

1833

Appeal to the Wealthy of the Land, Ladies as Well as Gentlemen, on the Character, Conduct, Situation, and Prospects of Those Whose Sole Dependence for Subsistence Is on the Labour of Their Hands (1833)

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APPEAL
TO
THE WEALTHY OF THE LAND
LADIES AS WELL AS GENTLEMEN,
ON THE
CHARACTER, CONDUCT, SITUATION, AND PROSPECTS
OF
THOSE WHOSE SOLE DEPENDENCE FOR SUBSISTENCE
IS ON THE LABOUR OF THEIR HANDS.

—*—

BY M. CAREY,

AUTHOR OF 'VINDICIÆ HIBERNICÆ,' 'THE OLIVE BRANCH,' 'ESSAYS ON POLITICAL
ECONOMY,' ETC. ETC.

—*—

“ See them look o’er
“The labour past, and toils to come explore—
“ See them alternate suns and show’rs engage,
“And hoard up aches and anguish for their age.”

On turnpikes and canals “Their steps pursue,
“When their warm pores imbibe the evening dew:
“Then own, that labour may as fatal be,
“To these, thy slaves, as thine excess to thee.”

CRABBE.

* * * “Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
“And crippled age, with more than childish fears.”

IDEM.

“What mean ye * * that ye *grind the faces of the poor*, saith the Lord God of Hosts?”

ISAIAH iii. 15.

“We ought never to forget, that in alleviating the immediate sufferings of the poor [women], we are only *palliating*, not *eradicating* the evils of poverty. We must never forget that the **LOW RATE OF WAGES IS THE ROOT OF THE MISCHIEF**, and that unless we can succeed in raising the price of [their] labour, *our utmost efforts will do little towards effectually bettering their condition*. The distribution of alms, &c., may be useful in their way; but *they do not reach the source of the evil*.” —BARTON.

“The interests of the poorer classes of society are so interwoven with those of every part of the community that there is no subject more deserving of general attention, nor any knowledge more entitled to the exalted name of science, than that, in which their well-being is concerned; than that, the tendency of which is *to carry domestic comfort into the recesses of every habitation, and to add to the virtue and morality of a nation, by increasing its happiness*. The noblest and most elevated employments of the human mind lose their importance, when placed in competition with researches ON WHICH THE WELFARE AND GOOD CONDUCT OF MILLIONS MAY DEPEND, AND THE RESULT WHEREOF MAY ADD AS MUCH TO NATIONAL PROSPERITY AS TO INDIVIDUAL HAPPINESS.”

SIR THOMAS BERNARD

—*—

THIRD EDITION, IMPROVED.

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PHILADELPHIA:
STEREOTYPED BY L. JOHNSON, No. 6 GEORGE STREET.

Aug. 15, 1833.

[Price One Dollar for 20 copies.]

TO THE
IMPARTIAL HUMANE SOCIETY
OF
BALTIMORE
AND
THE FEMALE HOSPITABLE SOCIETY
OF
PHILADELPHIA

(WHOSE NOBLE EXAMPLES OUGHT TO BE FOLLOWED IN EVERY CITY AND TOWN IN THE U. STATES)

THIS PAMPHLET IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

AS

A SMALL MARK OF APPROBATION, OF THEIR
LIBERALITY, HUMANITY, AND FOSTERING CARE,

DIRECTED TOWARDS THE RELIEF OF
A LARGE, OPPRESSED, AND SUFFERING

CLASS OF FEMALES,

WHOSE CASE OFTEN PRESENTS SCENES OF DISTRESS, TO WHICH NOTHING
BUT OCULAR DEMONSTRATION COULD SECURE CREDIT,

IN A

COUNTRY FAR MORE PROSPEROUS

THAN ANY OTHER PORTION OF THE HABITABLE GLOBE.

BY THE AUTHOR

Philadelphia, June 24, 1833.

PREFACE.

The subject of the following essays is deeply interesting to a large portion of the human race, much of whose happiness, morals; and manners depends on its being correctly understood, and rightly acted on. It therefore demands the most serious reflection of the wise, and the good, and the liberal.

Some of the most material of the opinions herein contained, are in direct hostility with those generally prevalent on the same subject, and even by some highly enlightened citizens. But few can be ignorant that the most enlightened and profound men, may be radically and fatuously in error on particular points. Bacon believed in astrology; Johnson in the Cocklane ghost—and the great Judge Hale in witchcraft. He sentenced a miserable wretch, to death, for that imaginary crime. Need I add a word to prove the folly of placing implicit credit, without due examination, on opinions sanctioned by great names, or regarded as venerable from their antiquity.

All I ask for such opinions as at the first view may appear heterodoxical, is a fair, and candid, and repeated examination. Let them not be cast aside with scorn, as mankind are too apt to do, because they coincide not with preconceived views. If they cannot pass this ordeal, let them perish. If otherwise, I hope they will meet with that attention, and produce those practical results, which the importance of the subject demands.

Should it appear, as it probably will, to some of my readers, that I have expressed myself with too much warmth, in discussing the sufferings of the seamstresses, &c. let it be borne in mind, that I have been pleading the cause of probably 12,000 women in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, (with souls as precious in the eye of heaven as the most exalted females that ever trod the earth—as a Maria Theresa, a Princess Victoria, a Mrs. Washington, a Mrs. Madison, or a Mrs. Monroe,) who are grievously oppressed and reduced to the utmost penury, in a land literally flowing with milk and honey, while many of those for whom they toil, make immense fortunes, by their labours.

We are assured, as I have stated,* by ladies fully competent to judge on the subject, that nine cotton shirts a week are as much as the great mass of seamstresses can make. Those shirts are frequently made for 6, 8, and 10 cents, leaving 54 a 72 a 90 cents a week for the incessant application of a human being, during thirteen or fourteen hours a day, for the payment of rent, the purchase of food, clothes, drink, soap, candles and fuel!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Deplorable as is the condition of the poor in the crowded cities of Europe, there are few females there who earn much less than this—and therefore, it must follow, that there is frequently as intense a degree of distress suffered here, as in London or Paris. The principal difference is not in the *intensity*, but in the *extent* of the distress. Compared with London or Paris, there are few who suffer in this way here. But it is no alleviation of the misery of an unfortunate female in Philadelphia or Boston, who makes shirts for six or eight cents, or even ten, that is to say, who earns from nine to fifteen cents per day, that there are fewer similarly circumstanced here than in those cities.

It is often triumphantly asked, respecting the case of the women who are so very inadequately remunerated for their labours, What remedy can be applied to such an inveterate evil ? Does not the proportion between supply and demand, in this, as in all other cases, regulate prices ? And while there

is such an over-proportion of labour in the market, must not competition reduce prices, as it has done, to the lowest grade, even below the minimum necessary to support existence?

I am well aware of the superabundance of female labour—of the direful effects of over-driven competition, not only on the comfort and happiness, but on the morals of the labouring classes of society, in every quarter of the globe. But I contend for it, that every principle of honour, justice, and generosity, forbids the employer to take advantage of the distress and wretchedness of those he employs, and cut down their wages below the minimum necessary to procure a sufficiency of plain food and of clothes to guard against the inclemency of the weather. Whoever passes this line of demarcation, is guilty of the heinous offence of “*grinding the faces of the poor.*” The labour of every human being ought to insure this remuneration at least. And I am persuaded that there are thousands of honourable men who give inadequate wages to males as well as females, merely because they have never thought sufficiently on the subject; and who, therefore, have no idea of the real state of the case. They would scorn to give the wages they do at present, were they aware of the distress and misery thus entailed on those by whose labours, I emphatically repeat, they not only enjoy all the comforts and luxuries of life, but many of them make immense fortunes. My object is to induce upright men thus circumstanced, to scrutinize the affair, and obey the dictates of their better feelings as soon as they have ascertained the truth. Of the honourable issue I cannot entertain a doubt.

Let me most earnestly, but most respectfully, conjure the ladies, into whose hands these lines may come, to ponder deeply, and frequently, and lastingly on the deplorable condition of so many of their sex, who are ground to the earth by an inadequate remuneration for their painful labours. Let them raise their voices, and exert their influence in their defence, and urge their male friends to enter the lists in the holy cause of suffering humanity. I am not so enthusiastic or deluded as to suppose that a complete remedy can be applied to so enormous and so inveterate an evil—an evil, the remedy of which requires more generosity and disinterestedness than usually fall to the lot of mankind. But by proper efforts, the oppression of the mass of the sufferers may at least be *mitigated*, and no inconsiderable portion of them may be completely relieved.

The ladies will, I hope, pardon me for an observation which applies to some of them, but I hope to only a few. I have known a lady expend a hundred dollars on a party; pay thirty or forty dollars for a bonnet, and fifty for a shawl; and yet make a hard bargain with a seamstress or washerwoman,* who had to work at her needle or at the washing-tub for thirteen or fourteen hours a day, to make a bare livelihood for herself and a numerous family of small children! This is “a sore oppression under the sun,” and ought to be eschewed by every honourable mind. “Let it be reformed altogether.”

Philadelphia, June 18, 1833.

* *Extract of a letter from the Rev. Mr. Dupuy.*

Philadelphia, April 13th.

DEAR SIR,—As you are desirous of ascertaining the average amount of wages paid to some of the poor, I send you an individual whose case is peculiarly hard. I know the woman to be a person who would on no account deviate from the truth. She gets \$10 per quarter for washing, and frequently washes eight dozen of clothes per week—she finding soap, starch, fuel, &c. This is about ten cents per dozen. Your obedient servant,

MR. M. CAREY

CHARLES M. DUPUY

APPEAL TO THE WEALTHY, &c.

ESSAY I.

I PROPOSE in these essays to consider, and attempt to refute, certain pernicious errors which too generally prevail respecting the situation, the conduct, the characters, and the prospects of those whose sole dependence is on the labour of their hands—who comprise, throughout the world, two-thirds, perhaps three-fourths, of the human race—and on whose services the other third or fourth depend for their necessaries, their comforts, their enjoyments, and their luxuries.

According to these calculations, the number of persons in the United States depending on wages for their support must be eight or nine millions. This is a deeply interesting view of the subject, and fully proves its immense importance; and how solicitous we should be to guard against errors in discussing it—errors which may perniciously affect the interests and happiness of so large a portion of the human family. Whatever concerns their comfort or happiness—whatever tends to increase or decrease their comforts—to improve, or deteriorate their morals, demands the most serious attention of the friends of humanity, of all whose views extend beyond their own narrow selfish concerns, and who, without the services of this class, would be forlorn and helpless.

The class in question is susceptible of two great subdivisions—those who are so well remunerated for their labours, as to be able, not merely to provide, when employed, for seasons of stagnation and sickness, but by industry, prudence, and economy, to save enough in the course of a few years, to commence business on a small scale on their own account. With this fortunate description, which is numerous and respectable, I have no concern at present. My object is to consider the case of those whose services are so inadequately remunerated, owing to the excess of labour beyond the demand for it, that they can barely support themselves while in good health and fully employed; and, of course, when sick or unemployed, must perish, unless relieved by charitable individuals, benevolent societies, or the guardians of the poor. I use the word “*perish*” with due deliberation, and a full conviction of its appropriate application to the case, however revolting it may seem to the reader; for as these people depend for daily support on their daily or weekly wages, they are, when those wages are stopped by whatever means, utterly destitute of wherewith to support their existence, and actually become paupers, and therefore, without the aid above stated, would; I repeat, “*perish*” of want.

The crisis of suffering through which this class about three years since passed here and elsewhere, and the occurrence of similar suffering in all hard winters (and, in other seasons, from sickness and destitution of employment), often without receiving that extra aid which such a state of things loudly demands, appears to require a sober and serious investigation, in order to probe to the bottom so deplorable a state of things, whereby the comfort and happiness of such a large portion of human beings are so cruelly shipwrecked, and to ascertain what are the causes of the evil, and whether it be susceptible of any remedy.

The erroneous opinions to which I have alluded are—

1. That every man, woman, and grown child, able and willing to work may find employment.

2. That the poor, by industry, prudence, and economy, may at all times support themselves comfortably, without depending on eleemosynary aid—and, as a corollary from these positions,

3. That their sufferings and distresses chiefly, if not wholly, arise from their idleness, their dissipation, and their extravagance.

4. That taxes for the support of the poor, and aid afforded them by charitable individuals, or benevolent societies, are pernicious, as, by encouraging the poor to depend on them, they foster their idleness and improvidence, and thus produce, or at least increase, the poverty and distress they are intended to relieve.

These opinions, so far as they have operated—and, through the mischievous zeal and industry of the school of political economists by which they have been promulgated, they have spread widely—have been pernicious to the rich and the poor. They tend to harden the hearts of the former against the sufferings and distresses of the latter,—and of course prolong those sufferings and distresses.

“Posterity will scarcely credit the extent to which the popular feeling has been worked upon and warped by the ravings of some of our modern economists. They, truly, have done all that in them lay, TO EXTINGUISH IN THE BOSOM OF THE MORE OPULENT CLASSES, EVERY SPARK OF GENEROUS AND BENEVOLENT FEELING TOWARDS THE DESTITUTE AND NEEDY PAUPER. *In their eyes, pauperism is a crime, for which nothing short of absolute starvation can form an adequate punishment.*”—London Quarterly Review, July, 1828.

Many wealthy individuals, benevolent and liberal, apprehensive lest by charitable aid to persons in distress, they might produce evil to society, are, by these pernicious and cold-blooded doctrines, prevented from indulging the feelings of their hearts, and employing a portion of their superfluous wealth for the best purpose to which it can be appropriated—that purpose which, at the hour of death, will afford the most solid comfort on retrospection—that is, “to feed the hungry; to give drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked; to comfort the comfortless.” * The economists in question, when they are implored by the starving poor for “bread,” tender them “a stone.” To the unfeeling and uncharitable of the rich (and such unhappily there are), these doctrines afford a plausible pretext, of which they are not slow to avail themselves, for withholding their aid from the poor. They have moreover tended to attach a sort of disrepute to those admirable associations of ladies and gentlemen, for the relief of the poor, on which Heaven looks down with complacence, and which form a delightful oasis in the midst of the arid deserts of sordid selfishness which on all sides present themselves to the afflicted view of the contemplative observer.

