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THOUGHTS

ON THE PRESENT

STATE OF THE POOR,

AND

THE INTENDED BILL

FOR

Their better Relief and Employment.

By a KENTISHMAN.

LONDON:

Printed for N. CONANT, Successor to
Mr. WHISTON, in Fleet-street,

MDCCLXXVI.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE first part of this pamphlet was written about five years ago, in consequence of an advertisement of the high sheriff and gentlemen assembled at the assizes for the County of Kent, for a meeting to be held at Maidstone on Tuesday October 2d, and at Canterbury on Friday October 5th, 1770, to consider of proper methods for the better care of the poor; and for applying to parliament for powers to carry the same into execution. The remainder of it consists of two letters written lately at the request of a neighbouring gentleman; who, having shewn the whole to some of those members of the house of commons that have exerted themselves the most on this business, and finding it their opinion that the publication of these papers might throw some useful lights upon the subject to which they relate, requested the Author to allow them to be printed; which he did not think himself warranted to refuse, though conscious that they are in many respects unfit for the public eye.

As they were written at different times,
and only for the inspection of a private friend;

iv ADVERTISEMENT.

want of connection, as well as correctness, will appear in every part. These he would have endeavoured to reform, had it been in his power; but, ill health having disabled him, he can only submit them in their present rough state to the candour of the reader, and entreat him to attend to the *matter* which they contain, without regarding the *manner* in which it is delivered.

THOUGHTS, &c.

THAT there is a very great increase in the poors-rate of late years, is a fact too notorious to be denied. It is become an almost intolerable burthen on the farmer; and it is high time to think of some effectual remedy to put a stop to an increasing evil, which has been foreseen and complained of these hundred years.

In the reign of King Charles the Second, Sir Josiah Child thought general work-houses might answer the end, under proper regulations, which he then pointed out: several were at that time attempted; but, he acknowledges, none succeeded, except that at Dorchester. About twenty years after, in the year 1700, Mr. Cary published his scheme, a good deal on the plan of Sir Josiah's, and gives Bristol as an instance of the probability of the success of such houses. However,

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no great dependance could be had on this example because he published within four years after its erection, a term too short to form a proper judgement. This scheme continued encreasing in favour with the publick for some years, till, in the year 1723, the legislature thought proper to give their sanction to it, by passing an Act to empower Parishes to erect work-houses singly, or in conjunction with others, as was found most convenient. Many seemingly forcible arguments were used in their favour, as a likely means of providing well for the poor, and, at the same time, lessening the charge of Parishes. It was urged, that, by bringing the poor into one house, and to one or two fires, according to their numbers, much might be saved in house-rent and firing; and that, by keeping the poor employed in some sort of in-door work, under proper regulations and a fit master, the profit of the labour of these poor people would turn to good account. This way of reasoning was so plausible, that many parishes in this county came into the scheme. They have been tried long enough to enable us to judge how they have answered; and I doubt, on the whole, few parishes will be found, where the rates have been lessened by them: on the contrary, they have in general continued increasing as much, at least, as in the neighbouring parishes without them. The greater increase of the poors rates in
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the parish of A——, beyond its neighbour parish of G—— C——, is a confirmation of what is here advanced; for it appears, that the former, where there has been a work-house these five and forty years, has exceeded the latter, which never had any, in the increase of their rates, by three pence farthing in the pound, on an exact calculation of the sesses in both parishes for eight years before the work-house was in being, compared with what has been raised in each parish during the last eight years, ended at Easter 1770.

The work-house in the parish of W— was erected 27 years ago; and it appears from the parish books of the Overseers accounts, that, in the 27 years immediately preceding it's erection, the sesses at an average did not come to thirteen pence half penny in the pound one year with another, and that the monies raised in those years amounted only to the sum of 216l. a year; and that, for the same space of time since the work-house has been established, the sesses have been at above eighteen pence half-penny in the pound; and the monies raised in these last 27 years have amounted to the sum of 320l. a year, that is, an increase of 104l. a year, almost one half more than they usually came to before there was a work-house. It is to be feared, the case is nearly the same in most
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parishes throughout the county, where they have come into them.

