

A Discourse Touching Provision for the Poor

Matthew Hale

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Written by Sir Matthew Hale, late Lord Chief Justice of the Kings-Bench.
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The Preface.

A Due care for the relief of the Poor is an act, 1, of great Piety towards Almighty God, who requires it of us: He hath left the Poor as his Pupils, and the Rich as his Stewards to provide for them: It is one of those great Tributes that he justly requires from the rest of Mankind; which, because they cannot pay to him, he hath scattered the Poor amongst the rest of Mankind as his Substitutes and Receivers.

2. It is an act of greatest Humanity among men. Mercy and Benignity is due to the very Beasts that serve us, much more to those that are partakers of the same common nature with us.

3. It is an Act of great Civil Prudence and Political Wisdom: for Poverty in it self is apt to Emasculate the minds of men, or at least it makes men tumultuous and unquiet. Where there are many very Poor, the Rich cannot long or safely continue such; Necessity renders men of Phlegmatick and dull natures stupid and indisciplineable; And men of more fiery or active institutions rapacious and desperate.

At his day it seems to me that the English Nation is more deficient in their prudent provision for the Poor than any other cultivated and Christian State; at least that have so many opportunities and advantages to supply them.

In some other Countries a Beggar is a rare sight; Those that are unable to maintain themselves by Age or Impotency are relieved. And those that are able to supply their wants by their Labour are furnished with Employments suitable to their condition.

And by this means there is not only a good and orderly Education and a decent face of the publick; But the more populous the State or Country is, the richer and the more wealthy it is.

But with us in England for want of a due regulation of things the more Populous we are the Poorer we are; so that, that wherein the Strength and Wealth of a Kingdom consists, renders us the weaker and the poorer.

And which is yet worse, Poor Families which daily multiply in the Kingdom for want of a due order for their Employment in an honest course of life, whereby they may gain subsistence for them and their Children, do unavoidably bring up their children either in a Trade or Begging or Stealing, or such other Idle course, which again they propagate to their Children, and so there is a successive multiplication of hurtful or at least unprofitable people, neither capable of Discipline nor beneficial Employment.

It is true we have very severe Laws against Begging, the very giver being in some cases subject to a penalty by the Statute of 1. Jac. cap. 17. But it takes little Effect. And indeed as the case stands with us, it is no reason it should: for what man that is of ability can have the conscience to deny an Alms, or to bring a Wanderer to the punishment directed by that Statute, and

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the Statute of 39 Eliz. when he cannot choose but know that there is not that due course provided, or at least used, that persons necessitous, and able to work may have it; indeed were there a clear means practiced for the employing poor persons, it were an uncharitable action to relieve them in a course of Idleness. But when I do not know there is such a Provision, I dare not deny my relief, because I know not whether without it he may be starved with hunger, without his own default.

We have also very severe Laws against Theft, possibly more severe than most other Nations, yea, and than the Offence in it self simply considered deserves; And there is little to be said in the defence of the severity of the Law herein, but the multitude of the Offenders and the design of the Law rather to terrify than to punish, ut metus in omnes, poena in paucos: But it is most apparent that the Law is frustrated of its design therein; for although more suffer at one Sessions at Newgate for Stealing and Breaking up Houses, and Picking of Pockets, and such other Larcenies out of the protection of clergy, than suffer in some other Countries for all offences in three years, yet the Jayls are never the Emptier: Necessity and Poverty, and want of a due Provision for the Employment of Indigent persons, and the custom of a loose and idle life, daily supply with advantage the number of those who are taken off by the Sentence of the Law: and doubtless as the multitude of Poor, and necessitous, and uneducated persons, increase, the multitude of Malefactors will increase, notwithstanding the Examples of Severity.

So that upon the whole account the prudence of prevention, as it is more Christian, so it will be more effectual than the prudence of remedy: The prevention of poverty, idleness, and a loose and disorderly Education, even of poor Children, would do more good to this Kingdom than all the Gibbets, and Cauterization, and Whipping Posts, and Jayls in this Kingdom, and would render these kinds of Disciplines less necessary and less frequent.

But hitherto I am in generals, which rarely prosper into Action or conviction: I therefore shall consider principally these things:

1. What Provisions there are already settled by the Laws in force for the Relief and Employment of the Poor.
2. Wherein the Defects are, in relation to those Laws or Provisions, and the consequences thereof.
3. What may be thought a convenient Supply of these defect, and the Consequence of such supplies.

A Discourse Touching Provision for the Poor.

Chap. I.

Touching the Laws at present in force for the Relief and Employment of the Poor.

The Laws relating to the Poor are of two kinds, viz. 1. Such as concern the relief of the Aged, and Impotent, that are not able by their labour to maintain themselves. 2. Such as concern the employment and setting of work, of such as are able. And this latter as shall be shewn is the more comprehensive and beneficial charity, although both are necessary and become us, both as men and as Christians; much more touching the former of these, viz. the relief of the impotent Poor, the laws of England have provided a double remedy. First, by giving great encouragement to voluntary undertakings of good and liberal minds in this kind. 2.

by Compulsary means upon all.