In entering on this discussion, it is necessary to consider the character and conduct of the classes whose case I have undertaken to review. Both are, I am persuaded, greatly and perniciously mistaken.

There is scarcely any propensity more universal among mankind, than the tendency to generalize from inadequate premises. From the good or the bad qualities of half a dozen persons or things, most people are disposed to draw general conclusions affecting the whole species or genus to which the half dozen belong. It is not therefore wonderful, although greatly to be regretted, that on beholding a number of worthless poor, so many superficial persons feel disposed

* How transcendently superior are those who, like Mr. Perkins and Mr. Philips of Boston, Mr. Brown of Rhode Island, Mr. Oliver of Baltimore, Mr. Rutgers of New York, Mr. Ralston, Mr. Henry, and Mrs. Stott of Philadelphia, &c., bestow thousands and tens of thousands on public charities or other benevolent objects, to those who retain their millions to the last moment of their existence! Ten thousand dollars *bestowed* during life have more real merit than a million *bequeathed* at the last gasp, when it can be no longer clutched.

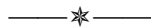
to set down the mass as worthless. A little reflection will prove the folly and injustice of this procedure. The estimable part of the poor, who struggle with their poverty. who resist the temptations to fraud and transgressions of every kind, are generally in the back-ground—they escape notice. Hundreds of them may be within a few squares of us, and never attract our attention. Let us suppose a case. A man has, in the course of a year, dealings with five hundred of those persons who depend on their labour for support: among this large number, he discovers ten or a dozen tricky and worthless, who are on the watch to cheat and deceive him. Will he not, in his conversation about his affairs (and how many are there who have no other subject of conversation?) dwell more on the frauds and tricks of these, than on the correct conduct of the four hundred and eighty or four hundred and ninety? And will not superficial persons be disposed to generalize and stigmatize the whole from his statements?

Far from being surprised that among the poor there are to be found many worthless persons, it appears, that the surprise, all things considered, ought be, that there are so few. In the first place, it is well known that we are the creatures of education and example; and how lamentably deficient the mass of the poor are in point of education and example, we all know. No small proportion have had no education; others only a mere smattering: and the examples which they are to copy, are, alas! too generally ill qualified to form them as useful or estimable members of society.

The higher orders of society have generally enjoyed the advantages of a good education and good examples: the censorial eye of the public is on them, and serves as a curb to restrain them from guilt: regard to character has a powerful operation. Nevertheless, do we not unfortunately see considerable numbers of them who lapse from the paths of rectitude? How powerfully do such lapses tend to extenuate those of the poor, who are under no such controlling or restraining circumstances, and have so much stronger motives to aberration !

The population of Philadelphia is about 160,000 souls, of whom about 100,000 depend on the labour of their hands; 40,000 are probably labourers, hodmen, seamstresses, families of workmen on the canals and rail-roads. The utmost industry and economy they can employ will scarcely suffice to sustain them, if not unremittingly employed; and few of them are so fortunate as to be employed through the year. These last descriptions of persons are those whose case I have undertaken to consider.

Philadelphia, June 20, 1833.



ESSAY II.

The first position on which I propose to animadvert is—

“That every man, woman, and child, able and willing to work, may find employment.”

So far is this from being true, that a very cursory reflection would satisfy any candid person, that in the most prosperous times and countries, there are certain occupations, which, by the influence of fashion or other causes, suffer occasional stagnations. There are other occupations, at which employment is at all times precarious—and others, again, which furnish little or no employment at certain seasons of the year.

To the first class belong all those who minister to the fanciful wants of society—wants contracted or expanded by the whim or caprice of fashion. For instance, the Prince of Wales having,

some years since, laid aside his shoe-buckles, and supplied their place with ribands, shoe-buckles became unfashionable, and the journeymen buckle-makers were reduced to a state approaching to starvation. Cases of this kind occur occasionally, in this country, though not by any means to the same extent, nor arising exactly from the same causes. But, whatever may be the cause, the effect is equally oppressive to the sufferer, deprived of his usual sources of support. Three instances occur to my mind at this moment. The custom of cropping the hair threw half of our hair-dressers out of employment. The general use of lamps produced a similar effect on the chandlers. And the introduction of marble cutting in the New York prisons operated perniciously on the stone-cutters of that state, particularly in the metropolis.

In the second class, the most conspicuous are the shoe-binders, the spoolers, and seamstresses employed on coarse work, who, being far more numerous than the demand for their service requires, a portion of them are at all times but partially employed.

In the third class may be enumerated labourers on canals and turnpike roads, hod-carriers, wood-sawyers, wood-pilers, &c. &c.

Instances repeatedly occur in our cities of decent men, with the most satisfactory recommendations, seeking employment in vain for months, as porters. There is at all times a superabundance of clerks. An advertisement for a clerk will, in an hour or two, produce a dozen or two of applications. I have known persons of this class, burdened with families, obliged to descend to menial and degrading employments for support.

It is frequently said, as a panacea for the distresses of those people—"Let them go into the country; there they will find employment enough." To say nothing of the utter unfitness of most of those persons for country labour, this is taking for granted what remains to be proved. The country rarely affords employment for extra hands, except for a few weeks in harvest time. Farmers are generally supplied with steady hands at another seasons. But were it otherwise, take the case of a man of a delicate constitution, with a wife and three or four small children; what a miserable chance would he stand of support by country labour !

So far as regards seamstresses and spoolers, the employment of the two classes, through the year, does not average above 40 *a* 45 weeks. One thousand of the former have been employed by the Provident Society in this city, during a winter, who could procure only four shirts per week, for which they received but fifty cents! Some of them, living two miles from the office, had to travel that distance for this paltry pittance—and above half of them had no other dependence. In the absence of all other evidence, this would be abundantly sufficient to establish the cruelty and injustice of the accusations brought against this ill-fated and oppressed class, when they are involved in the general censure passed on the poor for idleness and improvidence.

The second position which I propose to controvert is—

"That the poor, by industry, prudence, and economy, may at all times support themselves comfortably, without depending on eleemosynary aid: and, as a corollary from this,

"That their sufferings and distresses chiefly, if not wholly, arise from their idleness, their dissipation, and their extravagance."

A primary element in this discussion is a consideration of the wages ordinarily paid to the class of persons whose case I attempt to develop, and whose cause I have undertaken to plead—and first, of the very numerous class, labourers on canals and turnpikes.

By the annexed letter from JOSEPH M'ILVAINE, Esq., formerly secretary of the board of canal

commissioners, it appears that the average wages of this that in winter they may be had for five dollars; and that sometimes, in that season, when labour is scarce, they work for their board alone.

DEAR SIR,

Philadelphia, Feb. 14th, 1831.

It is difficult to answer with precision your inquiry as to the *average wages* of canal labourers. They vary with the seasons, and are still more dependent upon the proportion of labourers to the work required to be done. In the winter season men can be had at \$5 a month and found. In some cases I have known them to work a whole winter for merely their food. On the contrary, at the busier periods of the year, \$15 to \$20 a month have been given when hands were scarce. I incline to think, however, that \$10 to \$12 a month and found might be taken as a pretty fair average. Contractors, in making their calculations, set down 70 to 75 cents a day for each man employed, including wages and food. This would give about \$12 a month as the average of wages.

Very respectfully, &c.

M. CAREY, Esq. ,

JOS. M'ILVAINE.

It is important to observe, that in this and similar cases, averages do not afford a fair criterion for a correct decision. This may at first glance appear unsound doctrine, but a very slight reflection will remove all doubt on the subject. Suppose A and B to work, the former at seven dollars, and the latter at ten—the average would be eight and a half. But would it be fair to calculate the capacity of A to support his family by this average? Surely not. The calculation must be made on his actual wages: I will therefore assume ten dollars for ten months, and five dollars for two—and take the case of a labourer with a wife and two children. Many of them have three or four.

10 months at 10 dollars,	- - - - -	\$100 00
2 months at 5 dollars,	- - - - -	10 00
Suppose the wife to earn half a dollar per week,	- - - - -	26 00
Total,	- - - - -	<u>136 00</u>

I now submit a calculation of the expenses of such a family, every item of which is at a low rate.

Shoes and clothes for self and wife, each 12 dollars,	- - - - -	\$24 00
Washing at the canal, 6¼ cents per week,	- - - - -	3 25
Shoes and clothes for two children, each 8 dollars,	- - - - -	16 00
Rent, 50 cents per week,	- - - - -	26 00
Soap, candles, &c. 6 cents per week,	- - - - -	3 12
Fuel, at 12 cents per week,	- - - - -	6 24
Meat, drink, vegetables, &c. &c. 8 cents per day, each, for wife and children, -	- - - - -	87 60
		<u>\$ 166 21*</u>
Deficit,	- - - - -	\$30 21

This is one of a large class, whom some of our political economists of the new school are not ashamed to stigmatize as worthless and improvident, because they do not, forsooth, save enough out of their miserable wages, to support themselves and families, in times of scarcity, without the aid of benevolent societies; whereas it appears that their wages are inadequate to their support, even when fully employed.

* Statement in detail of the expenses of such a family per week, exclusive of clothes and rent, which, I trust, will be found moderate.

Bread,	- - - - -	\$0.62 ½
Meat,	- - - - -	20
Potatoes,	- - - - -	15
Butter	- - - - -	16
Tea,	- - - - -	10
Salt, pepper, and vinegar,	- - - - -	07
Fuel, soap, candles, &c.	- - - - -	21
Per week,	- - - - -	<u>\$1.69 ½</u>

Here let it be observed, there is no allowance for a single day in the whole year, lost by accident, by sickness, or by want of employment—no allowance for expense arising from sickness of wife or children—no allowance for the contingency stated by Mr. M’Ilvaine, of working, during the winter months, for board alone. It is assumed that no unfavourable circumstance has taken place—that everything has “run on with a smooth current;” and yet the man’s earnings and those of his wife fall short of their support \$30.21.

But we will present the case in another point of view. Suppose him to have \$12 per month for ten months; and \$5 for two; that his wife earns half a dollar per week; and let us see the result.

10 months, at \$12 each,	- - - - -	\$120
2 do. at \$5	- - - - -	10
Wife’s earnings per week, 50 cents,	- - - - -	26 *
		\$156
Expenditure as before	- - - - -	\$166.21

Even on this supposition he falls short about ten dollars a year of a meagre support, without, let me repeat, the loss of a single hour in the year by sickness or want of employment. What a hideous view of the situation of an industrious man, burdened with a family, and contributing largely to advance the best interests of society! what an overwhelming commentary on the idle and vapid declamations against the improvidence of the poor! and what an irresistible argument in favour of benevolent societies! †

The allowance for food and drink is probably too low. The rations in prisons and almshouses are from 5 to 8 cents per day. In those cases, the supplies are furnished by contract, under the influence of eager competition. The articles are all purchased by wholesale, and on a large scale. How immense the difference between this case and that of the poor, who purchase all in the small way, and generally on credit, at a price enhanced by the risk incurred by the sellers. The difference in the price of wood may afford a tolerable specimen of the disadvantage under which the poor labour in their purchases. By the measurement of some wood recently purchased on a small scale, it appears that oak wood, sold out by three or four cents worth at a time (the mode in which it is too generally purchased by the poor), produced about ten dollars per cord, when the price at the wharf was only five or six dollars !

Philadelphia, June 24, 1833.

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ESSAY III.

I HAVE too good an opinion of human nature, although by no means a believer in its perfection or perfectibility, to doubt that those speculative citizens, who have for years employed their time and their talents in denouncing the idle-

* Although I have allowed 50 cents per week for the earnings of a wife, it must be obvious that a woman with two or three small children to attend, and making shirts for 6, 8, 10, or even 12½ cents each, can contribute little to the support of a family.

† So far as regards canal labourers, the sickness and mortality among them form a painful drawback on the benefits mankind derive from their labours. It is not at all improbable, indeed it is almost certain, that among the whole number employed, five per cent. return to their families in the winter, with broken constitutions, by fevers and agues, one half of whom are carried off to an untimely grave. Those that escape this state often linger for years in a state of debility, subject to occasional returns of their painful and enervating disorder.

ness, the worthlessness and the improvidence of the poor, will, on a cool examination of the subject here presented to view, be filled with astonishment and deep regret at the infatuation, whereby they have attempted to dry up the sources of charity and benevolence in the breasts of the rich, and, as far as in them lay, doomed the poor to remediless pauperism—an unholy and ungodly employment. To superior beings, looking down on human affairs, nothing can be a more just subject of amazement than a wealthy man, with an income of 5, 6, or 7000 dollars a year, enjoying not only all the comforts but all the luxuries of life, and laying the four quarters of the globe under contribution for his raiment and the gratification of his appetites, who denies occasional relief to persons circumstanced as I have stated in the case cited, from a conscientious apprehension of injuring society by affording encouragement to idleness and improvidence! and nothing can be a more genuine subject of holy indignation, than a wealthy person, not labouring under such a delusion, and yet refusing to aid in cases of distress and wretchedness.

Calculations respecting city labourers, hod-men, wood-pilers, scavengers, and various other classes, whose sole dependence is on the casual employment of their hands, are attended with considerable difficulty. I have made inquiries of different persons, particularly of master-builders, as regards labourers and hod-men. Their statements vary extremely. One eminent builder, who employs a number of hands, states, that allowing for occasional heavy rains, in spring, summer, and fall, and the partial suspension of building in winter, those persons are not sure of employment more than 200 days in the year. This appears to be quite too low. Another, who states that wages vary from 25 to 37½ cents per day in winter, and from 62½, 75, 87½ to 100 cents, in spring, summer, and fall, assumes an average of 60 cents per day throughout the year. This again is apparently too low. Be this as it may, whatever the wages assumed, of the various estimates, it will be manifest from the preceding statements, that the most rigid economy will not secure persons with families, of the description in question, from occasional distress, in the event of any of the calamities to which they are subject, that is, accidents, sickness, want of employment, &c.