Their want of success seems to proceed from two or three causes; the difficulty of getting a proper master; the inattention of the guardians; and the small profits arising from the labour of the poor people in the House. As to the first, experience has shewn, it is a very difficult matter to find a sober, industrious, frugal, and honest man, to undertake such a charge; but this is not all, he must be a man of some spirit too, and capable of governing, and keeping the people under him in proper order, as well as of employing them in some sort of work. The guardians of the parish of W— are twelve of the principal farmers, chose in annually by the vestry, and are to attend the work-house by two and two at a time for a month, so that they are each of them to overlook the house two months in a year. One would think this to be no great task; and yet, I am sorry to say, it is but poorly executed: and why should we wonder at it, when we may observe, how few gentlemen in the commission of the peace, or in other commissions, will attend business, where the public good only is concerned. The labour of the poor can never be much; it arises only from those in the House, which is generally filled with decrepit old men and women, wenches with child, or a young one at the breast,

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breast, and mere children able to do very little; for as soon as they are fit for work, they either are, or ought to be, put out to service, so that the labour of such people cannot avail much; and indeed, in the best-regulated houses, it seldom amounts to more than 20 s. a head in the year, exclusive of the necessary Work of the house, which is not to be brought to account. From what is here said of the small profit arising from their labour, I would not be understood to insinuate that it is not worth minding; for it is certainly of great consequence to keep all in such Houses in constant employ, even though money should be lost by it, for if they are not busied on something, they will be apt to run into mischief. It is mentioned only as a caution to gentlemen not to lay too much stress on such profits in any future undertaking.

Some gentlemen are of opinion, that the inconvenience of not having able masters may be, in a great measure, obviated by applying to parliament for power to erect larger work-houses through the whole county, either one for each division of Justices, or one for each Hundred; or by uniting a certain number of parishes, more or less, according to the size, with respect only to the convenience of situation, without any regard either to the common division of the Justices, or the Hundreds,

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because by this means the salary may be increased, which might induce proper persons to offer to undertake the management of such houses. Doubtless a larger salary will be some inducement; but it is to be questioned whether it will be sufficient. The many bad masters and mistresses in the work-house at Canterbury, an institution of the same sort with those now talked of, where thirteen whole parishes, and a part of a fourteenth, are united under a certain number of guardians, and a master, mistress, and other officers, with proper salaries, and where the number of poor commonly run at about 200, shew the difficulty of procuring good ones; and indeed it is so disagreeable an office to be forced to live among such numbers of the lowest of the people, who are most of them a discontented set of mortals, and never to be pleased, that few people, capable of getting their livelihood by any other means, would be willing to undertake it; and such as cannot live by other means, will be seldom found qualified. The constant clamour and noise of the poor people in the house, and the complaints of the occupiers without doors, render it so disagreeable an office, that it always has been, and, it is to be feared, ever must remain an obstruction to the finding well-qualified persons to undertake the charge, even with a good salary annexed.

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The appointing of proper guardians is another consideration. If tradesmen are appointed, experience tells us, they will be too apt to favour their own advantage, and make a job of it. The farmers are liable to become very negligent. The gentlemen are the properest for this office; and how many of them are to be found, that reside the major part of the year in the country? and how few of those will apply to public business, during the winter part! It will be well if one in a district is to be found, and perhaps this one will not care to attend much in that cold season. Without the constant attendance of the guardians, no house can be expected to succeed well: this therefore is a point, that requires due consideration.

There is another thing, that greatly merits the attention of gentlemen: if general work-houses are set up, the majority of parishioners, who contribute to the charge, will be entirely deprived of the advantage of having any part of it laid out among them. I am sensible, it will be said, this makes no difference in regard to the whole county, and therefore need not be attended to. I cannot help being of a contrary opinion. The parishes, where these several work-houses are erected, will be the only gainers; the others, that pay equal ses-

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ses, as much hurt. The parish of W—, for ten years past, has raised the yearly sum of 320l. at an average, above 300l. of which has been constantly expended in the parish. Such a yearly sum carried out of so small a place will be severely felt by the little shopkeepers in particular, who generally get more by the profits of what they furnish to the work-house than their selves come to; neither are the farmers without their advantage too, in supplying the house with corn, pork, cheese, and fire-wood; and this, as it is a good deal by rotation on account of the frequent change of officers and guardians, is at times an advantage to all; from whence it follows, that though the county in general may not be impoverished, yet many individuals will, who will have just room for complaint, when they find they reap not the least advantage from any part of the monies raised by them, which, as the case now stands, they pay with one hand, and receive a part back with the other, and the whole is still circulating among them; neither is it quite clear, that all the money raised will circulate in the county at large, for it is more than probable, that the guardians will find their advantage in dealing directly with tradesmen in London for many articles, such as hemp, cheese, grocery goods, coarse cloths for cloathing, &c. which will take off a great deal,

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deal, and deprive the county at large of a considerable return.