Again as touching the former of these, the Statute of 39 Eliz. Cap. 5. have given a great encouragement to such as shall Erect Hospitals, Houses of Correction and Maisons de Dieu. And the Statutes of 39. Eliz. Cap. 6. and 43. Eliz. Cap. 4. have taken special care for the due employment of gifts to charitable uses. and certainly such voluntary Assignations argue an Excellent and Charitable mind in those that shall so voluntarily give; And the Statutes have give a fair Incouragement to the Charaties of men in this kind. But this provision doth but little in order to relief: For 1. for the most part such Hospitals extend but to a few aged Persons limited to some particular Town, unless it be in the large Hospitals, in London, where there is some provision more Extensive in respect both of number and age, as St Thomas Hospital, Christ Church Hospital and some others. 2. But besides this those are but Voluntary and not Compulsary; although there may be some that may be charitably minded, yet for the most part men are backward in works of charity; Self love, Covetousness, distrust of the Truth and Providence of God keeps most from overflowing Charity or Building or Endowing Hospitals.

2. Therefore there was a Compulsory laid upon men for the relief of the Poor within their respective Parishes, viz. the Statute of 43. Eliz. Cap. 2, being the first compulsory Law that I remember of that kind: And indeed it now became necessary to be done by a Compulsary means which before that time was left more arbitrary, because the Kingdom became then much more Populous than in former times, and with it the Poor also greatly increased, and besides many of those methods of their voluntary relief was then much abated; which Statute Enables the Church-Wardens and Overseers, etc. to do these things.

1. To take order for setting to work the Children of those whose Parents are not able to maintain their Children.

2. To take order to set those to work as having no means to maintain themselves, use no ordinary trade. But provides not sufficient Compulsaries to make them work.

3. To raise weekly by Taxation a convenient stock of Flax, Hemp etc. to set the Poor on work: But no means at first, before the return of the Manufacture to pay them wages in express words, but is supplying by the latter general clause. (And to do and Execute all other things, as well for the disposing of the said Stock, or otherwise concerning the premises as to them shall seem convenient.)

4. To raise competent sums of Money for the impotent Poor not able to work.

5. Also for the putting of Poor Children Apprentices but no Compulsary for any to receive them.

Among all these Provisions, the 4th concerns the relief of the Poor by Taxation, and Contributes to such as are impotent, the four other particulars concern their employment, and of such as are able to work, which is the far greater number. And although the relief of the Impotent Poor seems to be a Charity of more immediate Exigence yet the Employment of the Poor is a Charity of greater Extent, and of very great and important Consequence to the publique Wealth, and Peace of the Kingdom as also to the Benefit and Advantage of the Poor.

I therefore come to that second Business relating to the Poor, viz. the setting the Poor on work.

The Laws that concern that Business of the Employment of the Poor are of two kinds; viz. that which contains a Compulsary means of providing work for the Poor, which is the Statute of 43. Eliz. And secondly those Laws which are in some kind Compulsary

to force persons to work; and these are of two kinds, viz.

1. Those that concern Children and the binding of them Apprentices, viz. the clause of the Statute 43. Eliz. Cap. 4. before mentioned, and the Statute 7, Jac. Cap. 1, which makes fair Provision for the raising of Money to bind them, and directs the manner of its Employment. But as before is observed, hath not any sufficient Compulsary for persons to take them, and perchance it might be fit to have some such qualifications in that Compulsary which might not leave it too arbitrary in the Justices of the Peace to compell whom they please, to take whom they please: But this is not the business I drive at, perchance the general Provision which I design may make this at least not so frequently necessary.

2. In reference to Rogues, Vagabonds and Idle and disorderly persons, the Statute 7. Jac. Cap. 4 gives power, 1 to the Justices of the Peace to send them to the House of Correction, which they are thereby required to cause to be Erected. 2. Power to the Master of such House of Correction to keep them to work.

But even in this particular there are defects. 1. It is not general for all persons, but at most idle and disorderly persons. 2. That description is very uncertain in reference to such persons, and leaves the Justices either too great or too little power. 3. For want of a convenient Stock to be raised for such Houses of Correction, and advantageous ways for such work, it either leaves such as are sent without an Employment, or renders their Employment ungrateful in respect of the smalness of the wages, and rather makes People hate Employment as a hell than to Entertain it as a means of comfortable support; which though it may be well enough as a punishment for disorderly persons that refuse to work, yet it is not applicable to those that are only idle, it may be, because they have not work: 4. It is a difficult thing to determine who shall be said an idle Person, it is a reasonable answer to that, they are idle for want of such work as they are able to do, or for want of such wages as might give them a reasonable support; for there is not power given, nor is it reasonable it should, to compel Persons, to set them on work, or to set them on work at convenient wages: 5. And lastly, it is not universal; many Persons are not within that Law which would work if they might: or if they might at reasonable rates, whereby they might live. There is need, therefore of some such provision that might be as ample as the occasion, and without which indeed all the Laws already made are either weak and ineffectual to their Ends, and the generality of the Poor left destitute of a convenient support and provision.