I do not pretend my calculations are strictly accurate. They are, however, a sufficiently near approximation, to satisfy every candid mind of the enormous and pernicious errors which prevail on this subject. When a labourer has a wife and only one child, or neither one nor the other, he can support himself tolerably and is not within the scope of this essay. When, on the other hand, he has a sickly wife and three or four or five children, and is himself occasionally sick, his case is truly deplorable; and many of them have four, five, and six children. Their children are, I believe, generally more numerous than those of the rich.*

I might extend these views to a greater length. and embrace various other occupations, which stand on nearly the same ground as those I have specified: but I presume it cannot be necessary; and hope I have established a point of infinite importance to the poor, and highly interesting to the rich—that is, that even among the occupations of males, there are some which are so indiffer-

* I submit a story, recorded, I believe, by Montaigne. A lady who had been long married, and never had a child, paid a visit to one of her tenants who had ten or eleven. The farmer's wife was complaining to the lady how hard she found it to provide for her numerous family; the lady soothingly said, "*Be comforted, good woman; when God sends mouths, he always sends meat.*" "*Yes, truly, my dear Madam; but unfortunately he sends the meat to you, and the mouths to me.*" Such is the case with many of our wealthy men, who are blessed with a superabundance of all the good things of this world, with few or no children—while many of our weavers and labourers, who have half a dozen or a dozen, have not means to afford them proper nourishment.

ently remunerated, that no industry, no economy, no providence, in times when the parties are fully employed, will enable them to save wherewith to support themselves and families in times of stagnation, and during severe seasons; and that of course they must rely, on those occasions, upon the overseers of the poor, or benevolent societies, or charitable individuals, or on such extraordinary aid, as, to the honour of our citizens, the late (1830) distressing scenes called forth. If I succeed in deeply imprinting this important truth on the public mind, so that it may produce the proper effect, by removing the injurious prejudices that prevail on the conduct and character of the labouring poor, on the effects of benevolent societies, and on the claims of those societies for extensive support, I shall regard myself as signally fortunate.

There is one idea on the subject of benevolent societies which deserves serious consideration, and appeals not merely to our charity and beneficence but to our selfishness. It often happens that individuals who have for a long time struggled with distress and difficulties, and with a laudable spirit of pride and self-respect, which cannot be too carefully cherished, shrunk from the degradation of a dependence on the guardians of the poor, are on the point of giving way in a time of severe pressure, but, being then temporarily relieved by a benevolent society, are rescued from this painful necessity. Whereas they might otherwise sink into permanent paupers, and ultimately cost the public ten times as much as the amount which rescued them from this degradation.

Let it not be for a moment supposed, that I carry my defence of the poor to such an extravagant and ill-judged length, as to contend that all, their distresses and sufferings arise from inadequate wages, or that they are all faultless: far from it. I know there are among them, as among all other classes, worthless persons—and some supremely worthless. Among the heavy sins of this class are intemperance, and desertion by some of them, of their wives and children, or, what is at least as bad, living in a state of idleness on the earnings of their wives. Indeed, so far as regards their ill-fated partners, the latter course is the worse. In the one case, the husband only withdraws his aid: in the other, he not only commits that offence, but adds to the burdens of his wife.

As regards the sexes, there are, among the poor, twice as many worthless males as females—idle, dissipated, and intemperate. The females are, with few exceptions, orderly, regular, and industrious, and husband their slender means with exemplary economy—an economy without which they would frequently undergo intense suffering from hunger.

But while I freely admit that there are among the poor many worthless, I am fully satisfied, from the most attentive examination of the subject, that the worthless of both sexes bear but a very small proportion to those who are industrious and meritorious. Unfortunately, the worthless occupy a more prominent space in the public eye, and with many are unceasing objects of animadversion and reprobation; their numbers and their follies and vices are magnified: whereas the industrious and meritorious are, I repeat, generally in the background, out of view.*

* *Extract from a Report of the Managers of the Female Hospitable Society.*

“The Managers of the Female Hospitable Society state, that in their opinion, *a very large proportion of the distress among the industrious poor originates in the low price of women’s wages, and the uncertainty of constant employment.*

“This society has never been able to give work to one fourth of those who apply, even in the most flourishing state of its funds; *now not more than one in ten receives any!*

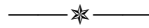
“MARY A. SNYDER, *Governess F. H. Society.*

“MARGARET SILVER, *Secretary.*”

The industry and virtue of the labouring poor appear undeniable, from the fact, that there is no occupation, however deleterious or disgraceful, at which there is any difficulty in procuring labourers, even at the most inadequate wages. The labour on canals in marshy situations, in atmospheres replete with pestilential miasmata, is full proof on this point. Although the almost certain consequence of labouring in such situations is a prostration of health, and danger of life; and that no small portion of the labourers, as I have already stated, return to their families in the fall or winter with health and vigour destroyed, and labouring under protracted fevers and agues, which in many cases undermine their constitutions, and return in after-years, and too often hurry them prematurely into eternity: their places are readily supplied by other victims who offer themselves up on the altars of industry.

This is one of those decisive facts which ought to silence cavil for ever on this important subject.

Philadelphia, June 26, 1833.



ESSAY IV.

LET us now turn to the appalling case of seamstresses, employed on coarse work, and to that of spoolers: and here “I will a tale unfold, to harrow up the soul” of all those endowed with feelings of humanity.

Coarse shirts and duck pantaloons are frequently made for 8 and 10 cents. The highest rate in the United States, with two highly honourable exceptions, which I shall notice presently, is 12½ cents. Women free from the incumbrance of children, in perfect health, and with constant, uninterrupted employment, cannot, by the testimony of ladies of the first respectability, who have fully scrutinized the affair, make more than nine shirts per week, working from twelve to fifteen hours per day, and possessing considerable expertness.*

Extract of a letter from J. W. Wyman, a New York Police Magistrate.

“New York, Jan. 25, 1830.

“It is most undoubtedly true, that the compensation which poor women with small children obtain for their labour, is so scanty that the least interruption in their accustomed employment occasions a corresponding diminution in their receipts, and they are at once (for they literally live from hand to mouth), compelled to raise the means in some other way, and none so ready or convenient, probably, as to send some article of wearing apparel as a pledge for the sum required. Every casualty in such a family will subject them to a similar inconvenience, until every article in their possession has disappeared, and *they are left to starve, unless the hand of charity is extended for their relief.*”

“The evils arising from the inadequate compensation given for most kinds of female labour, are by no means confined to their poverty. It is frequently the case, and my own experience enables me to speak with confidence, that women of this description are obliged to keep their children in the streets, either to beg, or by some light employment to earn a penny through the day; this leads to bad associations, and frequently to crime. *Of the children brought before me for pilfering, nine out of ten are those whose fathers are dead, and who live with their mothers, and are employed in this way.* The petty plunder obtained in this way finds a ready market at some old junk shop, and the avails are in part carried home as the earnings of honest labour.”

** Copy of a statement signed by thirty Philadelphia ladies of respectability, intelligence, and competence to decide on the subject.*

“Philadelphia, June 5th, 1830.

“The undersigned, having seriously considered the case of those seamstresses who work in their own lodgings, and whose dependence is on their needles, are convinced that the prices they receive for their work are inadequate for their

The Boston Society for the employment of seamstresses, of which I know not the exact title, pays, as I am credibly informed, but *ten cents for those shirts*, thus limiting the ill-fated women to 90 cents per week, if fully employed, which is seldom the case. Rent of rooms in Boston is higher than here: but suppose it the same, there remain for food, drink, clothes, fuel, soap, candles, &c. 40 cents per week, or less than 6 cents per day!

support; that expert seamstresses, if fully employed, and unincumbered with children, cannot make more, working, early and late, than eight or nine shirts, or duck pantaloons, per week; that the highest price paid for those articles is 12½ cents each; which amounts only to one dollar twelve and a half cents per week: that the women in question almost universally pay 50 cents per week for their lodgings, which leaves but 62½ cents per week, or 9 cents per day, for meat, drink, clothing, fuel, &c., *for an expert woman, constantly employed, and without children!* that cases very frequently occur, of the above articles being made for 10, and even for 8, and sometimes for 6 cents; that these women are frequently unemployed; that many of them are widows, who formerly lived in affluence; that no small number are aged and infirm, and unfit for any other occupation; that the occasional want of employment, and sickness, make serious drawback on their slender means of support; that many of them, but for the assistance they receive from charitable individuals, and benevolent societies, would not only be unable to pay their rent, but be often sorely distressed for want of the common necessaries of life! Taking the whole of these afflicting circumstances under consideration, they strongly recommend their case to the consideration of the public at large, but more particularly to that of those by whom they are employed, in the hope that some alleviation of the sufferings of this numerous class may be devised and effected.

“Various other species of female labour are equally ill paid, particularly those of spoolers and winders of thread; but they have not judged it necessary to go into more particulars.”

Philadelphia, May 24th, 1830.

☞ The ladies' names are omitted from motives of delicacy.

Testimony of leading citizens of Philadelphia, on the subject of the above certificate.

“It is impossible to peruse this statement without extreme regret and surprise, that such a state of things should have existed in this flourishing city, wholly unknown, as it must have been, to the mass of our citizens. That the case of the unfortunate women referred to calls loudly for a remedy, so far as maybe practicable, cannot, for a moment be doubted. That a complete and radical remedy is practicable, we do not flatter ourselves, *while the demand for employment so far exceeds the demand for that species of labour.* And we regret to say, that there are cases in which *the competition among the sellers of the articles produced by those women, may have so far reduced their prices as to render it impossible for the employers to raise the wages without injustice to themselves.* Yet we fondly hope there are very many cases in which the employers may be able to reconcile more liberal wages, with a due regard to their own interest. And when the extent and intensity of the suffering that must inevitably arise from the present low rate of wages are duly considered, we rely that every man of generous and liberal feeling, who can afford to raise the compensation for the labours of those women, will cheerfully obey the dictates of humanity and justice.

CADWALADER EVANS,	PAUL BECK, Jun.
MATTHEW L. BEVAN,	HENRY TROTH,
SAMUEL RICHARDS,	J. K. MITCHELL, M. D.
HENRY KUHLE,	SAMUEL HILDEBURN,
THOMAS LATIMER,	BENJAMIN TUCKER,
ROBERT RALSTON,	JAMES GRAY,
WILLIAM MEREDITH,	PETER HILL,
ALEXANDER HENRY,	L. P. GEBHARD, M. D.
Rev. G. R. LIVINGSTON,	SAMUEL D. BREED,
SOLOMON ALLEN,	W. GARRIGUES, Jun.
JAMES TAYLOR,	CHARLES D. MEIGS, M. D.
COLEMAN SELLERS,	MATHEW CAREY.
ANDREW BAYARD,	

Philadelphia, June 10, 1830.”

† A similar statement has been signed by a number of ladies in New York and Baltimore

Those incumbered with children, or in indifferent health, or inexpert, cannot make more than six or seven. They are, moreover, as I have already stated, very partially employed. But laying aside all the various disadvantages and drawbacks, and placing the circumstances in the most favourable point of light, let us consider the case of a woman in perfect health, without children, and with uninterrupted employment; and see the result of her painful labours, and how little attention is paid to the awful denunciation against those that “*grind the faces of the poor.*” Allowing nine shirts per week, at 12½ cents, and constant, uninterrupted employment, let us view the appalling result.

9 shirts per week = 1.12½.	- - - - -	Per annum,	-	\$58 50
Rent at 50 cents,	- - - - -			26 00
Shoes and clothes, suppose,	- - - - -			10 00
Fuel per week, say 15 cents,	- - - - -			7 80
Soap, candles, &c., 8 cents,	- - - - -			4 16
Remain for food and drink 20 cents per week, or about 2¾ cents per day!!!!!!				10 54
			—————	\$58 50

But suppose the woman to have one or two children; to work for ten cents, which is not below the usual average; to be a part of her time unemployed, say one day in each week; and to make, of course, six, but say seven shirts.

7 shirts, or 70 cents per week, is, per annum, - -		\$36 40
Rent, fuel, soap, candles, &c. as before, -		\$47 96
Deficit, - - - - -		11 56
		————— \$36 40

Here is no declamation; no pathetic appeal; no solemn invocation, to arouse the dormant feelings of humanity. It is all a plain statement of harrowing facts, that defy the severest scrutiny. It exhibits a state of suffering which, I had almost said, cries to heaven for vengeance.

In speaking of the effect on some of the unfortunate seamstresses, to drive them to licentious courses, I ought to use the strongest language the subject would admit of, in order to make a deep impression on the reader, somewhat commensurate with the magnitude of the evil, and the enormity of the oppression under which they groan. A due consideration of their actual situation, and the gloomy prospects before them, would lead, *a priori*, to anticipate such a deplorable and fatal result. Beset on one side by poverty and wretchedness, with scanty and poor fare, miserable lodgings, clothing inferior in quality and often inadequate in quantity, without the most distant hope of amelioration of condition, by a course of honest and unremitting industry; and on the other side, tempted by the allurements of present enjoyment, comfortable apartments, fine dress, with a round of pleasures: all these held out by vice and crime to entice them from the paths of virtue, is it wonderful that many of them fall victims, and enter on the “broad path that leads to destruction?” Is not the trial almost too severe for poor human nature? Let those who pass a heavy censure on them, and are ready exultingly to cry out, with the Pharisee in the gospel, “Thank God, we are not like one of these,” ponder well what might have been their conduct in similar circumstances.

But that this is too often the result does not depend on an elaborate process of reasoning, which, notwithstanding its plausibility, might lead to erroneous conclusions. We have the evidence of various citizens, whose opportunities duly qualify them to decide the question by the infallible test of facts.*

* *Extract of a letter from Dr. Van Rensselaer, of New York.*

“My profession affords me many and unpleasant opportunities of knowing the wants of those unfortunate females, who try to earn an honest subsistence by the needle, and to witness the struggles often made by honest pride and desti-

Such is the hideous, the deplorable state of a numerous and interesting portion of the population of our cities in the most prosperous country in the world! And be it noted, to the discredit of the wealthy portion of the nation, of both sexes, particularly the ladies, that this subject has for five years been pressed on the public attention, in almost every shape and form, without exciting a single efficient effort in Boston, New York, or Philadelphia—I will not say to remedy or alleviate this horrible state of things—but even to inquire into it, and ascertain whether it be or be not remediless! It is impossible to regard this apathy without exciting the utmost astonishment.