Another argument, used in support of this opinion, is the prevention of many suits between parish and parish, which, it is said, are now perpetually carrying on at a great expence; for, if district work-houses are set up, it will be very immaterial to what parish within each district the paupers belong. It will undoubtedly prevent some suits; but, if we look back into the books of Reports, I dare be bold to say, those that have been carried into Westminster Hall, fall far short of 500 for these 100 years past: and what is that number compared to the whole kingdom, which consists of above 8000 parishes, besides the many hamlets and vills in the northern and western counties, which, in respect to the poor, are as so many separate and distinct parishes? Indeed there are many appeals to the quarter sessions, of which no notice is taken in the Report books. These are carried on at a trifling expence in regard to the others; and even these are so few, in comparison to the number of parishes in each jurisdiction, that we can hardly allot one to a parish at an average in twenty years, and the expence not to amount to a farthing in the pound in each year; a consideration of no account!

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Nothing can be got by such an act, except a compulsory clause to oblige parishes to come into such an allotment; for, as the law now stands, by 9 Geo. I, any number of parishes, that are disposed to do it, may join, with the consent and approbation of the justices of the division, and erect a common work-house. It is an unfavourable presumption, that, as far as I am able to learn, but one such aggregate work-house has been attempted to be established in this county since the first passing of the act, and even that lasted only a very few years. What was the true occasion of its being dissolved I am not well informed: but, had it been manifestly for the benefit and advantage of the parishes concerned, it is difficult to suppose pique or prejudice could run so high, as to occasion the abolition of an institution so much to the advantage of all that paid rates to it as it has been represented to be by some gentlemen, who seem too fond of these general work-houses, of which nobody can well tell the success till some longer trial has been made. It is said, indeed, they have succeeded in Norfolk and Suffolk: some pains have been taken to enquire into the state of them there; several appear to have done well; others, it is said, have not; a further enquiry into their true state should be made, wherein it would be necessary

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necessary to enquire into the particular rates paid by every parish within each district for as many years, before these houses of industry were established, as have passed since; with a yearly account of what has been raised in the several parishes for the use of the house. The rules and orders they have framed are generally well calculated for the purpose, and are nearly the same in all the houses. The poor are provided for in the house, under the care of a governor and matron, as they call the master and mistress, subject to the inspection of the directors and acting guardians in weekly, and of the directors and guardians at large in quarterly or special, meetings. The poor in general live well; but there is great danger of incurring an unnecessary expence, either from the dishonesty of the master or mistress, or from the inactivity and want of vigilance in the guardians; and large communities in general are most subject to fraud and mismanagement, which are not so soon discovered in the larger as in the smaller ones. And indeed it is found in Suffolk, that gentlemen grow tired of a constant attendance, and drop off apace; so that the management begins already to devolve upon the farmers, of whom the guardians chiefly consist, who are observed there to make jobs of their contracts; neither are the parochial clergy, who by the Act are standing guardians, and may be

be directors, sufficient to stem the tide; they have not weight enough to over-balance the farmers: and if this appears, as it certainly does, so soon after their erection, what are we to expect twenty years hence, which is the shortest period, in which the most sanguine advocate for these houses hope to be able to make the least abatement in the rates?

The work-house at Canterbury was not erected on this law of 9 Geo. I, but by virtue of a particular act passed about forty-two years ago. And what has been the success? They contracted a large debt at first, which increased to 2200l.; and there is a debt of 500l. still remaining, notwithstanding there is above 200l. a year in landed estate belonging to it, given originally to the city for the use of the poor, at the instance of Abp. Parker, by Queen Elizabeth, being the site and estate of the then late dissolved hospital of poor priests, an income no district work-house can hope to enjoy; though, to the credit of the present guardians be it spoken, they have, by prudent management, paid off 100l. a year for ten years past, reduced their fees to three shillings in the pound, and are in hopes of bringing them down to half a crown next year.