Chap. II.

Touching the Power by the Law settled for the general Provision for the Poor, and their defects.

Upon the consideration of the Statutes for the Poor, the only Statute that provided universally is that of 43. Eliz. which generally makes two Provisions.

1, For the Impotent Poor that are not able to work: And it is true is a good and Effectual Provision for such, if duely Executed. But, as I said before, the Plaister is not so large as the sore, there are many poor that are able to work if they had it, and had it at reasonable wages, whereby they might support themselves and their Families, which oftentimes are many. These are not within the Provision of the Law and if they come for Exhibitions, they are denyed, or at least have but very small,

and such as cannot support them and their Families. And indeed if they should have sufficient Exhibition for the support of them and their Families, the Parishes where they live were not able to supply them in a proportion answerable to their necessities, or answerable to that supply which a full Employment would afford them; For instance, a poor Man and his Wife though able to work, may have four Children, two of them possibly able to work, two not able: The Father and the Mother are not able to maintain themselves and their Family in Meat, Drink, Cloathing and House rent under ten Shillings per Week, and so much they might probale get if imployed; This amounts to 26 l. per annum, if there were forty such Families in a great Parish, and they lived upon this exhibition collected by rates, it would arise to above 800 l. per Annum, which in many Parishes exceeds the yearly value of their Lands or Rents, yet when these persons are kept on work thus much must be gotten by them, and without a supply Equivalent to this they must live by Begging, or Stealing, or Starve: therefore the second Provision is,

2. For those Poor that are able to work, and in reference to them it gives power to raise Stocks by rating the Parishioners, and setting the Poor on work.

The defects of this Provision are,

1. In the Execution of the Law already made; for let any man look over most of the Populous Parishes in England, indeed there are rates made for the relief of the Impotent Poor, and it may be the same relief is also given in a narrow measure unto some others, that have great Families, and upon this they live miserably and at best from hand to mouth, and if they cannot get work to make out their livelyhood they and their Children set up a trade of Begging at best. But it is rare to see any Provision of a Stock in any Parish for the relief of the Poor. And the reasons principally are these: 1. The Generality of the people that are able yet unwilling to Exceed the present necessary charge, they do chuse to live for an hour rather than project for the future; and although possibly trebling their Exhibition in one gross sum at the beginning of the year, to raise a Stock, might in all probability render their future yearly payments for seven years together less by half or two thirds, than what must be without it, yet they had rather continue on their yearly Payments, year after year, though it Exhaust them in time, and make the Poor nothing the better at the years End. 2. Because those places, where there are most Poor, consist for the most part of Trades-men, whose Estates ly principally in their Stocks, which they will not endure to be searched into to make them contribuary to raise any considerable stock for the Poor, nor indeed so much as to the ordinary Contributions: But they lay all the rates to the Poor upon the Rents of Lands and Houses, which alone without the help of the Stocks are not able to raise a Stock for the poor, although it is very plain that Stocks are as well by Law rateable as Lands, both to the relief, and raising a Stock for the Poor. 3. Because the Church Wardens and Overseers, to whom this power is given, are Inhabitants of the same Parish, and are either unwilling to charge themselves or displease their Neighbours in Charging more than they needs must towards the Poor: And although it were to be wished and hoped, that the Justice of Peace would be forwardly to Enforce them if they might, though it may concern them also in point of present profit, yet if they would do any thing herein, they are not impowered to compel the Church Wardens and Overseers to do it, who most certainly will never go about it to burthen, as they think, themselves, and displease their Neighbours, unless some

Compulsary power were not only lodged by Law, but also executed in some that may have power over them to do it effectively, if they do it either partially or too sparingly: 4. Because people do not consider the inconvenience that will in time grow to themselves by this neglect, and the benefits that would in a little time accrue to them by putting it in practice if they would have but a little patience, as shall be shewn hereafter.

2. The second Defect is the Law it self; which are these.

1. No power in the Justices of the Peace, or some Superintendent power to compell the raising of a Stock where the Church Wardens and Overseers neglect it.

2. The act chargeth every Parish apart where it may be they are able to do little towards it, neither would it be so effectual as if three, four, five or more contiguous Parishes did contribute towards the raising of a Stock proportionable to their Poor respectively.

3. There is no power for hiring or erecting a common House, or place for their common Work-House, which may be in some respects, and upon some occasions, useful and necessary, as shall be shewn.

Chap. III.

The Remedy propounded.

1. That the Justices of the Peace at the Quarter Sessions do set out and distribute the Parishes in their several Counties into several Divisions, in each of which there may be a Work-House for the common use of the respective Divisions, wherein they are respectively placed, viz., one, two, three, four, five or six Parishes to a work-House, according to the greatness or smallness, and accomodation of the several Parishes.