I have not lightly thrown a higher degree of censure on the ladies in this case, than on the gentlemen. It is peculiarly the cause of the former. Their sex are “ground to the earth,” and it is the proper duty and province of the ladies to stand forth in their defence. In such a holy cause of humanity, their efforts could not have failed of success. They might readily have stimulated their fathers, brothers, husbands, and cousins, to meet and devise some plan to mitigate sufferings, which drive numbers of unfortunate women to DESTRUCTION—to ruin here, and perhaps hereafter. Half the zeal, the effort that they make in other causes, not calling so loudly for their interference, would have sufficed to render the defence of those oppressed women fashionable. But they have looked on with calm indifference. Application on the subject has been made in Philadelphia and New York, personally or by letter, to above fifty ladies in each city; and every one of them expressed deep sympathy for the sufferers, but the sympathy has been barren and unproductive.

I will now take the case of a city labourer, whose wages average about 75 cents per day through the year, when employed; and suppose him to lose only eight weeks in the year by sickness and want of employment. Let

tution. *I could cite many instances of young, and even middle-aged women, who have been ‘lost to virtue’ apparently by no other cause than the lowness of wages, and THE ABSOLUTE IMPOSSIBILITY OF PROCURING THE NECESSARIES OF LIFE BY HONEST INDUSTRY.*”

“MY DEAR SIR,

New York, 5th April, 1830.

“The subject of conversation at our last interview is one of great importance in every well-regulated community, and cannot fail to interest every benevolent mind. I mean the inadequate price usually paid for female labour, particularly to poor widows who are burdened with small children. It is a subject which ought to arouse the feelings of every philanthropist: for I have no hesitation in saying, from my own observation, as one of the acting magistrates of this city, that *no inconsiderable portion of female distress and FEMALE DEPRAVITY* is to be attributed to the very scanty remuneration they receive for honest industry. I hope, therefore, most sincerely, that your unceasing efforts in the cause you have so disinterestedly espoused, will be crowned with ultimate success.

“Yours, sincerely,

“MR. CAREY.

“JOHN W. WYMAN.”

Extract of a letter from the Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, D. D.

“From intimate acquaintance with many of the industrious poor, for eighteen years past, both in New York and in this city, I am constrained to say, that your remarks concerning the inadequate payment which females receive for their labour, are just, and ought deeply to affect every benevolent person, who has any wish to do justly, and see honest industry suitably rewarded. *A common slave, in the states of Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, is much better compensated for his labour, by his necessary, food, clothing, lodging, and medicines, than many respectable mothers and daughters in this city, who apply themselves diligently to their work, two hours for every one occupied by the negro in his master’s service.* Your remarks will apply to the folding and stitching of books, to the sewing of carpet rags, to the binding of shoes, * * * no less than to the work done for the army and navy.”

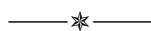
us to see the result, and how far he is from being able to save wherewith to meet the casualties of sickness and want of employment.

44 weeks, at \$4.50,	- - - - -	\$198 00
Shoes and clothing for self and wife,	- - -	24 00
For two children, at \$8 each,	- - -	16 00
Rent, 50 cents per week,	- - - - -	26 00
Soap, candles, &c. at 8 cents per week,	- -	4 16
Fuel, at 15 cents per week,	- - - - -	7 80
Bread, meat, drink, vegetables, &c. for self, wife, and two children, at 8 cents each per day,		116 68
	—————	\$194 64

This is a sample of a large class, whom citizens, wallowing in wealth and enjoying all the luxuries of life, vituperate for not saving enough when employed, wherewith to support themselves during hard winters and times of sickness!!! And let it be observed, that this calculation is for two children, whereas some of those persons have four or five.

There are, I believe, some journeymen in Philadelphia whose wages do not much, if any thing, exceed four dollars and a half a week.

Philadelphia, June 28, 1833.



ESSAY V.

BUT we are gravely told, that some of the seamstresses ought to go to service—that servants are scarce; if they would condescend to fill that station, they might have comfortable homes, abundance of good food, light labour, and high wages.

That there maybe found some individuals among those oppressed women who might go to service, and whom a false pride prevents from taking that course, I admit. But on a careful inquiry of the Matron of the Provident Society, and of the Managers of the Female Hospitable Society, I am persuaded the number is small, and bears but a slight proportion to the whole number of the seamstresses. There is among them a large proportion of aged widows, who are wholly unfit for service, and many young widows, with two or three small children, who are as dear to them, as theirs are to the rich; whom, of course, they cannot bear to part with; and whom their wages, as servants, would not support at nurse.

Extract of a letter from Mrs. Margaret Silver, Secretary of the Female Hospitable Society.

“Philadelphia, Jan. 5, 1832.

“On consulting with the Managers of the Female Hospitable Society, we have concluded from the experience which twenty-three years have given us, to return the following answers to your queries:—

1. The number of women who apply for work in the winter season, is, on an average, five hundred.
2. As to persons among them fit for house-maids, or service in families, not one in fifty.
3. As to the number of widows, the proportion is as seventy-five to an hundred; the remainder, chiefly wives deserted by their husbands, or whose husbands do nothing for the maintenance of their children, who are too young to do any thing for themselves.
4. As to aged females, one half are of that class, and one fifth of the whole infirm.

Yours, &c.

MR. M. CAREY

MARGARET SILVER, *Secretary.*”

Extract of a letter from Mrs. Queen, Matron of the Philadelphia Provident Society.

“SIR,—As far as I can judge, from what the women told me last winter, I should think that *at least six hundred of them were widows. At least two thirds of them said they had children to support.* The recompense they received

averaged about fifty cents per week, while they took out work. Few of them lived in the city. The greater part of them came from Kensington, Northern Liberties, and Southwark.”

“MR. M. CAREY.”

The pernicious consequences of the inadequate wages paid the women of the classes in question, is strikingly displayed by the state of the out-door paupers in the city of Philadelphia, in 1830. Of 498 females, there were,

Seamstresses,	- - - -	142
Washerwomen,	- - - -	62
Spoolers,	- - - -	28
Shoe-binders,	- - - -	10
	————	242

Being nearly one half of the whole number. There were 406 widows.

It may excite wonder how the seamstresses, spoolers, &c., are able to support human nature, as their rent absorbs above two-fifths of their miserable earnings. The fact is, they generally contrive to raise their rent by begging from benevolent citizens, and of course their paltry earnings go to furnish food and clothing.

I stated that there are two honourable exceptions to the low rate of wages paid to seamstresses. They are entitled to a high degree of applause, and are worthy examples, which ought to be generally followed. The one is “the Female Hospitable Society of Philadelphia,” the other “the Impartial Humane Society of Baltimore.” The former, although its resources are very slender, too slender considering its usefulness, has uniformly paid. 18¾ cents for making shirts and duck pantaloons, and in the same proportion for other articles. The scale of prices of the latter is as follows:

	<i>cents.</i>		<i>cents.</i>
Linen shirts, - - - -	75 to 87½	Gentlemen’s shams, - - - -	18¾ to 50
Gentlemen’s pantaloons, - -	62½ to 75	Children’s suits of clothes, - - - -	50 to 87½
Roundabouts, - - - -	75	Do. cloaks, - - - -	62½
Linen collars, - - - -	10	Do. mittens, - - - -	10 to 12½
Unbleached cotton shirts, large, -	25	Women and children’s aprons, - - - -	6¼ to 31½
Do. do. small, 12½ to 18¾		Women’s plain dresses, - - - -	43¾ to 50
Bleached do. large, -	31¼	Bonnets, - - - -	25 to 75
Do. do. small, -	25		

All other articles in proportion.

It is deeply to be regretted that in such a wealthy and public-spirited city as Baltimore, this institution has but three hundred subscribers,* although the subscription is but one dollar per annum; whereas for so glorious an object as rescuing such numbers of interesting females from penury and distress, and all their demoralizing consequences, had the annual subscription been five dollars, there ought to have been one thousand subscribers.

The following is the list of prices paid by the Female Hospitable Society of Philadelphia: †

* This fact must excite a high degree of astonishment and regret. There are in Baltimore citizens whose liberality may, in some cases, vie with the illustrious examples set in Boston, which stands pre-eminent above any other city in the world (London perhaps excepted) for displays of munificence on the most magnificent scale. That citizens of such a calibre should overlook the claims of this noble institution—should not make a liberal provision for it, so as to place it on high ground, and to enable it to extend its usefulness to a degree commensurate with the demand upon it, can only arise from its merits not having attracted a due degree of attention. I venture to hope that this state of things will not be allowed to exist much longer, and that the institution will have in future that degree of support to which it is fairly entitled.

† The observations made in the preceding note respecting the Impartial Hospitable Society of Baltimore apply with equal force to this Society. Its objects, and views, and merits, are the same. Too much praise cannot be awarded to Mrs. Snyder and Mrs. Silver, who have devoted many years to this institution, and contributed largely to its success.

	<i>cents.</i>		<i>cents.</i>
Fine linen shirts, - - - -	50	Drawers and duck pantaloons, - -	18¾
Next quality do. - - - -	40	Check shirts, - - - - - - - -	16
Fine muslin do. - - - -	40	Flannel, do. - - - - - - - -	14
Next quality do. - - - -	37½	Collars, separate from the shirt,	6¼, 8, 12 ½
Next quality do. - - - -	31¼	Quilting, - - - - - - - -	.75 to 1.25
Common muslin shirts, - -	25	Comfortables, according to the size, from	
Coarse unbleached do. - -	18¾	\$2 to 2.50 and \$3.	
Boys' shirts, - - - -	18¾	Bed-quilts, do. do.	

The case of the spoolers is at least as hard, and their sufferings as great, as those of the seamstresses. By no degree of industry and skill can they earn in summer more than a dollar and a quarter, or a dollar in winter; and during the latter season, they are, for the most part, employed but half their time.

Philadelphia, July 1, 1833.



ESSAY VI.

IV. The fourth position which I undertook to controvert, is, that

“ Taxes for the support of the poor, and aid afforded them by benevolent societies and charitable individuals, are pernicious; as, by encouraging the poor to depend on them, they foster their idleness and improvidence, and thus produce, or at least increase, the poverty and distress they are intended to relieve.”

If I have proved, as I hope I have, satisfactorily, that there are classes of people, male and female, whose dependence is on their hands for support, and whose wages, when fully employed, are not more than sufficient for that purpose; that when unemployed, they must be reduced to penury and want; and that there are classes of females, whose wages are inadequate for their support, even when constantly employed; it follows, of course, that the poor rates, the aid of benevolent societies, &c., far from producing the pernicious effects ascribed to them, are imperiously necessary, and that without them, numbers would, as I have stated, actually perish of want, or would have recourse to mendicity; and mendicants impose a far heavier tax on a community than the same number of paupers supported by poor rates. The support of 549 out-door paupers of Philadelphia, in 1830, averaged 46¼ cents per week—or less than 7 cents per day. Some of them received only a quarter of a dollar a week. I submit a statement of the whole number, with the pittance they respectively received:—

42	a	25 cents.
2	a	31¼
186	a	37½
259	a	50
17	a	62½
42	a	75
1	a	100
<hr style="width: 10%; margin-left: 0;"/>		
549		

If these had been strolling mendicants, as, by the abrogation of the poor laws, and the annihilation of benevolent societies, they would have become, the average, instead of seven cents per day, would more probably have been 25 or 30 cents; thus increasing the burdens on the community three or four fold. Many of them, with a woe-begone appearance, whether real or fictitious, calculated to excite sympathy, would probably have realized 50 cents, and often a dollar a day.

Those of our fellow-citizens who complain of the oppression of our poor laws, will learn with surprise, that of the 549 out-door paupers, there were no less than 390 above 60 years of age, and

no less than 390 above 60 years of age, and 6 above 100. Almost all of these were in a state of superannuation, 50 of them were blind, and 406 of the whole number, as I have already stated, were widows. I annex a statement of their respective ages.

Between 10 and 20	4	
20 and 30	26	
30 and 40	42	
40 and 50	40	
50 and 60	47	
		———— 159
60 and 70	154	
70 and 80	161	
80 and 90	60	
90 and 100	9	
Upwards of 100	6	
		———— 390
		———— 549 *

Of the whole number, 381 had 935 children, of whom 372 were at home with their parents. I have been unable to procure a statement of the ages or characters of the tenants of our almshouse—but presume that they were somewhat similar to those of the out-door paupers.†

Philadelphia, July 4, 1833.

———— * ————

ESSAY VII.

THE question of the most eligible mode of supporting the poor, whether by statutory provision, or by voluntary contributions of individuals, has created a great diversity of opinions in Great Britain—opinions advocated with the utmost zeal and ardour, and with considerable talents, on both sides. On one side, a powerful party, at the head of which at present are the editors of the *Edinburgh Review* (formerly Mr. Malthus), is in favour of a total abolition, as speedily as possible, of the system of statutory provision. The other party, headed by the editors of the *Quarterly Review*, maintains, that all the evils of which the complaints are so loud and general, are the result of the abuse of the system. The subject is deeply interesting, both as regards the payers and

* Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania, vol. vi. p. 266.

† The following extract from the presentment of the Grand Jury of the Mayor's Court for the June session for 1833, exhibits a degree of wretchedness of which few of our citizens have any idea. It fully establishes the necessity of the interference of benevolent associations and charitable individuals, to relieve such severe suffering, and ought to make those persons blush, who, enjoying the good things of the world, involve the poor in an indiscriminate mass of obloquy; unjustly charge all their misery to intemperance and other vices; and, decrying those associations, avert, as far as in them lies, the current of charity in its course to their support. Think of the miseries of six families in one small house, destitute of the most essential conveniences! Let it be eternally borne in mind, that if intemperance and other vices produce poverty on the one hand—poverty, degrading and remediless poverty on the other, as often produces recklessness, intemperance, and their baleful concomitants.