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An alteration of the laws in being, such as this of district work-houses, ought to be well weighed before it is carried into execution. There ought to be a clear conviction, that *the laws now in force, if put in execution, are not sufficient for the purposes intended in enacting them, and that there is the greatest probability, the methods proposed are such as will certainly answer the design.* I say *the laws now in force, if put in execution,* because it appears that several of the most likely to have proved the most efficacious have never been at all regarded; or, if they have in some very few places, went soon into a total disuse. A few examples will be sufficient to illustrate this point.

By the 3d W. c. 11. it was ordered, that in every parish the names of all who receive collections be registered in a book kept for that purpose, with *the day and year when they were first admitted to have relief, and the occasion which first brought them under that necessity; and yearly in Easter week, or as often as shall be thought convenient, the parishioners shall meet in the vestry, or other usual place of meeting in the parish, before whom the book shall be produced; and all persons receiving collections to be called over; and the reasons of their taking relief examined, and a new list made and entered.* In 8 and 9 W. c. 30. a further regulation

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was made, in order to deter people from relief before some absolute necessity forced them to it, by ordering all others that were put on weekly collection to wear a badge on their right shoulder. The 43d of Eliz. c. 2. directed every parish to have *a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and other ware and stuff, to set the poor on work.* This was further encouraged by 3 Car. I. c. 4. which gives the majority of the parish officers, with the consent of two justices, full power *to set up and use any trade, mystery, or occupation, only for the setting on work and better relief of the poor.* I do not find the first of these Acts has been hardly any where strictly observed, or a separate book kept for the purpose of noting down the time of the admission of the paupers, and the reasons for their taking relief, or any new lists made of them beforehand. Indeed, at the end of the year, in Easter Week or soon after, when the overseers make up their accounts, the names of those to whom they have paid relief in the past year are entered in the accounts, and read over with the other articles of expences; but no list for the year then next coming is made, nor any care taken who shall remain, or who shall be struck off: this is the most usual practice, and no reason why these paupers are on the list is ever set down or thought of. The second act, which

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orders the badge, has been almost as much disregarded, though enacted with good consideration. It would, if duly executed, be a likely means to stir up the poor to industry, and spur them on to care and sobriety, the want of which is a main cause of the increase of the poors rates. I do not find it ever was carried into a continued execution in any one parish: now and then a vigilant magistrate may have attempted to restore it; but from the very beginning the poor endeavoured to elude it (a shrewd sign it would take the desired effect, if put again in practice); for I have seen an order of vestry made, within two years after the act was passed, to enforce it, by ordering the overseers not to pay that week's allowance to the pauper, in which he was seen in the street or highway without his badge on, and to stop it still such time as the badge was again put on, and regularly worn.

It is certain these several Acts are now almost quite disregarded, though all of them have not been always equally so. That of 43 Eliz. was certainly carried into execution for many years after it was first enacted, as may be reasonably concluded from the further power given to the parish officers, by 3 Car. I. of exercising any trade they have not been apprentices to, for the benefit of

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keeping the poor in constant employment; a plain indication that the legislature wisely found business of some sort the surest means of keeping them from being so chargeable as they would otherwise be. It is not unlikely but the troublesome times, which so soon followed this second act, were the only cause why this law went into disuse.

A house or room for work, with a proper stock, and implements to set the poor at work when they cannot be employed without doors, which in severe and long frosts is commonly the case, ought by all means to be restored every where. These times are generally dear too, and will frequently oblige many of the poor to apply for relief, who would never think of it if they were sure of being set to work on their first application; and, when once they are put upon the list, they are often continued there till by their age they become proper objects; whereas, if a new list was made every year, with the time and reason of the admission, and that list read over at least twice in the year in a vestry called for that purpose, the reason for their admission in such hard times would appear manifestly upon the face of it; and if that was the only cause, they would of course be struck off when the reason ceased; and not only in that, but in any other case where it was ap-
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parent to the vestry that there was no further occasion for Relief.

If these few acts were duly enforced, it is to be expected that a spirit of industry might soon be instilled into the minds of the labouring part of the people, which is the main thing wanted, such as there used to be within the memory of man. It would of course introduce a saving frugal way of living among them, and a shame to apply for relief till necessity forced them to it.

It would be unjust to suppose work-houses to be the sole cause of the increase of fees; it is a sufficient objection, that they do not lighten the burthen, which daily experience shews they do not. The evil is to be attributed to many other causes, such as an improvidence in the poor at one season to lay up store against the necessities of another, in case of sickness, want of work, or other unavoidable accidents; a luxurious way of life, in comparison to what they were formerly used to, and, above all, an increase of wages, which is indeed the source of many other mischiefs; for it is observable, that where the highest wages are given, there they do the least work; and in places where men can earn half a crown or three shillings a day, they seldom work above three or four days in a
week,

week, spend the rest of their money at the ale-house, and leave their families to starve at home.