2. That at that Sessions the Church Wardens and Overseers of the Poor of the respective Parishes, bring in their several rates for the relief of their respective Poor upon Oath. And that the said Justices do assess three, four or five yearly Pays to be levied and collected at one or two intire sums within the time prefixed by them for the raising of a Stock to set the Poor within those precincts on work, and to build or procure a convenient Work House for imploying the Poor, if need be, in it, and for lodging Materials, and for instructing Children in the Trade or Work.

3. That there be yearly chose by the said Justices a Master for each Work House, with a convenient Salary out of the said Stock or the proceed thereof, to continue for 3 years, and two Overseers to see the Issuing and return of the said Stock, and to take the accounts quarterly or monthly of the Master, as they shall think fit.

4. That the Stock be delivered to the Overseers, and by them Issued to the Master, as there shall be occasion, and that they also from time to time receive the proceed of the said Stock and the accompts for the same.

5. That at the end of every year the Master and Overseers give up their accounts to the two next Justifices of the Peace at times by them prefixed, and publickly notified to the Inhabitants of each Precinct, to the end that they may take any Exceptions to such accounts, if there be cause.

6. That the Master and Overseers of every respective Work House stand, and be incorporate by the name of Master and Overseers of their respective Precincts, and capable to take in Succession by will or otherwise Lands, Goods, Money, or other

Legacies or gifts for the Benefit of the Poor, within their respective Precincts.

7. That they also be accountable as well to their respective Successors, and also to the Justices of the Peace at their Quarter Sessions for the benefit and proceed and Employment of such Gifts and Bequests.

8. That they be disabled to grant any Lands to them give or bequeathed for any longer term than one Year, and at an improved Rent.

9. That if any person that is able to work, and not able to maintain himself, shall refuse to do so, he may be forced thereunto by Warrant of two Justices of Peace by Imprisonment, and moderate correction in such Work-house.

10. If any person employed by the master shall imbezill or wilfully prejudice, or spoil his work, he shall upon complaint and proof thereof by the party grieved to any Justice of Peace, and by Warrant from him receive Imprisonment or moderate correction by Warrant of such Justice.

These be the heads of that Provision, I could wish for the setting the Poor on work, which is but an Essay and may receive Alterations or Additions upon consideration.

The Benefits, that would come by this Method, would be very many and great: I shall set down some of them that occur to me.

1. by Incorporating of these Work-Houses, which are the best kind of Hospitals, charitable-minded Persons would have as it were a Pillar whereunto to fasten their Charity, which would prevent many Difficulties in the faithful Administration thereof, and would invite benefactors.

2. Whereas Hospitals provide for some few Poor Impotent People, this would prevent Poverty, and in a little tract of time bring up hundreds to be able to gain their Livelyhoods.

3. Whereas in that State that things are, our Populousness, which is the greatest blessing a Kingdom can have, becomes the burden of the Kingdom, by breeding up whole Races and Families, and successive Generations, in a mere Trade of Idleness, Thieving, Begging, and a barbarous kind of life, which must in time prodigiously increase and overgrow the whole face of the Kingdom, and eat out the heart of it: This course within one seven Years alters the whose state of this Disorder, and brings People and their Children after them into a Regular, Orderly, and Industrious course of life, which will be as natural to them as now Idleness, and Begging, and Thieving is.

For no person wil have need to Beg or Steal, because he may gain his living better by Working.

And no man will be so vain, and indeed hurtful to the Publique as to give to such as Beg, and thereby to encourage them, when he is sure they may gain their living by Working. And all the Laws against Vagrants, Beggers and Wanderers will be then Effectually put in Execution, when we may be sure they may be employed if they will: But till that interdicting and punishing of the Beggars and Givers, seems to me a most unreasonable piece of Imprudence as well as Uncharitableness.

4. By this means the Wealth of the Nation will be increased, Manufactures advanced, and every Body put into a capacity of eating his own Bread, for upon what imaginable account can we think, that we should not be as able to improve our Populousness to our Wealth, as well as Holland, and Flanders, and Barbadoes, if we had but their Industry, and orderly Management? If it be said, their Disposition is more industrious than ours; it is true, in that condition that matters are ordered; but, if we had the same industrious Education, we should have the same

industrious Disposition: let a man, one that hath been bred up in the Trade of Begging, he will never, unless compelled, fall to Industry; and on the other side, it is a wonderful Necessity indeed that shall bring one bred up in Civility and Industry, to beg; as is easily observable in many poor Places and Families.

And were there no other Benefit to the Kingdom in general, nor to the particular Places where such Work houses shall be settled but this, although the Stock were wholly lost in four Years, it would be an abundant Recompence, by the accustoming the poor sort to a civil and industrious course of Life, whereby they would soon become not only not burdensom, but profitable to the Kingdom and Places where they live.