“3d. The block of buildings bounded by Vine and Sassafras and Water and Front streets, the Inquest are of opinion, presents a nuisance of a very serious nature, and which may prove detrimental to the public health. *There are in this block 29 houses or tenements, containing 94 families, consisting of 472 individuals.* These houses generally cover all the ground belonging to the premises: in many of them are residing six families each! and they have not the convenience of a privy, nor a situation in which one could be placed! they are almost without ventilation: the tenants are compelled to use vessels of various kinds, which are emptied either into the streets and gutters, or into the neighbouring docks!”

the recipients, and demands to be soberly and calmly and candidly discussed, uninfluenced by the names or standing of the advocates, or by previous prejudices, however great.

The investigation may at present be prosecuted with more advantage than at any former period. The British parliament some time since appointed a commission, composed of the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Chester, Messrs. W. J. Bourne, Nassau W. Senior, Henry Bishop, Henry Gawler, and W. Coulson, to investigate the subject thoroughly. They addressed pertinent queries to the different overseers of the poor, and the magistrates throughout the kingdom; the responses to which shed a flood of light on the subject, and dispelled the clouds of darkness and delusion under which it has been obscured.

Copies of a digest of the information thus collected, published so late as last March, have been forwarded to this country to different individuals, with a desire of ascertaining the nature of our system for the support of the poor. Of this publication, the most authentic and conclusive that has appeared, on the subject, I shall principally avail myself in the following view of it.

The law of the 43d Elizabeth, the result of the collected wisdom of the great statesmen by whom that queen was surrounded, was framed after various experiments. It ordered that “competent sums should be raised” [by the overseers of the poor] “for the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other among, them being poor and unable to work; and that the able-bodied, idle vagrants should be compelled to labour for their support. This law, which is marked by the strongest features of enlightened humanity and sound policy, has been in operation above two hundred years, and has undergone various alterations—some, obvious improvements—others, deteriorations; but the frame-work of it remains as originally enacted. I will state the main objections alleged against such a system. It is asserted by the editors of the *Edinburgh Review*—

1. That the necessary and inevitable consequence of a statutory provision for the poor, is, to increase regularly and oppressively the amount of the burdens, as has been the case for some years in England.

2. That it encourages imprudent and improvident marriages, and of course produces the distress it professes to relieve, and multiplies a pauper population.

3. That it destroys, or at least impairs, the stimulus to industry, by insuring a support to the idle and vicious, equal to what honest industry can acquire by useful labour.

Were these objections well founded, they would unquestionably give irresistible force to the loud call that prevails for the abolition of a system pregnant with such baleful consequences. But I hope to prove, by the most unquestionable evidence, that the evils complained of are solely the result of the most flagrant, barefaced, and corrupt abuses, such as are perhaps without parallel in any other country in the world. Let it be observed, that I should not here trespass on the public with this subject, but that the opinions of the *Edinburgh Review* are spreading in this country, and are advocated by some of our best citizens. The Rev. Mr. Tuckerman, author of a Report to the Legislature of Massachusetts, and W. M. Meredith, Esq., author of an elaborate one to the Legislature of Pennsylvania on this subject, both decidedly concur in ascribing the worst consequences to a legal provision for the poor, and deprecate its continuance. These opinions are gaining ground, and therefore it is highly proper to bring them to the test of the talisman of truth and fact, so as not only to enable those who may be called to legislate on this subject, to act understandingly, but to enable the public

at large to decide between the conflicting opinions. I premise the exact words of the first objection.

“After the principle of a legal assessment has begun to be acted upon, there is no one expedient within the reach of human skill, by which the progress and increase of pauperism can be arrested.”—*E. R.** vol. xxix. 279.

This is a strong, unqualified assertion; let us see how it is borne out by facts. The earliest accounts of the amount of the English poor rates that we have, date in 1673, when they amounted to £840,000;† whereas in 1750, after a lapse of 77 years, they were reduced to about £700,000,‡ being a reduction of 16 per cent., notwithstanding the intervention of the sanguinary and expensive wars of William III., Queen Anne, George I., and part of those of George II., and the great increase of population.

On these simple facts the question might be confidently rested, so far as regards the first and most important allegation, the regular and progressive increase of pauperism, and consequently of poor rates. But we must not rely wholly on these facts; others of equal force remain, drawn, *mirabile dictu!* from the same Edinburgh Review.

“From the period [1601] when the act of the 43d of Elizabeth, the foundation of the existing code of poor laws, was promulgated, to the commencement of the late war, there had been scarcely any increase of pauperism: and FEW OR NONE OF THOSE PERNICIOUS CONSEQUENCES HAD ACTUALLY RESULTED from their operation, which we are naturally led, looking only to the principles they involve, to *suppose* they must produce.”—*E. R.* vol. xlvii. p. 304.

Thus, after assuring us that “there is no expedient within the reach of human skill to prevent the progress and increase of pauperism,” in the case of “a legal establishment for the support of the poor,” we are gravely informed that “scarcely any increase” took place for 190 years under that system!! May we not say “*ex ore tuo*” to the oracle which pronounced the former dictum? And does not this strong contrast warn us against surrendering our judgment to those self-installed judges of literature, politics, and government? Again:

“According to the official accounts, it appears that the total sum raised by assessment under the name of poor rates, in England and Wales, during the three years ending with 1750, amounted at an average to £730,135 a year, of which £689,971 were expended on the poor, BEING A MERE TRIFLE MORE THAN THE SUM EXPENDED ON THEM AT THE REVOLUTION, and about £300,000 less than the sum supposed to have been expended at the commencement of the century!”—*Idem*, p. 307.

“During the period between the termination of the American war and the commencement of the late French war, the rates were again considerably reduced.”—*E. R.* vol. lii, p. 351.

Let us go on, and “make assurance doubly sure.”

“It may safely be concluded, that the *rates were considerably lower in 1793 than in 1785*. How much this reduction might amount to, it is impossible accurately to conjecture, but at the commencement of the late war, they could hardly, one should think, exceed £1,400,000 or £1,500,000 a year.”—*E. R.* vol. xlvii, p. 318.

“*The poor rates gradually diminished during the three years ending March 25, 1821; and that year were nearly one eighth, or one million less, than in the year 1818.*”—*Q. R.* vol. xxviii, p. 357.

“Sums expended for relief of the poor: 1817, 1818, £7,890,148: 1820, 1821, £6,958,445. Total population in England and Wales:—1811, 10,502,500: 1821, 12,218,500.”—*Ibid*, note.

The Edinburgh Review, among other evils, ascribed to the operation of the poor laws, has asserted that their tendency is to increase a pauper population. Let us hear it again on the other side of the question.

“It is established by evidence which it seems to be impossible to controvert, how much soever

* *E.R.* refers to the Edinburgh Review, and *Q.R.* to the London Quarterly Review.

† Eden on the Poor Laws, vol. i. p. 189.

‡ *Idem*, p. 249.

the conclusion may be at variance with the opinions that have recently been current on the subject, that from *their institution down to a late period, the effect of the poor-laws was not to increase, but to diminish population!!!*—*E. R.* vol. xlvii. p. 314.

Here are most palpable contradictions! “Who shall decide,” not “when doctors disagree,” but when the doctor disagrees with himself?

Having fairly stated the contradictory opinions of the leading journal hostile to the poor-laws, it is but right to state the views of their advocate.

“The experience of more than two centuries has only confirmed the wisdom of the measure. *The evils that have been attributed to the poor-law are justly chargeable only to the abuses that have been locally permitted to creep into its administration.* There are few, if any persons, practically acquainted with the subject, that do not now recognise this truth.”—*Q. R.* vol. xlv. 512.

“The mischief which the poor-laws produce has arisen wholly from their mal-administration or perversion. The system itself *is humane, just, necessary, befitting a Christian state, and honourable to the English nation.*”—*Q. R.* vol. xxxvii. p. 540.

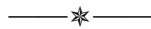
“Reflection and experience have produced a general conviction, that the principles of the poor-law of Elizabeth are consistent with the sound policy of that important reign, and cannot in the present state of things be safely departed from: and that a compulsory provision for the poor—as it originated not in abstract theory and speculation, but was resorted to from necessity, and after other measures had been repeatedly tried in vain—continues to be an indispensable obligation upon such a system of government as ours.”—*Q. R.* vol. xxviii. p. 349.

It is incredible, but nevertheless true, that the Edinburgh Review, after having distinctly admitted that for 190 years the poor-laws had not “increased pauperism, or population, or the poor rates,” to any perceivable extent, has carried its blind opposition to them to such an extreme length as to advocate the substitution of mendicity, with all its immoralities, its frauds, its impositions, its degradation! So much for a bigoted devotion to theory, in utter disregard of fact or experience.

“Those who are destitute must be relieved somehow, and must have some way of making their wants known: and therefore we see no alternative between *the allowance of mendicity, under some modification* or other, and the establishment of the very system which is now bearing so oppressively down upon the country. And we do confess, that rather than have such a system, *we would sit down under mendicity in its very worst form!* we would let it roam unrestricted and at large, as it does in France!!! We would suffer it to rise, without any control, to the height of unlicensed vagrancy, and are most thoroughly persuaded that even under such an economy, the whole poverty of the land would be disposed of at less expense to the higher orders, and with vastly less both of suffering and depravity to the lower orders of society!”—*E. R.* vol. xxix. p. 286.

What! mendicity with all its loathsomeness, and depravity, and corruption, preferable for “*the lame, the impotent, the old, the blind, and the poor unable to work,*” to having them comfortably supported at a moderate expense in poor-houses!! What next?

Philadelphia, July 8, 1833.



ESSAY VIII.

I TRUST that it fully appears from the above evidence, even that of the Edinburgh Review, the great opponent of the poor-laws of England, that those laws, so generally reprobated at present, were not for 190 years attended with any of the oppressive and disastrous consequences which have of late years attended their administration. The cause of those evils must then be sought for in something extraneous to the laws themselves, some essential difference in the mode of administration, which I shall endeavour to point out. The evils may be traced to three sources.

1. The dishonest system pursued by the manufacturers and agriculturists, whereby they combine to reduce wages below the minimum necessary for the support of those they employ, and force the overseers to make up the difference.

2. The support, by a regular weekly stipend, of masses of able-bodied men, without exacting any labour in return, and without regard to character or conduct; whereby thieves, rogues, and pickpockets are enabled to live in idleness, and enjoy in many instances more of the necessaries of life than the honest and industrious poor; thus destroying all stimuli to industry or regard to character.

3. Supporting at a heavy expense the mothers of hosts of illegitimate children; thus offering a premium to lewdness.

Of each in turn: and first, of the dishonest combination to reduce wages.

“A practice had obtained, of labourers being engaged at half or even one-third of the usual rate of wages, upon an understanding with their employers, that *the difference would be made up to them from the parochial funds.*”—*Information received from his Majesty’s Commissioners, as to the Administration of the Poor-laws*, p.163.

“The elders [a self-elected body of magistrates] of Hartland, in Devonshire, meet once in the beginning of the month, and dine at the parish expense, asking friends to dine with them. Some time after dinner, the paupers who cannot get work are brought in one by one, *are put up to auction, and the elders bid according to the value they fix upon them; the difference with what is necessary for their subsistence being made up from the rates.*”—*Idem*, p. 166.

“*By combining together, as they almost uniformly do, the farmers in agricultural parishes can reduce the rate of wages to any limit they please.* They are enabled to do this, because the parish, by granting such a supplementary allowance to the labourer as will support him and his family, prevents him from emigrating to another district, as he would most certainly do, were his employers to attempt artificially to depress his wages in a county unfettered by this system.”—*E.R.* vol. xlvii. p. 322.

“Its effect is to force the occupiers of villas, as well as shopkeepers, tradesmen, &c., or those who do not employ labourers, *to pay a portion of the wages of those who do:* and thus to place every farmer, who might be disposed to act on a more liberal system, in a relatively disadvantageous situation! The farmers are in this way led to encourage a system which *fraudulently imposes a heavy burden upon others.*”—*Ibid.*

“Instead of securing a refuge for the really destitute, the poor-laws have been perverted in the southern counties to the very worst purposes: they have been made a means of *reducing wages to the lowest level, of pauperising the whole population, and of throwing a large proportion of the expense of labour upon those who do not employ a single labourer. This perversion began in 1795.*”—*E.R.* vol. liii. p. 46.

“Persons who have no need of farm labour are *obliged to contribute to the payment of work done for others.* This must be the case wherever the labourers, necessarily employed by the farmers, receive from the parish any part of the wages, which, if not so paid, would, be paid by the farmers themselves.”—*E.R.* vol. liii. p. 50.

“And for what object are three fourths of mankind thus degraded and kept down? The immediate gain is the master’s; but that is only a temporary advantage, followed by a train of bad consequences, from which the masters and the whole community suffer.”—*E.R.* vol. xxii. p. 198.

“We have had silk-masters who have made rapid fortunes by giving their men low wages, and *driving them on the parish for the rest of their means of subsistence.*”—*Commissioners’ Report on the Poor-laws*, p. 277.

“Wherever this pernicious system has been fully matured, it has, as might have been anticipated, produced an entire revolution in the manners and habits of the working classes. Every incentive to individual exertion it has abolished; every motive of sobriety, steadiness, honesty, it has utterly destroyed. Among them exists no longer any anxiety about the interests of their employer, or any regard for their own character: for what motive is there to induce a labourer to work hard, when he is aware that he will be paid, not in proportion to the quantity of work done by him, but according to a general standard established in the parish?”—*Q.R.* vol. xxxiii. p. 449.

Next, of the support by the overseers of the idle, the lazy, the worthless, of thieves, and able-bodied rogues and vagabonds.

“The assistant-overseer and the other parish officer, allowed, that *no attention whatever was ever paid to character*; but that that the most notorious drunkards, swearers, and thieves, with wives and families, were all duly relieved by the arithmetic of the magistrates’ scale. I asked them, if they never took these men before the bench for punishment. Their answer was, that they had so often been reprimanded, and triumphed over, (to use their own expression), that they had given it up in despair, and *relieved all alike, bad and good, meritorious and profligate.*”—*Commissioners’ Report*, p. 108.

“The *greatest thief in the parish has the magistrate’s allowance; the honest but unfortunate, get nothing more.*”—*Idem*, p. 9.