One thing, however, it might be worth while to apply to parliament for; and that is, for a proper power in the justices to appoint an inspector, or middle man between them and the overseers, to overlook a certain number of parishes, with a convenient salary; to examine what persons are upon the lists, and the reasons of their admission, with power to strike off those they think improper objects, and to admit such as appear to have been unjustly refused by the vestry and officers; to see that all such regularly wear the badge; to have a particular eye to such boys and girls as are not put out to trades or service at proper ages, or do not keep to service afterwards; or to such single men or women as lay upon their own hands before they have been married, unless rendered unfit for service by old age or other infirmities, from whence many of our present mischiefs relating to the poor undoubtedly flow; to see that all the poors laws are duly executed; and to call a vestry in each parish within their districts once every quarter, or oftener if need requires; and to make a report thereof to the justices of the division, at a special session to be held quarterly for that purpose. And if there is a work-house

house within any of their districts, to have a further power to inspect the management of the house, to reprimand and inflict some slight punishment on the paupers, and even on the master or mistress, in case of misbehaviour; and, if occasion be, to order the officers and vestry to remove them, and to chuse others in their room; as well as to take care that no improper person is admitted into it; with an appeal, in all these cases, either for the inspectors, overseers, parishioners, or pauper, to the next special sessions; and from thence, if need be, to the quarter sessions. Such an officer might be very useful, and worth an application to parliament, to try the experiment for a certain number of years: let us suppose seven, for it would be wrong at first to make it perpetual, because nothing but the experience of the thing can certainly shew its utility. Such a term is sufficient to judge whether it will be worth while to continue it; and it will be always found easier to get another act to render it perpetual, than, if it was made so at first, to procure its repeal, in case it should turn out a burthen only without any use.

This scheme would not alter the laws in any respect; on the contrary, it would be the means of enforcing them, and therefore seems well worth the trial, much preferable to that of

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of general work-houses, and will cost a trifle; for the expence of a proper salary to an inspector cannot be great, when divided between a number of parishes, and will cease with the office if it does not succeed; whereas the building of houses must be attended with a very great expence at first; and, should the project fail in its success, it will remain a heavy load on every parish by the debt contracted for that purpose, if it should be thought proper to borrow the money; or, if it is raised at once, will be an intolerable burthen on the present occupiers, and occasion a deal of clamour. If then an application to parliament is judged necessary, let it be for appointing an inspector, with sufficient powers, during a certain term of years, only by way of experiment; should it answer the intent, it may be soon made perpetual.

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SINCE the foregoing observations were drawn up, some gentlemen, who have seen them, and approve of the inspectorship of the poor, and poor laws, therein proposed, as an office that may be attended with many advantages both to the paupers themselves and to those that pay for their support, have thought, that the same persons, who superintend the overseers and vestries, might also overlook the surveyors of the highways, and the amendment of the roads within their respective districts, which seem to want as much regulation as the other. The two officers may be very conveniently and properly united in the same person, as the due inspection of the overseers and poor will require the frequent attendance of the inspector in each parish; and he may with little more trouble visit the roads, examine the state of them, and make his report of both together.

By the late general Road Act of 7 G. III. the Justices, *at their special sessions, by writing under their hands and seals, may order and appoint those roads which do most want repair, within their jurisdiction, to be first amended, and at what time, and in what manner, the same shall be performed; according to which order (if such there be) all and singular the*

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respective surveyors of the said highways are hereby required to proceed within their respective liberties. This Act undoubtedly gives the justices full power to order the amendment of the roads in every parish within their division; and many good effects have arisen from it, in roads frequented by the several justices, as far as they travel: but yet all others remain in as bad a state as ever; and those that are improved are not so much so as they might have been, had the common parish surveyors been more skilled in the proper ordering of repairs. The short experience we have had, since the composition has been settled by this act at so low a rate, has manifested how much more can be done by hiring carriages and labourers to do the work, than by leaving it to the farmers to do it themselves, as by the old law; and this too at a much easier rate to the occupier, whether farmer or cottager. But still there is something wanting: the power of the justices, as the law now directs, is very sufficient; due information only is what they stand in need of, for they do not see half the roads in the parishes they frequent most, and there are numbers where they seldom or ever come; most also of the surveyors, who change every year, are entirely ignorant of the proper methods of managing the materials;