5. By this means there would soon be an improvement of the several Manufactures of the Kingdom, both for the necessary Consumption of the Kingdom, and for Exportation, whereby our Trade Outward would exceed our Trade Inward, which Outward Trade, as it is the Basis and Foundation of all our Trade inward, and the Excess and Over ballance of our Trade Outward to our Trade Inward is the only means not only to keep our Money at home, but to gain an increase of Money, and so advanceth the true intrinsique Wealth of the Kingdom; for as of our Hand, if our Trade Outward exceed our Trade Inward, the excess must of necessity be returned in Money or bullion; so if our Trade Inward exceed our Trade Outward, the excess must be made good from hence in Money, which must needs insensibly improverish the Kingdom; and Experience makes us know it to be true. Now the advance of our Manufactures would be by this means plainly evident; for, Woollen Manufactures, as Kersies, Serges, Baize, which though now confined to several parts of the Kingdom, as Devonshire, Norfolk, Colchester, would be by this means diffused over the whole Kingdom, and those places which have little of Woollen Manufacture, as Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, and other Counties, would soon fall into it; so likewise knitting of Stockings, Caps, Wast-Coats, and the like. 2. Our Linnen Manufactures, as Linnen Cloath, Laces of all sorts, Nets, Sails, etc. would become Native, and supply the want of the Kingdom, and prevent the necessity of Importation of Linnen Cloath from Holland and France, of Laces from Flanders: and as this Trade is in some degree used in Lancashire, Leicestershire, and some other places, so it would be communicated to other places of the Kingdom: and it is very considerable the numbers of Poor that would be by this means employed in dressing of Hemp and Flax, Spinning, Weaving, Whitening, and the like. And if any shall say, we want the Materials, and we want those that should instruct the Poor in the ordering of them, the Answer is at hand; If once the Manufacture were begun to be put into a method by this way, all men would quickly sow Hemp and Flax in some parcels of their Tillage, and possibly some Lands that were not so fit for other Tillage, would be employed in this: two Acres of Hemp and Flax in every Parish would employ multitudes, which now People neglect to sow because they have no way to vent or employ it. And for Instructors, when once the alarum is abroad of such a design, it will draw over Workmen from other Forreign Parts; and by this means we gained, or at least recovered the skill of making Woollen Cloath from other parts, as appears by undeniable Evidence. And if it shall be said that this will defraud and straiten us of Labourers in our Woollen Manufactures, there can be no fear of that; for we have Poor enough to be employed in both: and it is most certain, that the Populousness of the Kingdom still increaseth, notwithstanding its great Exhaustings by Wars and Plagues, and Foreign Plantations, and consequently

the Poor will be proportionably increased, so that we may reasonably suppose, that in one seven Years, by the blessing of God, the very Proceeds that will be able and fit to work, of poor Families, will be more than double to what they are now, which will continually increase in a kind of Geometrical Progression, whereby there will be enough for double the Employment that is now for them.

6. By the means of these Work-Houses, there will be an opportunity for one or two Persons, skilled in any Manufacture, to instruct twenty in the Trades, by common resort, meeting, and daily residence of Children and young People there; and there may be opportunity to teach Children to read, without any Interruption in the Employments of them that are able to teach them, or of them that are able to work.

7. By this means the yearly Contributions for the Necessary relief of Poor, that are able to work, and their Families, and those kind of Contributions which in time will be impossible to support the Poor, will be changed into a supply every way more easie for them that are to pay, though at first it may require a more liberal assistance for the raising of the Stocks, and Every way more beneficial and advantageous for the Poor; First, Because they will hereby be educated and inured to a way of Civility and Industry. 2. They will gain a Trade, which will go along with them as the constant support of their lives. 3. The wages that they will gain will be a greater and better support than they can have by any contributions that are able to be assessed for them, for they may be able to gain, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six shillings a Week, for every Person able to work, which is five times more than their weekly or yearly Contributions do or can amount unto, without Exhausting more than the Revenues of the Parishes, wherein these Poor are in many Places: and this shall be demonstrated to the Eye of any that will consider this instance, which I have Exactly tryed, and Examined, and found to be true.

The ordinary Process and time, and charge of making a common course medly Cloth of our Gloucestershire Wool a this day is;

1. In every such Cloath of about 32 yards long there is Ninety Pounds of Wool, which will cost at this day at 12d per pound 4 l. 10 s. viz, ordinary in a gray Cloath.

54 l. of Abb. ---

34 l. of Warp. --

2 l. of Mixture --- } 4 l. 10s.

2. The Charge of making this Cloath:

1. Parting and Picking. --- 0 l. 3 s. 0d.

2. Colouring. --- 0 16 0

3. Breaking and Spinning the Abb, at pence farthing per l. ---

1 7 9

4. Breaking and Spinning the Warp at 5 d per l.

0 18 6

5. Cards and Oyl 1 0 0

6. Weaving, Spooling and Warping

1 1 3

7. Milling and Burling 0 12 0

8. Shearing and Dreding 0 18 0

9. Drawing 0 1 6

10. Carriage and Facturage 0 7 0

So the whole comes to 11 15 0

Out of which deducting the Materials of Wool and Cards, and Oyl, viz. 5 l. 10 s.