“Being secure of good wages for mere nominal work, the ill-disposed and idle *throw themselves wilfully on the parish*; the effect is most ruinous on the small householders, who, being already on the verge of pauperism, may be converted, by a slight addition to their burden, from payers to receivers of rates.”—*Idem*, p. 15.

“In the month of December, 1832, four healthy young men, receiving from 12s. to 14s. per week from the parish, refused to work at thrashing for a farmer, at 2s. 6d. and a quart of ale per day; and the only punishment inflicted on them by the parish officers, *was taking off half a day’s pay, 1s.!!* at the same time, *a poor widow, aged 75, could obtain but 1s. per week for her support from the vestry!!*”—*Idem*, p. 16.

“Out-door paupers have nearly the same amount of wages allowed them *without work, that could have been obtained by independent labourers by hard work*; the pauper having in addition to the money payments, frequent allowances of clothes from the parish, and payments on account of rent, and ‘other advantages!’”—*Idem*, p. 218.

“A man lately married a girl, who left her place for that purpose on Wednesday. They applied for relief on the Saturday. It will appear from the scale, that, *on marriage there is an immediate increase of 3s. per week.*”—*Idem*, p. 3.

“There is a butcher who occupies, I think, 20 acres of land, who has five or six cows and a horse. A son of this butcher, an able-bodied man, is constantly on the parish.”—*Idem*, p. 84.

“So long as this continues a parish of its present *small extent, with its present number of poor*, the property must be *an encumbrance to the proprietor*; for he can expect no rent, *the rates assessed upon the land far exceeding its value*, amounting, as they last year have done, to *more than 32s. in the pound at rack rent.*”—*Idem*, p. 88.

“Of this population [6468] there were 420 able-bodied persons receiving relief, 360 were regular, and 60 casual. A short time since, *1000 persons were receiving relief.*”—*Idem*, p. 186.

“The English peasant no longer looks on parish relief as a degradation: such a feeling is extinct.”—*Idem*, p. 200.

“Mr. Cliff, the assistant-overseer of Burghfield parish, stated: ‘Whilst the allowance system went on, it was a common thing for young people to come to me for parish relief two or three days after they were married: nay, *I have had them come to me just as they came out of the church, and apply to me for a loaf of bread to eat, and for a bed to lie on that night!!*’”—*Idem*, p. 236.

“A woman says she was not bred up to work, and *won’t work*; she does not even choose to knit; and during the last month she received 6s., 4s., 4s., and 3s. in the four weeks, week by week.”—*Idem*, p. 121.

“Those labourers who have families, say, ‘We can get 10s. or 12s. per week from the parish; why should we slave ourselves for this sum?’”—*Idem*, p. 123.

“This system secures subsistence to all; to the idle as well as to the industrious; to the profligate as well as to the sober; and, *as far as human interests are concerned, all inducements to obtain a good character are taken away.*”—*E.R.* vol. xlvii. p. 321.

Under the third head, the encouragement afforded to the mothers of illegitimate children, the following disgusting facts are abundantly sufficient.*

“A woman of Swaffham was reproached by the magistrate with the burdens that she had brought upon the parish,

* I had strong doubts about the propriety of publishing the odious, offensive, and immoral statements under this head; and should have pretermitted them, but that it would be doing manifest injustice to the argument. The clamour against the poor laws arises wholly from a want of discrimination between their proper administration and their abuse. It is therefore imperiously necessary to display, in their utter deformity, the monstrous abuses by which a charitable, benevolent, and sagacious system has, after a period of 190 years’ admirable administration, been degraded, dishonoured, and rendered so unpopular as to create a loud outcry for its abolition.

upon the occasion of her appearing before him to present the parish with *her seventh bastard!* She replied, 'I am not going to be disappointed in my company with men to save the parish.' This woman *now receives 14s. a week for her seven bastards, being two shillings a head for each.* Mr. Sewell informed me that had she been a widow, with seven legitimate children, she would not have received so much by 4s. or 5s. a week, according to their scale of allowance to widows. *A bastard child is thus about twenty-five per cent. more valuable to a parent than a legitimate one!!!*"—*Commissioners' Report*, p. 393.

"One woman named Smith has three children by three different fathers. She has never been punished, and the parish allows her 6s. per week. Women are very rarely punished; has only known one or two instances in his memory of the parish. *Bastards very common.*"—*Idem*, p. 394.

"An unmarried girl, upon leaving the workhouse after her fourth confinement, said to the master, 'Well, if I have the good luck to have another child, I shall draw a good sum from the parish, and with what I can earn myself, will be better off than any married woman in the parish.'"—*Idem*, p. 395.

"Bastardy is very much increasing in Badford; believes that one third of all the number applying to the parish, old and young, are bastards."—*Idem*, p. 396.

"Is bastardy pretty much the same in your parish as in the rest of the county?—Yes; very bad. *There are two women who have four children each, and each by three different fathers.* The order on the father varies, from 1s. 6d. to 3s. 6d., according to his circumstances. *But the women extort money by threatening to swear the child first to one, then to another.*"—*Idem*, p. 385.

"In the first place, I appeal to the experience of all overseers in rural districts, whether the *instances of marriages taking place among the labouring classes, without previous pregnancy, are not so very rare as to constitute no exception to the general assertion, that PREGNANCY PRECEDES marriage.*"—*Idem*, p. 392.

"There are twenty-five bastards supported by the parish at 1s. 6d. per week."—*Idem*, p. 105.

"There are at the present time eleven bastards on the weekly list. The parish receives for two only.

"It is well known that for from £3 to £4, and a treat, many men consent to be sworn to as the fathers of illegitimate children, knowing that the parish *cannot enforce payment against them*, and that, generally speaking, *it will not be attempted.*"—*Idem*, p. 122.

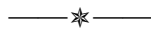
"Nine out of ten of the orders of removal which the parish receives, are cases of bastardy. Mr. Barnet knows whole families in the town which are bastards from generation to generation. He has observed that magistrates generally favour the mothers of bastards in their complaints against overseers."—*Idem*, p. 397.

"The English law has abolished female chastity, self-respect, proper pride, and all the charities of domestic life, derived from and connected with its existence. It has destroyed, likewise, the beneficial influence which this virtue in women reflects on the character of men."—*Idem*, p. 399.

"In referring to the printed lists, it will be observed, that out of sixty illegitimate children, the allowance from the father is only recovered for twelve."—*Idem*, p. 403.

"A woman has brought three illegitimate children on the parish, and for the last she was committed to prison for three weeks. She told the vestry that she would, if put to jail again, *swear the child to the overseer*: she is now pregnant a fourth time. This same individual says openly to the vestry, 'If you don't give me some relief (enough, in fact, to support her in idleness), *I will bring you some more bastards to keep.*'"—*Idem*, p. 122.

Philadelphia, July 10, 1833.



ESSAY IX.

Is it wonderful that pauperism, profligacy, and other evils, together with poor rates, have rapidly increased under such a hideous system of mismanagement! And is it not unaccountable that such an enlightened nation as England should have for nearly forty years submitted to it without serious, and decisive efforts to free themselves from it, before it had arisen to its present alarming and oppressive height?

It remains to ascertain whether or not the evils are remediless, and if not, what are the remedies?

Fortunately, on this important point we are not left to mere speculation or theory. The experiment has been tried in several parishes in England, and found completely successful: and it is unnecessary to observe, that a remedy found effectual in one disorder, bids fair to be equally so in all disorders of an exactly similar type. The remedy is an asylum, where *labour will be found for the able-bodied, and support refused but in return for labour*. This has in many parishes diminished the applications for relief, and the poor rates 20, 30, 40, and in some, 60 per cent.

The principal means of effecting the reformation has been the abolition of the interference of the magistrates, who, strange to say, in almost every instance when the paupers appealed from the overseers, decided in favour of the appellants, although in most instances wholly unacquainted with the merits or demerits of the case, which the overseers had properly investigated. This shocking procedure was so uniform, that the overseers found themselves generally forced to comply with the demands of the paupers, often obstreperously and impudently preferred. Select vestries with final jurisdiction have been appointed in many of the parishes, and have in every instance produced the most salutary reformation.

“Some time ago, for instance, we had a lot of granite broken: there were not above 20 per cent. of the men who began the work, who remained to work at all; there were not above 2 per cent. who remained the whole of the time during which the work lasted!!”—*Report of Commissioners on Poor-laws*, p. 209.

“In June, 1821, a select vestry was formed: and although they had to clear off a debt of £300, they speedily effected a great reduction of the rates. The cases were all investigated respectively, and the relief adjusted by judgment of the vestry. *The expenditure, which according to the parliamentary returns, was £720 in 1819–20, was reduced to £347 in 1822–23, and to £216 in 1828–29.*”—*Idem*, p. 369.

“In Swallowfield, where it was partially effected, the rates were reduced from 9s. and 10s. in the pound to 5s. 8d., and during the last year to 3s. 8d. in the pound.”—*Idem*, p. 337.

“The able-bodied applicants for parochial relief increased in such numbers, that it has recently been found necessary to recur to the use of the stone-yard to stem the influx: *900 of the applicants for relief were set to work; only 85 have continued at work!!!*”—*Idem*, p. 210.

“He cited the cases of nine families who had applied for relief; but had refused it when they were told they would be removed” [to the workhouse.] ‘Six of these families,’ he said, had not only been saved from pauperism, but they were now *in a better situation than he had ever before known them to be in.*”—*Idem*, p. 208.

“The interference of the magistrates is unknown. The present acting guardian took on himself the management in 1815. In four years *he reduced the expenditure £2,600*; and though the population has nearly doubled since that period, the rates have never exceeded what they were after that reduction.”—*Idem*, p. 106.

“The parish officers of St. James’s, Westminster, state, that ‘on one occasion, in the month of November last, upwards of 50 paupers were offered admission into the work-house, in lieu of giving them out-door relief; and that of that number *only four accepted the offer*;’ and that ‘since then, the same system has been pursued in a number of instances, and *attended with a similar result.*’”—*Idem*, p. 214.

“All the lazy, profligate, and disorderly part of the community, necessarily entertain the greatest possible disinclination to the hard labour and severe discipline enforced in every well-conducted workhouse.”—*E.R.* vol. xlvii. p. 308.

“The real use of a workhouse, is to be an asylum for the able-bodied poor; for the maimed and impotent poor may, speaking generally, be more advantageously provided for elsewhere; but it ought to be such an asylum as will not be resorted to, except by those who have no other resource, and who are wholly without the means of supporting themselves.”—*Ibid.*

“From the year 1821 to 1826, the average assessment was £3500 per annum; from 1826 to 1831, the average has been £1800. The population in 1821 was 5317; in 1831 it had increased to 6341; thus exhibiting decreasing rates with an increasing population.”—*Commissioners’ Report*, p. 189.

“Previous to the establishment of this house, the average rates of the parish or Shardlow were £570; since that period they have been reduced full one third. In the year ending 1832 they were £344. 2s. The population in 1811 was 750; in 1831, 1091.”—*Idem*, p. 193.

“Have you refused applicants relief unless they went into the house?—Yes; and a large portion decline going into it, *and we get rid of them.*”—*Idem*, p. 205.

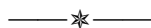
“The old system attracted vagabonds to the parish who have now left us, and kept many in idleness, which led to pilfering. Some of these people I now see at work in the parish. *The change, I am sure, has benefited the people themselves*, for they would commonly spend two or three hours to get a sixpence in charity, rather than give an hour’s labour to obtain the same sixpence.”—*Idem*, p. 268.

“What number of undeserving cases did you get rid of, in consequence of this alteration and of your investigations? About 150 as an immediate consequence of this alteration; but, all together, including the clearing of the workhouse (with which the magistrates had nothing to do), *we got rid of about 500 in the course of two years.*”—*Ibid.*

“Very great numbers of lazy people, rather than submit to the confinement and labour of the workhouse, are content to throw off the mask, and *maintain themselves by their own industry.* And this was so remarkable here, at Maidstone, that when our workhouse finished, and public notice given that all who came to demand their weekly pay should be immediately sent thither, *little more than half the poor upon the list came to the overseers to receive their allowance.*”—*Idem*, p. 328.

“About ten or eleven years since, the officers of the town of Maidstone were induced, from the great cost of the poor (which had increased, I think, to 7*s.* or 8*s.* per week each), to set on foot some inquiries. The result was, that the officers reduced the diet: and after enforcing the alteration for about two months, they contracted with a person to keep the poor for about 3*s.* 3*d.* per head. They have continued the contracting system ever since.”—*Idem*, p. 329.

“In the instances of individuals, as well as in several whole parishes, wherever the influence of the present system has been removed, the rise of the condition of the people has been proportionate to the removal of that influence, or their previous depression. In Cookham, where the change was most extensive, the parochial expenditure was reduced from £3133 to £1155, and the general condition of the labouring classes improved.”—*Idem*, p. 337.



Have I not produced a superabundance of proofs, that for 190 years the operation of the poor-laws in England was beneficent and salutary; that the most enormous abuses have prevailed in their administration for nearly 40 years; that those abuses satisfactorily account for a large and oppressive increase of the poor rates; and that a universal rule to afford no relief to able-bodied men but for labour performed, the more severe the better, would apply a remedy to the great mass of the abuses? When men who do not employ labourers, are obliged to pay a portion of the earnings of those employed by their neighbours—when thieves and robbers are supported at the public expense—when prostitutes with illegitimate children receive larger allowance from the overseers of the poor than honest widows with their legitimate offspring—when able-bodied men, refusing to work, are supported with weekly stipends, equal to the wages of honest industry, can we be surprised at the enormous increase of the poor rates? Can any thing be more unfair or illogical than to charge these hideous abuses of the laws to the laws themselves? And is it not certain, that the introduction into every parish in the kingdom of such reforms as have taken place in Maidstone, Cookham, &c. &c., (whereby the rates were reduced 30, 40, and in some cases 60 per cent., although the population had increased, and the condition of the poorer classes was improved,) would produce a great reduction of the rates, and a melioration of the state of society throughout the kingdom?

Philadelphia, July 13, 1833.

ESSAY IX.