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rials, or ordering them to the best advantage; and this perpetual change is a constant obstacle to their understanding it. The few parishes that have come into choosing a single man with a salary are an example of what may be done by the proposed method, and point out the use of a general inspector of the roads; who should be empowered, not only to order which road should be first mended, and the time of doing it, but the manner also how it should be laid out, and the proper method of repairing it, still subject to the justices in their special sessions, to whom they ought to give a state of the several roads within their respective districts, and of the work done since their last report, at least twice in the year, and take directions how and when to proceed. Such an office, well executed, would bid fair to bring the roads into tolerable order, and prevent the necessity of erecting new turnpikes, and all this might be done in most places by the composition money only, if set at 30s. a plough-land, without any cess, in a very few years. There is indeed a necessity of some such person to keep the farmers, who are now generally appointed surveyors, to do any duty; for it is well known, very little is done in parishes where gentlemen do not live, or at least do not often see, and then only in a few of the

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main roads there. One person may be very capable of managing both businesſes, and therefore it is a very right and prudent measure to join them together in a future application to parliament. A ſmall addition to the ſalary, on account of putting the inspection of the roads to that of the poor, will make full amends for the additional trouble.

October 17, 1770.

To

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To F—— H—— Esquire.

June 27, 1775.

S I R,

AS you are pleaſed to deſire to know my thoughts of the report from the committee, appointed to review and conſider the ſeveral laws which concern the relief and ſettlement of the poor, and the laws relating to vagrants; and alſo the ſtate of the ſeveral houſes of Correction within that part of Great Britain called England, 1775; I herewith ſend them, and wiſh they may be acceptable to you.

About five years ago, when Mr. Ward propoſed his ſcheme to this county, which was very ſimilar to that in the report, ſome gentlemen then deſired me to draw up my thoughts upon it, which I did; and, as the ſame reaſons ſeem ſtill to ſubſiſt, I herewith ſend you a copy of them. I have not yet ſeen any thing that has tended to make me alter my opinion ſince, but many to confirm it. There are ſome things in the report not fully touched upon in the little eſſay, which I muſt beg leave to take notice of.

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The committee seem to think the present laws are defective in themselves, and the good purposes intended by them in many respects prevented. I cannot readily come into that way of thinking; whatever defect there is, it proceeds more from the want of a due execution, than from any other cause. They are now generally very well understood, a main and material article in all laws; and where the officers in their several parishes do their duty, and the justices at their petty sessions give due attention to the complaints of the poor on the one hand, and to the officers on the other, the poor are generally well provided for and kept employed, and the cesses do not encrease.

There are other ways and means, besides that of erecting district work-houses, consistent with the laws in being, to reduce the poors rates without oppressing the poor; and of this I can give an example, that has been put in practice in my own parish. About seven years ago it was agreed in vestry to nominate a single person, who should be paid for collecting the rates, relieving the poor, attending the guardians at the work-house, and in short managing every thing that is to be done in this business, except in those few particular cases, where the overseers, appointed by the justices, are obliged to act themselves. There

There was a person chosen, who has continued to act ever since. When he undertook the charge, the parish was very considerably in debt, and the cesses amounted to two shillings and six-pence in the pound for the year. The first half-year he had a fifteen-penny cess, the next half-year he sunk it to a shilling, and he is now got to two nine-penny cesses, where it is like to continue, unless by any unforeseen accident a great charge is unexpectedly brought upon the parish. He paid off the debt long ago, and has since advanced almost 100 l. to buy in a charity that stood out on the life of a person, and this too at a time when the necessaries of life have been growing dearer and dearer every year. His only method is, to get a true insight into the real state of every poor family in the parish, by which means he is enabled to judge of their necessary wants, and to make an allowance accordingly, so that no one can complain of the least oppression; and it is very observable, that, during the space of seven years, there has not been one regular complaint from a pauper lodged against him before the justices for want of a proper allowance. This is sufficient to prove the good effect that may ensue from trying a single man with a salary, which might be done for a few years, without altering the present laws, and, if it did not succeed, might be laid aside.

aside. The present method is liable to objection from the frequent change of officers, for they are out of office before they are acquainted with the duties of it.