Their Remains entirely for the Expence of Work, amount to 6

l. 5s.

It is true, at this day this Cloath yields not above 12 l. to be sold, which is only 5 s. profit; but when Trade is quicker it may yield 13 l. or more.

3. The People that are employed in bringing about this Cloath to be ready, are fourteen, viz. three Weavers and Spoolers, two Breakers, six Spinners, one Fuller and Burler, one Sheer-man, one Parter and Picker: The Weavers supply the office of Spooler and Warper.

4. These will bring about the first Cloath in about two months space: But being continued in a constant tract, the Cloath will be brought about in three weeks time; for all the other Workmen are at work, and fit the Cloath for the Weaver in that space that he is weaving the first Cloath.

5. Consequently this one Loom thus employed all the Year round, allowing two months to the first cloath, and three Weeks to every other, will make fourteen Returns the first year of Cloath ready for sale, and sixteen returns every Year after.

6. Consequently that which this yields for bare Wages to these 14 poor Workmen for the first year is Eighty seven Pounds ten Shillings, and for the following Years is Ninety seven pounds, and by this Computation it is easie to see what every Work-man can gain a Week being fully employed.

7. About one hundred Pounds stock will for ever keep this Looms work going, and maintain these fourteen Workmen, and consequently a Stock of four hundred Pounds will keep on foot four Looms work, and keep on Work 56 Persons, and be able to abide the ordinary delays of sale incident to the Markets.

8. But if it could be supposed that the Cloath could be sold as soon as made (which is not I confess reasonably to be expected) then a stock of four and twenty pounds would by its continual return provide Materials, and pay the Workmen for one Looms work in perpetuity: but because the returns by sale cannot be as speedy as the work is done, the Stock must be near 100 l. to abide the delay of a Month, two, three, four or more, in point of sale, and likewise to buy Wool reasonably for Work. And by this it appears that although one hundred pounds Stock by its 16 returns yields but an inconsiderable advantage to the poor Workers, viz. near one hundred pounds per annum; and consequently a Stock of four hundred pounds yields near four hundred pounds per annum. And consequently these fifty six poor People that are kept on work with this Stock of four hundred Pounds could not live better, if the Parish were at the yearly pension of four hundred Pounds per annum, to relieve them, nor indeed so well, considering they are by this means kept in a way of Employment and honest Industry; and yet without some supply either by Wages or Contribution, those 56 poor People being destitute of Wages or Contributions to this value or near it, must live by stealing, or begging, or starve.

And let it be also considered, that this Stock thus raised and set going, maintains it self by a perpetual Circulation and Vicissitude, without any considerable help by any farther Supply, and yet perpetually countervails a Contribution of near four hundred Pounds per ann. for the relief of these fifty six poor Persons.

By all which it will appear, that the advantage of a Stock employed, and once set on foot, doth countervail a great Contribution, and indeed, greater than can be raised and yearly continued by most places, and will at last in time render those yearly constant Contributions lower and less needful.

9. But yet farther, by this means there will be a reasonable

gage set to Wages of Workmen: It is not unknown how that some covetous Masters in hard times, if they are well stocked and of Abilities, will set on work many Poor, but they must take such Wages as they are not able to live upon, and that also many times paid in Corn, Wool, Cheese, and other things, at rates high enough: and indeed, if they will work upon these terms they may, but if not, they turn them off, or not employ them, and thereupon the poor Workmen not being able to live without Work, and having no place to resort for any, are under a necessity of working to them at inconsiderable Rates. And such Masters make greater advantage by this means when Trade is low than when it is open: but by this means there would be a refuge for the Poor to be employed at reasonable Wages; and the reason is evident, because this being but an Expedient, not so much for gain to the Master, as for employment for the Poor, as long as the Stock makes but good itself, or be managed without considerable loss, it attains its End, and therefore may give competent Wages. But on the other hand the Trading-Master looks for his Profit, and if his Stock turns not to him for Gain, he gives over, or reduceth the Work-man to inconsiderable Wages, that his own Gain may be the greater. And although it may be there be some honest minded and charitable masters that will be content for some time to employ their Stock though without Gain, yet they are but rare to be found, and such as commonly hold not out long unless they find Profit, though perchance they suffer no loss.

These be some of those Considerations that shew the usefulness of this Expedient: I shall now consider some of the Objections that may be made against it.

1. Obj. It is a great Business to raise for the purpose four Years Pay at once to make up a Stock, and yearly Contributions are more easie.

