective corporation.

[33] That the teachers in each school, or some other person thereunto appointed, shall fetch from the respective storekeepers the materials they are appointed to work upon in that school, and in such quantities as they are ordered, which materials shall be manufactured accordingly, and then returned to the storekeeper, and by him be either given out to be further manufactured, or else disposed of to the best advantage, as the guardians shall direct.

[34] That the overseers of the poor shall in like manner take from the storekeeper, and distribute unto those who are under the public relief, such materials, and in such proportions, as shall be ordered each of them for a week's work, and not pay unto any of the poor so employed the allowance appointed them till they bring back their respective tasks well performed.

[35] That the overseers of the poor of each parish shall be chosen as they are now, and have the same power to collect the poor's rates

of their respective parishes as now; but that they issue out the money so collected for the relief and maintenance of the poor according to such orders and directions as they shall receive from the guardians. And that the accounts of the overseers of the poor of each parish, at the end of their year, shall be laid before such persons as the parish shall appoint to inspect them, that they may make such reservations on the said accounts, or exceptions against them, as they may be liable to, and that then the said accounts, with those observations and exceptions, be examined by the treasurer and two of the guardians (whereof one to be nominated by the guardians themselves and the other by the parish), and that the said accounts be passed by the allowance of those three.

[36] That the said guardians shall have power to appoint one or more beadles of beggars, which beadles shall be authorised and required to seize upon any stranger begging in the streets, or anyone of the said corporation begging either without the badge appointed to be worn or at hours not allowed by the said guardians to beg in, and bring all such persons before any one of the said guardians. And that, if any of the said beadles neglect their said duty, so that strangers or other beggars not having the badge appointed, or at hours not allowed, be found frequenting the streets, the said guardians, upon complaint thereof made to them, shall have power and be required to punish the beadle so offending, for the first fault, according to their own discretion; but, upon a second complaint proved before them, that they send the said beadle to the house of correction, or (if it be in a maritime county, and the beadle offending be a lusty [able-bodied] man, and under 50 years of age), to the next seaport town, in order to the putting him aboard some of his majesty's ships, to serve there three years as before proposed.

[37] That those who are not able to work at all, in corporations where there are no hospitals to receive them, be lodged three or four or more in one room, and yet more in one house, where one fire may serve, and one attendant may provide for many of them, with less charge than when they live at their own choice scatteringly.

[38] And, since the behaviour and wants of the poor are best known amongst their neighbours, and that they may have liberty to declare their wants, and receive broken bread and meat, or other charity, from well-disposed people, that it be therefore permitted to those whose names are entered in the poor's book, and who wear

the badges required, to ask and receive alms in their respective parishes at certain hours of the day to be appointed by the guardians; but, if any of these are taken begging at any other hour than those allowed, or out of their respective parishes, though within the same corporation, they shall be sent immediately, if they are under 14 years of age, to the working school to be whipped, and, if they are above 14, to the house of correction, to remain there six weeks and so much longer as till the next quarter-sessions after the said six weeks are expired.

[39] That, if any person die for want of due relief in any parish in which he ought to be relieved, the said parish be fined according to the circumstances of the fact and the heinousness of the crime.

[40] That every master of the king's ships shall be bound to receive without money, once every year (if offered him by the magistrate or other officer of any place within the bounds of the port where his ship shall be), one boy, sound of limb, above 13 years of age, who shall be his apprentice for nine years.