The only suggestion in the report, to support the erection of the large district work-houses, containing the poor of several parishes according to their extent and number of poor inhabitants, is the putting a stop to litigations concerning settlements, which, it is said, consumes a considerable part of the money raised for the relief of the poor. I wish the gentlemen of the committee would give themselves the trouble to examine into it, each one in his own neighbourhood; it is humbly presumed, they would find this article, which sounds great upon paper, and may sometimes fall heavy upon here and there a particular parish, is a trifle in the whole, and will not amount to near a half-penny in the pound throughout a whole county. Some people, who constantly attend the quarter sessions, and by that means are acquainted with the appeals that come there, and go from thence to the King's Bench, observe they do not amount to half that very small sum in a year; and that, since the publication of Burn's Justice, Burrow's Cases, and some other law decisions relative to the poor, it is remarked, they grow and less and less every day.

apply for a remedy to remove an evil, visibly encreasing very fast of itself, appears to be a needless precaution, especially if it is considered that the very remedy itself may introduce more charge and greater inconveniencies than now arise from the grievance complained of. It is said, the late lord Hardwicke put a stop to the general register bill in the House of Lords, by observing, that he never knew 2000 l. a year lost, for want of a general register, in any one year during the course of his very long practice, and that he thought 30,000 l. a year, which he computed the charge of registering would come to, was too heavy a tax on the subject in general, to save so small an annual sum, though it might sometimes fall heavy on a few individuals. It is well if the method proposed, to prevent this very small dying burthen of litigations about parish settlements, does not introduce a more considerable charge some other way.

It is to be hoped, should these resolutions pass into a law, that they may answer the desired purpose. The attempt, however, must be allowed at least hazardous, and ought to be considered in all lights before it is carried into execution. The expence of the building, furniture, and laying in a proper stock of materials for carrying on some sort of manufacture, will be a certain one, and must

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be immediately raised; to what amount, it is not easy to ascertain: be it what it will, it will be a mortgage of so much on each separate estate. Should any of the houses fail of success, through mismanagement or other unforeseen accident, the estates in such districts would remain liable either to an excessive charge in raising money to pay it off, or to the payment of a perpetual annuity towards the discharge of interest of the principal sum borrowed for the first establishment of the several houses, and be perhaps loaded with an additional increase of the poors rates into the bargain. For, whether the landlord or occupier pays it in the first instance, it will fall ultimately on the land; which shews what caution ought to be used, before so chargeable a scheme is passed into a law.

There is no occasion to take notice how these houses of industry are proposed to be governed or managed; 100l. a year in England, and 60l. in Wales, may be a proper qualification for a governor, and half those sums for a guardian, though, I hear, it is intended to double them. One thing is to be observed, that, if the county of Rutland is set higher than the Welsh counties, and it is less in circumference and contains fewer inhabitants than many of them, it may be very difficult to find governors sufficient to supervise

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supervise even one house, which may be sufficient for that county, as it consists only of forty-five parishes; for they are often so distressed for sheriffs there, that they are frequently obliged to nominate persons of no more than 40l. a year to that office.

The regulations in general seem to be such as might answer the proposed intent, if the scheme itself was good, provided the governors and guardians would attend their duty as they ought, which is a thing very much to be doubted: while it is new, they will be fond of it; when it begins to grow a little familiar, and the business to be carried on with a seeming regularity, gentlemen will be apt to neglect, and to fancy there is nothing worth their attendance to do, which will soon open a door to all sorts of frauds and iniquities. This is too plainly foreseen by their attendance on other commissions, such as that of the peace, the sewers, turnpikes, &c. How many meetings of each sort are obliged to be adjourned, because a sufficient number of commissioners do not attend to constitute a bench!

I must not pass over one regulation without a stricture, and that is, the removal of the impotent and old to these houses. It seems to carry with it a species of great hardship,

ship, and in some degree a mark of slavery, which in this age of liberty is pretty remarkable, did it not appear, in other things, that those who cry out the most for it are, many of them, such as carry it with a high hand to those below them. It cannot be better illustrated than by two examples that happened in my parish within these ten years; the one is, a farmer, that rented between 40l. or 50l. a year, which his father rented before him, and wherein he was born, an industrious sober man, fell under misfortunes, and was ruined solely by his wife's losing her senses, which reduced him so low, that he was obliged to put off his business, and go into the work-house. Here he was received, and entertained with all the tenderness imaginable; he had every indulgence the house could afford, and what was still more, his brother farmers, who were guardians, would give him a little pocket-money as they came to and fro to their meetings, and would always speak kindly to him, so that his life was made as comfortable as his situation could possibly admit. The other was also a farmer of about 25 l. a year; he lived to a very great age, was considerably turned of 90 when he came into the house, and lived till he was above 100. This poor old man also found many conveniences and comforts, by being placed in the middle of his