I answer, It is true, and yet the advantage even to the Objectors themselves is even to their Sense apparently great: If a man had a Rent of Inheritance issuing out of his Land, he would not think much of giving sixteen years purchase to buy it in: And the charge that goes out for the Poor, as it is as much and as certain a Charge as a Rent, so it is evident to us that it hath increased yearly, and of necessity, the longer things are continued in this careless way, it must increase in an excessive Proportion, and to give four Years Purchase to abate it, or if it were but to keep it at a stay, were good husbandry. 2. Besides this, let a man consider what other Losses do accrue by the want of a due Provision of Work, and an industrious Education for the Poor, in thieving and stealing, and sending such Malefactors to Goals at the charges of the Parish, in prosecuting them at Assizes and Sessions, in cutting and destroying of Woods, pulling of Hedges, and trespasses to Corn and Grass thereby, in Alms giving at the door; these would be, if not altogether prevented, yet, in a great measure they would, when that most unchristian and indeed inhumane way of Living among most ordinary indigent People is remedied by convenient Employment and Wages.

2. Obj. But there are a sort of idle People that will rather beg than work, though they may be employed; and so that Trade of Begging and Idleness would be still continued.

I Answer, 1. That we do furnish a compulsory Law to enforce Idle Persons to work; which would prevent it. 2. By this means, the benefit of Working would exceed the benefit of Begging, which would cause Persons to leave it. 3. By the educating of Children in a way of industry there would be gradually a Disaccustomedness to that way, which would in time quite remove it. But 4. When men were once assured by a clear Evidence, that the Poor might have

Work upon reasonable terms, no man would give; the Laws against Wanderers that were able to work, and against the Relievers of such, would be chearfully put in Execution, which now men even upon the account of common charity cannot bring themselves to.

3. Obj. But what considerable advantage would such a Stock as four hundred Pounds do when perchance in a time of Trading four or five thousand Pounds employed by Masters in a Parish is but enough to set their Poor on work, where it may be there are two or three hundred persons that are thus employed.

I answer, It would be a great help to the poor in a time of scarcity of work, although it should lie still in a time of plenty of Work. The supply of Work, for a month, or two, or three, in a Year, when Traders for advantage give over, keeps Industry on the wheels, and yields a considerable Supply. 2. In good times, when there is no need of it, it is as capable of Increase and Improvement, being employed as private mens Stocks are, which would inlarge it, or at least inable it to bear some loss in times of lowness of Trade. 3. If once such a Stock were going, it would not only increase by it self, but it would have continual accession by charitable Gifts, which would do five times the good thus employed, than employed as they are in Doles and little yearly Pensions, which consume and come to nothing, but are swallowed up in the present Necessity of the Poor, and leave but small sings of advantage behind them: whereas the following of the method now propounded will at least leave the persons to whom it is applied, the advantage of an industrious Education and Profession, which will abide by them.

4. Obj. But men that are concerned for their own benefit in the prosecution of their Trade, as for instance, of Cloathing, and consequently more careful than Persons employed for others, yet do lose by their trading, and many times impair their Stocks; and therefore this, that cannot be expected to be neither so industriously nor sucessfully managed, may be in the same Condition.

I answer, 1. in general. In this way there must needs be one of these events:

1. Either there will be Gain, and then it doth improve the Stock, and lays up an Advantage that may compensate a former loss, and enable the bearing of a future loss. And I know no reason but that in this Management there may be sometimes at least of advantage as well as in private trading. The Times are not always at a stand in Trade, but sometimes, and most ordinarily there is some gains in it, though not so much as at other times; and then the good times makes amends for the bad.

2. Or else, though there be no gain, there will be no loss, but it stands at a stay, and if it doth so this design attains its End, which is the imployment of the Poor. Though it yields not the Master or Trader any gain, yet it yields the Poor a subsistence in their Wages and Work. It is true a private Tradesman looks to gain so much as may at least maintain himself and his Family. And if he doth not he gives over his Trading as not answering his end; and it may be in some cases reasonable to do so; But though here be little or no gain, yet the end is attained, because the Poor are employed and paid though the Stock increase not.

3. Or else there is Loss: To this I say: 1. If there be loss, yet it is but gradual, not altogether. Suppose it be twenty, thirty, or forty pounds in a Year, in a Stock of four hundred Pounds, and by that account, yet this Stock of four hundred Pounds, and by that account, yet this Stock will not be wholly exhausted in five or six Years; and if it should be so, yet the