It is to be observed, that a cause has been steadily and powerfully operating to increase the poor rates, wholly independent of the multifarious abuses above specified. I mean the rapid and oppressive reduction of wages, consequent on the wonderful improvements in machinery. Manual labour succumbs in the conflict with steam and water power: and as three-fourths of mankind depend on the labour of their hands for a support; and further, as at the best of times there is always a superabundance of labour in the market, every thing that supersedes the demand for that labour must increase competition; lower wages; produce distress; and, to the same extent, increase the poor rates.

Mr. Brougham has published an elaborate work on the advantages of the improvement of machinery.* But unhappily for his argument, he introduces in the very first page a powerful fact which fully proves that the advantages, admitting them to the full extent that he contends for, are accompanied by a mass of suffering that fully counterbalances all the good with which they are pregnant. He states that a certain Jos. Foster, a working weaver of Glasgow, being examined on the subject of wages, in 1827, by a committee of the British House of Commons, declared:

“That he and many others, who had formed themselves into a society, were in great distress; that numbers of them worked at the hand-loom FROM EIGHTEEN TO NINETEEN HOURS A DAY; that THEIR EARNINGS, AT THE UTMOST, DID NOT AMOUNT TO MORE THAN SEVEN SHILLINGS A WEEK; and that sometimes *they were as low as four shillings*. That twenty years before that time, *they could readily earn a pound a week* by the same industry: and that as *power-loom weaving had increased, the distress of the hand-weavers had also increased in the same proportion.*”

Here is an overwhelming fact on this subject, which must puzzle the Malthuses, the Seniors, the Editors of the Edinburgh Review, and all those who so loudly declaim against poor-rates.

A large body of men, earning, as Foster says, twenty shillings a week in 1807, and gradually reduced to seven, six, or four shillings, in 20 years, might in the early period have been not only able to support themselves comfortably, but to save, in a few years, money enough to commence business on a small scale: whereas in process of time they would be reduced, step by step, to absolute pauperism, unable to support their families, and obliged to rely on eleemosynary aid, public or private. And let it be observed, that this is not a solitary case. The reduction has extended, in a greater or less degree, to almost every branch into which machinery has been introduced.†

* “The notion, that it can be nationally profitable to save the employment of labour by improvements in machinery, when *those whose labour is thus supplanted, must be supported in idleness, at the public expense*, is as irrational as it would be for the owner of a pair of carriage-horses, who is obliged by law, or the will under which he inherits, to keep them on good provender in his stable, *to attempt to save money by setting up a steam coach.*”—*Q. R.* vol. xliii. p. 257.

† The effect of machinery to increase the poor rates is obvious from the following tables, by which it appears that the latter have increased, *pari passu*, with the increase of the former.

The spinning Jenny was invented by Hargreaves, in	1767
Arkwright’s machine, worked by horse power, was invented in	1769
put in motion by water, in	1771
The mule Jenny, worked by hand, was invented by Crompton in	1775
Wm. Kelly applied machinery to it in	1792

It is obvious that the war of machinery upon manual labour was not confined to the cotton and woollen branches,

“The hand-loom weavers are very numerous [in Burnley.] They weave coarse calicoes, and are not able to earn more than five shillings per week.”—*Report of Commissioners on the Poor-laws*, p. 368.

“The wages of the manufacturing people were necessarily so low that *from the most laborious exertions they could hardly procure a subsistence; between six and seven shillings being the extreme weekly earnings of an industrious man; and he must work fourteen hours a day to get that sum.* Mr. May, a master manufacturer, stated that he had known the time when a stockinger could earn one pound sterling per week.”—*Idem*, p. 185.

“The price of wheat, according to the account kept at Eton College, during the first mentioned years, (1767, 1768, 1770,) was 51s. a quarter; and during 1810, 1811, its price was 110s., being a rise of 115 per cent: and Mr. Young estimates that butchers’ meat had in the same period risen 146, butter 140, and cheese 153 per cent: being on an average, a rise of 138½ per cent: so that wages, as compared with these articles, had DECLINED in the interval considerably more than one *third*, or 38½ per cent. And if the increased cost of tea, sugar, beer, leather, &c., besides the house-duty and window-tax, had been taken into account, the diminished power of the labourer over the necessaries and comforts of life would have appeared still greater.”—*E.R.* vol. xxxiii. p. 173.

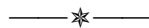
“How then can we be surprised at the excess of poverty and misery which has been experienced since the peace?”—*Ibid.*

“The poor rates have existed more than two centuries, and they incontestibly prove the condition of the day labourer to be worse at present than at any former time during that period. This, too, should be remembered, that the condition of the middle ranks has been materially improved meanwhile: their comforts, their luxuries, their importance have been augmented ten-fold: their intellectual enjoyments have been enlarged and multiplied; the situation of the poor would be relatively worse, if they had only remained stationary, without receiving a proportional increase of comforts: but this has not been the case,—it is absolutely worse. *The same quantity of labour will no longer procure the same quantity of the necessaries of life.*”—*Q.R.* vol. xv. p. 195.

“In many parishes of Kent, Suffolk, Bedford, Essex, Norfolk, &c. wages were in 1824 as low as 6d. a day, or 3s. a week: in others they amounted to 4s. and 5s.: in others again to 6s., and in some they rose as high as 9s., which was the maximum.”—*Ibid.*

“Mr. Mahony asserts, as the result of an extensive experience in the south and west of Ireland, that the receipts of a day labourer throughout the year average but 5d. per diem. The payment for a day’s work is generally from 8d. to 10d. but deducting Sundays, saints’ days, bad weather, and occasional loss of time, the receipts average but half that sum.”—*Q.R.* vol. xlv. 542.

“In the year 1786 the wages for spinning No. 100 cotton yarn was 10s. per pound; in 1790 they were reduced to 4s.; and in a few years fell to 8d.,” that is to say, one fifteenth of the wages in 1786.”—*Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xxiv. p. 397.



It would appear that the facts above adduced are abundantly sufficient to put down for ever the chief ground on which the opposition to the poor-laws rests; that is, their assumed inevitable tendency to a ruinous and oppressive increase of poor rates. But unfortunately theorists blindly shut their eyes to opposing facts, and view with microscopic eye all those that appear to lend sanction to

and woollen branches, although more severely felt in these than in others. It went on in every other branch to which machinery was applicable.

Years.	Poor taxes. £	Population.	Poor rates per head.	
1673	840,000†		3s.	4d.
1750	700,000†	6,467,000‡	2 s.	2d.
1770	1,306,000†	7,428,000‡	3s.	5d.
1780	1,774,000†	7,953,000†	4s.	4d.
1790	2,569,000†	8,675,000†	5s.	11d.
1800	3,861,000†	9,168,000‡	8s.	5d.
1810	5,407,000†	10,502,500‡	10s.	3d.
1820	6,680,000†	11,977,663‡	11s.	

* F. M. Eden’s *State of the Poor*, vol. i. p. 189.

† Lowe on the *Present State of England*, pp. 185, 186.

‡ *Statistical Tables*, page 3.

their theories. The facts here stated are clear, decisive, and irrefragable; and it is astonishing how those enlightened men, who have so long and so zealously trumpeted forth the supposed unavoidable evils of this system, should be so blind to their force as not to seek some other cause to account for its oppressive results.

It is believed that the poor are supported in Scotland by voluntary subscriptions, and that assessments for the support of the poor, and mendicity, are unknown. Both assertions appear to be egregiously erroneous, as may be seen by the annexed extracts. But even were they literally correct, it does not thence follow that the same reasoning would apply in England. The Scotch are a peculiar people. They are brought up with more advantages than most other people in Europe; their education is better attended to; their habits are more orderly. But with all these advantages, which are immensely valuable, they are obliged to have recourse to assessments for the support of the poor; and are moreover plagued with the heavy curse of mendicity.

“If the case of the poor in Scotland and Ireland be produced as a proof, that leaving them to private charity would have a better effect than the rates of England, the answer is obvious—that in Scotland they are not left to private charity in their principal cities, but are admitted to a provision out of the funds of the general session of those cities.”—*Ruggles’s History of the Poor*, vol. ii. p. 78.

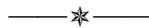
“Notwithstanding all the eulogiums which have been passed on the manner in which the poor of Scotland are maintained, we find, that even at this moment, vagrant mendicity is nearly universal in that country. Scotland possesses a series of very severe laws for the suppression of vagrancy; and resolutions have been recently entered into, by more than one county, to carry their provisions into effect.”—*Q.R.* vol. xxxviii. p. 74.

“But these resolutions have hitherto proved unavailing, in consequence of the extreme humanity of parishioners, who cannot resist listening to the plea of apparent distress, and bestowing alms. It is indeed computed that the stranger poor carry away, in the shape of alms, from the parish, more in value each year than would support comfortably the whole poor on the parish-roll: and a general belief prevails, that the practice is attended with many most hurtful effects, both to the best interests of the public, and to the morals of the mendicant. They (i.e. the Committee of the Assembly) consider begging as a violation of the whole provision, purposes, and spirit of our poor-laws; as a heavy loss to the community, of productive labour, from the wandering and idle habits of beggary; as encouraging the vices of those who are professionally pilfering vagrants; and as habituating, generally, the pauper to duplicity, falsehood, improvidence, and dissipation.”—*Minutes and Report of the Committee of the General Assembly*, 1818, p. 14.

But even if sufficient sums could be raised by voluntary contributions, there would be strong objections to this mode, as the burden would fall very unequally.

“By statutory provision the burden is equally laid upon persons of property, according to their ability; while *in voluntary contributions, the richest are not always found the most charitable.*”—*Q. R.* vol. xxviii. p. 354.

Philadelphia, July 16, 1833.



ESSAY XI.

IT now remains to consider the case of those countries where there are no taxes raised for the support of the poor, whose support is extorted by mendicity, and how far the plan of tolerating that abominable nuisance as a substitute, recommended by the Edinburgh Review, would be preferable to a statutory provision. This comparison affords the best, indeed the only correct criterion of the merits of the respective modes of providing for the poor.

In a publication issued at Paris about the close of the last century, say 1795, the latest account I have been able to procure, it is stated that there were then in that country 300,000 able-bodied beggars, who occasioned a loss to the state of 125,000,000 livres, equal to about \$20,000,000. It

is presumable that each 'able-bodied beggar,' on an average, had dependent on him at least two persons, a wife and a child. Here is an aggregate of nearly a million of souls in a state of beggary, prowling abroad, and preying on the public to an enormous amount, levied merely on the charitable; whereas, had the same sum been levied by law, it would have probably far more than supported all the paupers whose age and infirmity rendered them entitled to public aid, and been borne in somewhat like equitable proportions by the whole community. To aggravate the evil, these beggars are "considered as the great nursery of all the robbers and assassins that infest the country."—*Q.R.* vol. xxxviii. p. 74.

"The population of Paris in 1823 was 713,966 souls, of whom 61,500 were entirely supported in hospitals and other charitable institutions, and 64,000 at their own houses."—*Idem*, p. 73.

"Notwithstanding this oppressive provision, *'her streets, her quays, and all her public places, are filled with mendicants!'*"—*Ibid.*

"The patrimony of the poor," says a report of the bureaux de charité, "was sufficient to support one fourth of the inhabitants, and yet the poor were in want."—*Q.R.* vol. xxxviii. p. 74.

"Naples is crowded with beggars, whose number defies all calculation. I feel it indeed a fruitless task for my pen to attempt a description of the scenes I have witnessed, and I lay it down in despair—But no! what I can tell is as much as need be known of human misery. As we step out of our house, twenty hats and open hands are stretched out towards us. We cannot take ten steps without meeting with a beggar, who crosses our path, and with groans and piteous exclamations solicits our mite. Women, often dressed in black silk, and veiled, intrude themselves impudently upon us. Cripples of all sorts hold up their stump of a leg or an arm close to our eyes: noseless faces, devoured by disease, grin at us; children quite naked, nay, even men, are to be seen lying and moaning in the dirt. A dropsical man sits by the wall, and shows us his monstrous belly. Consumptive mothers lie by the roadside with naked children on their laps, who are compelled to be continually crying aloud. If we go to church, we must pass through a dozen such deplorable objects at the door; and when we enter, as many fall down on their knees before us. Even in our dwellings, we are not free from the painful spectacle."—*Kotzebue's Travels through Italy*, vol. i. pp. 251, 252.

"In large cities, in coming out of one house, you are fairly hunted till you get into another; the fraternity, however, appear to have this point of etiquette, that only one hunts you at a time: but before you are out of sight of the former beggar, whom you have relieved, you are considered fair game for the rest of the pack."—*Q. R.* vol. xxxviii. p. 73.

"If the whole sum which is paid in misapplied alms by the farmers and peasantry were estimated, it would amount to a very heavy poor-tax!"—*Idem*, p. 530.

"Mr. B. Bryan calculates that there are half a million of houses in Ireland of the farming class, each of which contributes in this way, on an average, a ton of potatoes a year towards the support of the poor: *the value of this alone would be near two million of money.*"—*Ibid.*

"In the kingdom of the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland, the poor are provided for on a plan which does not essentially differ from our own, at a cost to the community, which, when compared with the wealth of each country, equals, at least, the highest expense which has been found to attend the English system. *Over all the remainder of the continent, the mendicant system—the delight of the Malthusians—prevails in all its vigour: but the intolerable burden of this system can only be conceived by those who have witnessed its pressure.*"—*Q. R.* vol. xxxviii. p. 72.

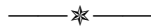
The worthlessness, the improvidence, the dissipation of the labouring classes are fertile themes of declamation with the new school of political economists. To those who cling to their wealth with the tenacity of "grim death," it is delightful to descant on these topics, as they regard them as a full justification of their invariable rejection of the claims of the poor. But I have one strong fact in proof of the providence of a large portion of that class, which outweighs a volume of frothy declamation on the opposite side of the question.

"In 1815, there were no fewer than 925,439 individuals in England and Wales, being about *one eleventh* of the then existing population, members of friendly societies, formed for the express purpose of affording protection to the members during sickness and old age, and *enabling them to subsist without resorting to the parish funds.*"—*E.R.* vol. xlvii. p. 304.