Loss to the Parish would not be more than it would be if its old course of contribution at the height that it would have during the spending of that Stock which is thereby, as before is observed, in a great measure remedied: 2. These decays may possibly be repaired by charitable Gifts and Bequests. 3. But if it were not, yet such gradual decays may be supplied by the Parishes with the same Ease that their contribution would have been, all things considered, and possibly better times of Trade may happen at least once in two or three Years which may repair the loss, or at least keep the Stock at its full gage with small helps: 4. But suppose the worst, and that in the Compass of three or four Years the whole Stock were wholly drawn dry; I say confidently that the advantage the Country would have by a course of industrious Education of the Poor continued but one three or four Years, will more then countervail the loss of a very considerable Stock, in preventing that Trade of Idleness which grows up in poor Families, which will daily infinitely increase, and will receive a very great check, and possibly such as will for ever prevent the return of such a course of life by the interruption of a tract of three or four Years of Employment, and will put thousands in that tract of time into a course of trade and livelyhood which they will carry with them all their lives after. 5. And besides all this, it is not likely the Trade will suffer a perpetual interruption, but even while this Stock is in this wane and declination, private men will be trading, and then in this decay and declination of the Stock (if it should be unsupplied) there will be Work at private hands, and Persons instructed and fitted and able to do it, which may prevent a total interruption of an industrious Education, and may give some intervals of relation of the employment of the common Stock, at least in that fulness as formerly till it be recruited by new supplies. 6. But yet farther, the Method of the proposed Employment, though it be principally bottomed upon the trade of Woollen Cloathing, yet it will have other supplies, as is propounded, as making of Kerseys, Baize, Knitting of Stockings, dressing and ordering of Hemp and Flax, and spinning and Weaving it. And though there were no other but the Woollen Manufacturer, yet if it should please our Superiours to interdict the wearing of forein Manufactures, our own consumption at home and the necessity that they have in forein Parts of our Woollen manufactures, would double the Trade of Woollen Manufactures.

5. Obj. The poor have Work already if they will work, and the setting up such a publique Trade will but make Workmen the more independent, and decline the Employment of private Traders, which will tend to the decay of Trade.

I Answer 1. It is true, when Trading is quick possibly they may have Work enough, but upon any check in Trade they are oftentimes turned off unless they will work at extream low Wages, and ill paid. 2. When work is so plenteous at private hands, there may be an intermission or relaxation of the Employment of the common Stock: Especially if they can have better Wages at Private hands; for it will be enough for this to be supplemental of the defects of work at others hands, and it sufficiently attains its End if it may be a refuge at the time of need for those that would work and cannot get it, and an Expedient to force those to work than can and will not.

6 Objection. Poor that do their work well, and are honest and industrious, cannot want work when any is to be had in the Country, and those that are not employed are either such as will not work, or cannot tell how to work, or will steal or purloin their work: These will undoe the Work-house.

I answer 1. Sometimes there are, when the honestest Workmen cannot get Work, and this will be a reserve for them. 2. But as for others, here will be an Expedient to teach them to work that cannot, and to compell them to Work that can, and to punish them that are dishonest in their Work. 3. And if there were no punishment, yet when a Work-House and Stock is once settled, that would be sufficient to make them Work: For when every man were once sure that they that would honestly work might have it, and reasonable Wages, every Wanderer and Begger would be esteemed such a Person as will not work, or will be dishonest in it, and not fit to be relieved, but the Laws to be severly put in Execution against them.

7 Obj. But where shall we have men that will undertake the employment, and be faithful and trusty in it?

I answer, 1. There be many poor and honest men, who for a small Salary and a Room or two to work and lodge in the Work-House, would be fit enough to undertake the Employment of a Master, and yet he would have not great Trust upon him, for the Stock would be lodged in the hands of the Overseers, and they to deliver it out, and take weekly or monthly Accounts: which Overseers may be substantial men and at no great trouble, and eligible either by the Justices of Peace or Parishioners, yearly, or once in three years, and their trouble would be no greater than the trouble of Overseers of the Poor, or Church-Wardens in any Parish.

And thus I have hastily and cursorily gone through the Method, Reasons, and Objections of this Proposal, which I am sure, if it can be brought to a due Accomplishment, is,

1. A Work of great Humanity, and such as we owe to those of our own Nature, as we are men. the wise God did tell his ancient people, that the Poor should be always among them; which was, 1. To exercise their Liberality and Charity in supplying the Wants of some by the Abundance of others. And 2. To exercise their Discretion and Industry to think of and set on foot such means as might put them in a course of honest Employment, and encourage them in it: they that are rich are Stewards of their Wealth, and they that are wise are Stewards of their Wisdom, unto that great Master of the Family of Heaven and Earth, to whom they must give an account of both; and one, I am sure, of the best Accounts they can give of both, is to employ them in the Reformation and Relief of those that want both or either. Am I my Brother's Keeper, was the Answer of one of the worst of men.

2. A Work that as well becomes a Christian as any, Christianity recommending Charity as one of the principal Christian Vertues. And indeed, the ill provision for the Poor in England, is one of the greatest Reproaches to us in relation to our Christian Profession.

3. A Work for a good English man. The want of a due Provision for Education and Relief of the Poor in a way of Industry, is that which fills the Goals with Malefactors, and fills the Kingdom with idle and unprofitable Persons, that consume the Stock of the kingdom without improving it, and that will daily increase even to a Desolation in time: And this Error in the first Concoction is never remediable but by gibbets and whipping. But there must be a sound, prudent, and resolved Method for an industrious Education of the Poor, and that will give better Remedy against these Corruptions than the after gain of Penalties can.

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