It is highly probable that these were generally heads of families; but say that only two-thirds were of that description, and that each of them averaged two in family besides himself, it would make an aggregate of about 2,150,000 souls of the labouring population, who do not look to the poor rates in times of sickness or want of employment. The population of England was at that time about 10,000,000; of course, the above number constituted a fifth of the whole. What a triumphant fact in favour of the providence of the labouring classes in England and Wales, notwithstanding the various circumstances connected with their situation, tending to degrade and render them reckless! How complete a refutation of the unceasing vituperation under which they labour! The importance of this fact is greatly enhanced by the consideration of the paltry wages the mass of the labouring classes receive; and how ill they can spare any part of them to make such provident provision for future distress.

A feature in the connexion between the manufacturers and the operatives in England, which has a tendency to degrade and pauperize the latter, and, of course, to increase the poor rates, deserves to be noticed. When work is slack, the former combine to lower wages: this they can effect without any difficulty, their numbers being small; of course they can readily co-operate in any plans they may form: and the necessities of the operatives, who depend on their weekly wages for their weekly support, oblige them to submit. But when the demand for goods is brisk, the rise of wages must be either voluntary on the part of the employers, which rarely takes place, or by an association among the operatives, which, considering their numbers, is not easily effected; and which, moreover, if attempted to be enforced upon those who cannot or will not voluntarily acquiesce in the arrangement, is, by law, a criminal offence, subjecting the parties to fine and imprisonment. It is obvious, therefore, that the war is carried on between the manufacturers and their journeymen upon very unequal terms, to the great disadvantage of the latter.

Philadelphia, July 19, 1833.



ESSAY XII.

It is frequently asked—what remedy can be found for the enormous and cruel oppression experienced by females employed as seamstresses on coarse work, spoolers, &c.? While these classes are so much more numerous than the demand for their services requires, a complete remedy for the evil is, I am afraid, impracticable. I venture, to suggest a few palliatives.

1. Public opinion, a powerful instrument, ought to be brought to bear on this subject. All honourable members of society, male and female, ought to unite in denouncing those who ‘grind the faces of the poor,’ by taking female labour without a compensation at least adequate for the support of human existence. The pulpit ought to unite in this crusade against a crying injustice, productive of such distressing consequences.

2. Let the employments of females be multiplied as much as possible. They are admirably calculated for various occupations from which they are at present in a great degree excluded, more especially shop-keeping in retail stores.

3. The poorer class ought to have exclusively the business of white-washing and other low employments, now in a great degree monopolized by men.

4. Let the Provident Societies, intended to furnish employment for women in winter, be munificently supported; and let those Societies give fair and liberal wages, following the laudable

example of the Impartial Humane Society of Baltimore, and the Female Hospitable Society of Philadelphia.

5. Let the ladies have some of the poor women, who are half starved, making coarse shirts at 6, 8, and 10 cents each, taught fine needle-work, mantua-making, millinery, clear starching, quilting, &c. There is always a great want of women in these branches.

6. Let schools be opened for instructing poor women in cooking. Good cooks are always scarce.

7. Schools for young ladies, and infant schools, ought, with few exceptions, to be taught by females, who should be regularly educated for those important branches, which are peculiarly calculated for their sex, and which would afford excellent occupation for the daughters of reduced families.

8. Ladies who can afford it, ought to give out their sewing and washing, and pay fair prices. Let them display their economy in any other department than in one which has a tendency to distress and pauperize deserving persons of their own sex.

9. In the towns in the interior of the state, and in those in the western states, there is generally a want of females as domestics, seamstresses, &c. &c.; and in factories, as spoolers, spinners, and weavers. It would be a most meritorious appropriation of a part of the superfluous wealth of the rich, to provide for sending some of the superabundant poor females of our cities to those places.

10. To crown the whole, let ladies who lead the fashion, take up the cause of these poor women, *con amore*. It is a holy cause. They may, with moderate exertions, render it fashionable to endeavour to rescue from unmerited and cruel sufferings, oppressed, forlorn, and neglected classes, as precious, I emphatically repeat, in the eye of Heaven, as the most exalted and high-minded among themselves.

Other palliatives might be devised, were public attention directed to the subject in any degree proportioned to its importance.



I conclude these essays, by stating, in brief, the points which I undertook to prove, and which, I flatter myself, I have fully proved:

1. That the wages of seamstresses, employed on common work, of spoolers, &c. &c., are inadequate for their support, even if fully employed, and unincumbered with children.

2. That of course, when not fully employed, or when burdened with children, they must necessarily be in a state of constant pauperism.

3. That such a state of things in a prosperous country—"a land flowing with milk and honey"—is a national disgrace, and calls loudly for a remedy, at least for some mitigation of the evil.

4. That the wages of labourers on canals and turnpikes, of hod-men, &c., &c., are barely sufficient, if they have families (as the greater number of them have), to support them, when fully employed; and that, therefore, in case of sickness, or want of employment, they must depend in a greater or less degree on public or private aid.

5. That the operation of the poor-laws in England from 1601, when the system was enacted, till 1795, when the flood-gates of abuse and corruption were thrown wide open, was benignant and salutary.

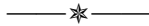
6. That the exorbitant increase of the poor rates in England is chiefly owing to the enormous abuses in the administration of the poor-laws, but partly to the oppressive reduction of the price of labour, resulting from the great improvements in machinery.

7. That the countries which have no poor-laws, are subject to oppressive burdens, probably not inferior to those of the English, but in another form, that is, by mendicity.

8. That mendicants generally levy contributions on the humane and charitable, to three or four times the amount that would support and equal number of paupers, either in alms-houses or at their own dwellings.

How far I have succeeded in the establishment of these positions, must rest with the public at large, from whose decision there is no appeal. Be that decision what it may, it cannot deprive me of the gratification of having, at the expense of no small portion of obloquy from those with whose personal interests some of my doctrines interfere, pleaded as holy a cause as any of those which for years past have been presented at the bar of the public.

Philadelphia, July 20, 1833.



APPENDIX.

THE following quotations on the situation of the poor, on mendicity, and on poor-laws, by C. D. Colden, Esq., formerly Mayor of the city of New York, who had the best opportunity of judging on those important points, are so pertinent and so conclusive in favour of the doctrines advocated in this pamphlet, that I earnestly recommend them to the consideration of the public.

“A sentiment is very prevalent, that *our various charitable societies and our public establishment for the poor have a pernicious tendency*. We are called upon to look at England, and to observe how she is burdened with paupers, and oppressed by her poor rates. It is supposed that the increase of paupers among us is owing to our following her example; and that we are precipitating ourselves into the same embarrassments.

“I think there is as little justice as humanity, in censuring our charitable establishments. I do not believe they augment the number of the poor. Paupers come here to avail themselves of the benevolence of our citizens; but if these charities did not exist, the metropolis would still be the natural resort in winter, of all the destitute who could reach it. Instead of plowing them through the instrumentality of societies, we should meet them in the street, and could not, resist their appeals to our individual charity.

“I have read much of what has been written respecting the establishment of poor-houses, and have paid attention to various plans which have been proposed for dispensing with them; but I never yet met with the suggestion of any plan which appeared to me to be practicable, or which I thought would be endured in this country.

“In our own alms-house there were, when I last visited it, about 1600 paupers. I had often heard it said that *many found shelter there who did not require or deserve an asylum of that description*. I endeavoured to satisfy myself how far this suggestion was founded in fact. After having seen every individual under the poor-house roof, and conversed with a great proportion of them, *I left the establishment with a conviction that none were there as paupers who could with any humanity be turned out. We have been frequently told that the poor and indigent should be left to rely on the charity of individuals*. Let us suppose that the 1600 unfortunate people I have mentioned, were cast out, and told they must beg. *I fear death would as often relieve them from misery, as charity*. But suppose it were otherwise: would we, in this community, *endure the sight of the aged, the infirm, and the cripple, asking alms of every passenger? Would we endure to see our fellow-creatures perishing in the streets?* Such objects are presented in many of the cities of Europe. In Naples, they are every-day occurrences. It is not uncommon to see a human being dying on the steps of a palace. Here, I am certain, such scenes would not be tolerated, though the expense of our public charities should be tenfold. But if we have not these establishments, how are the poor to obtain relief, but by becoming mendicants? and when their physical powers are prostrated by age, sickness, or accident, what shall be done with them? Humanity forbids us to answer—*let them linger and die like beasts upon our pavements*. An asylum must be provided for them; and our charitable institutions are no more than a compliance with this moral obligation. *If there be abuses, correct them*; but do not let the abuses, if they exist, or pecuniary considerations, so far harden our hearts, or blind our judgments, as to

induce us to abandon the poor to the precariousness of the individual charity they may chance to meet.

“As to the example of England, which we are called upon to regard with so much terror, I think it yet remains to be proved, that the multiplication of her paupers, or the pressure of her poor-laws on her wealthy citizens, *are justly to be imputed to either her public or private charities*. We are told that the facility with which alms may be obtained, sinks the independent spirit of the needy, and paralyzes a disposition to struggle for their own support. I do not believe the pride of man is so easily overcome, or that a mere invitation to dependence, is sufficient to induce him to accept it. We know that in England, the reduction of great naval and military establishments, * * * * and the astonishing operations of her labour-saving machines, have left millions of her citizens unemployed.

“There are so many to labour, and so little labour to be done, that many must be idle; or, if employed, it is for wages that will not enable them to provide the necessaries of life. *If the manufacturer does not afford his workmen sufficient to support himself and his family, the deficiency must be, and is in England, drawn from the abundance of the wealthy*. It is in this way that one class of the population in England becomes necessarily dependent on the other.

“The rich are not only obliged to maintain the helpless, but their wealth must contribute to the support of their unemployed or pinched manufacturers. If the master manufacturer cannot afford to pay, or does not pay his workman but half what is necessary for his subsistence, the other half must be paid by poor rates, and the rich are in truth merely paying to support the manufactories, or for the labour from which the manufacturer derives his profits. Suppose there are five millions in England who cannot find employment; or that if they do, their wages will not purchase half what is necessary to sustain life; they must be maintained, in whole or in part, by the public. *Can it be right to charge this necessity to their charitable institutions? Suppose these were abolished; how would the condition of the one class or the other, of the poor or the rich, be meliorated?*

“The labourer could no more command work than he can now, and the rich would have to support him; if not by legal contributions, he would be compelled to do it by that force which no human laws are sufficient to restrain, when his exertions are the only means of preservation. *It does, therefore, appear to me unreasonable and unfounded, to impute the increase of paupers in England, and the consequent augmentation of her poor-rates, to the superabundance of her charity*.

“Our situation is not, and cannot be for ages, similar to that of England. While we have so many millions of acres of uncultivated land, it is impossible that any portion of our population should want employment.

“It is true, that just now, [1819] our cities are overwhelmed with deluded and destitute foreigners; but this is an evil which will in a little while cure itself, and the recurrence of which we must prevent by appropriate laws. But do not let us, from the vain dread of the evils of which England so loudly complains, *discourage charitable institutions, which, when duly regulated, are the highest ornaments of civilization*.

“There is one marked difference between our situation and that of England, which, I think, deserves to be noticed. The evils of want and poverty extend themselves to every part of her dominions. Indeed it is her land-holders and farmers, who most loudly complain of the oppression of her poor laws.

“With us, *the cause of complaint is entirely confined to our maritime cities. I do not believe there is a town in the state, in which the poor-rates amount to a mill, or a thousandth part upon the dollar*. This seems to me to show that the pauperism of our cities, is owing to adventitious circumstances; and that we have no reason to dread that we are extending a charity to the poor, which will bring upon us the calamities so much deplored in England.

“*We must always be content to bear with our due proportion of poor, as we must to share all other evils incident to humanity*. But in estimating what proportion we are to expect, and in comparing our own condition in this respect, with that of other countries, I think we ought not to forget, that while there are some circumstances peculiar to us which are favourable, there are others calculated to produce pauperism. Among these would enumerate the following:

“The common drink of the poorer classes of our people is ardent spirits; and I cannot but think it unfortunate that this is so cheap, that a man can purchase as much as will make him drunk, for no more than would pay for a pot of porter in England.

“We have no standing army, or navy, that take off so many thousand idlers in other countries. We have, to be sure, both an army and a navy; but they are on so small a scale, that their effects on society in this respect, are not felt. We have no transportation laws for crimes.”

About the Author

Mathew Carey (1760–1839) was born in Dublin and entered the printing trade as a young man. In 1779, to avoid prosecution for a work criticizing the Irish penal code, he went to Paris, where he met and worked for Benjamin Franklin. He returned to Ireland after a year and began publication of *The Freeman's Journal* and *The Volunteer's Journal*, both espousing radical politics. In 1784, following an imprisonment for libel upon Parliament, he emigrated to America. The Marquis de La Fayette loaned him \$400 to start a printing business in Philadelphia, and he established and published *The Pennsylvania Herald*, the *Columbian Magazine*, and the *American Museum*. He was initially allied with the Federalists, but changed his support to the Democratic-Republicans in 1796. He published the first American edition of the Douay (i.e., Catholic) Bible in 1790, and Thomas Clark's *Naval History of the United States* in 1815. Among his own works, *The Olive Branch: or, Faults on both sides, Federal and Democratic* (1814) called for both parties to support the war with Great Britain; *Vindiciae Hibernicae* (1819) was a refutation of the allegations of Irish atrocities in the rebellion of 1641. He was the author of more than 100 works on political, religious, economic, and social issues. He retired from business in 1825, leaving his son, Henry C. Carey, as the principal. The younger Carey took in Isaac Lea as a partner, creating the firm of Carey & Lea, which later became the publisher Lea & Blanchard.

About the Text

The text of this electronic edition is transcribed from a copy of the “Third Edition, Improved” in the library of Columbia University. Its pagination replicates that of the original, and page breaks occur with a few words of where they fall in the 1833 text. The original pamphlet measured approximately 6 × 9 inches, and was set in very small type, with as many as 64 lines of text per page. In this edition, block quotations have been rendered in the modern style, rather than beginning each line with quotation marks as in the 1833 text. Otherwise, the spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and orthography are those of the original.