his neighbours and acquaintance. Had houses of industry been then established, and had they been removed ten or fifteen miles off to one of these houses, remote from their friends, relations, and even their common acquaintance, what indulgence could they have expected among a parcel of strangers? and how uncomfortable must their latter end have been! This rank of people are as susceptible of friendship and society, and perhaps more so, than those of higher life; and are certainly much more wedded to their native soil, or to a place where they have long lived, and to the particular intimacies they have contracted, than any other set of men whatsoever. Such examples will frequently occur; and what has been said of farmers, will hold good of the very lowest class of labourers. What an hardship will it be to remove either farmers fallen into decay, not by their own wilful fault or neglect, but by some unavoidable accident, or labourers, who have ever been industrious and careful, and perhaps have bred up a numerous progeny of useful subjects, and grown old, and impotent, by the sweat of their brow, even before the ordinary time allotted to man; I say, what a hardship will it be to send such people into a sort of banishment! for they will be apt to look upon it in that light, and cannot easily be persuaded to think

so philosophically as to admit that every place is their own country.

It is much to be feared, the scheme itself will not answer, for it is very doubtful whether a number together can be kept so cheap as the poor generally are when they provide for themselves separately. I cannot learn that, in any of the houses of industry already established, the poor are kept for so little as 5*l.* a year *per* head, meat, drink, washing, lodging, firing, and other incidental charges, included. Now, if gentlemen would look into their own neighbourhood, they would find many families, consisting of a man, his wife, and four children, that live happily and comfortably on the man's daily earnings, which in this county, as high in wages as most counties in the kingdom, is eighteen pence a day. If we suppose him to work the six days in every week of the year, and to be hindered no one day by sickness, bad weather, or any other accident whatsoever, which will fully compensate, in the course of a very few years, for what he may get extraordinary by mowing, harvest, and pole-pulling, his wages will amount to no more than twenty-three pounds eight shillings a year; for an even sum, let us set them at twenty-four pounds: with this he maintains himself, his wife, and four children, in
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house rent, cloaths, firing, and all other necessaries of life. This would cost at least 30*l.* a year in the best managed house; he keeps them then at twenty shillings *per* head cheaper than in any of these houses: and the reason is plain; there is no waste, and they contentedly make shift with a coarser cheaper food under their own roof, than they would submit to in such a house. I have named only four children, because there are many such families to be found in the country, that are maintained by the earnings of one man, which are not set too low, and are more than a common ordinary labourer generally earns. I deny not but there are some, who burn lime, or make bricks, or work constantly in the woods, that earn a great deal more: but these are extraordinary instances; and if we go to extraordinaries, I could produce two men, who have each of them wives, and eight children apiece, whom they support without any help from the parish. They have both of them, indeed, received from time to time a charitable gift or two, that belongs to the parish, and half-yearly distributed by the minister and parish officers, to such industrious poor of the parish (to the amount perhaps of 40 or 50 shillings a year) as have never received alms. But extraordinary instances ought not to be insisted upon, or produced in such cases on either side.

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In affairs of this sort, experience, where it may be had, is our best and only sure guide. Theory, in the common occurrences of life, without practice, is but of little avail: we may reason as long as we please, and produce such arguments as may seem unanswerable; but practice only can shew us what effect they will have; and we may generally lay it down as an unerring rule, that like causes will produce like effects. The work-house at Canterbury, which is but slightly touched upon in the little essay that accompanies this, stands forth as a specimen of what may be expected from these houses. Here a number of parishes were incorporated 47 years ago, and rules and orders made very similar to those now proposed; let us examine the particulars, and see how it has fared with them, and from thence form some judgement how the present scheme is likely to answer.

It was originally planned, and carried into execution, in the year 1728, by the late Mr. Alderman Jacob, a sensible active man, and one that had the good of his city very much at heart. He proceeded upon what was thought a very rational scheme; and it might have been thought so still, had not experience proved the contrary. I take what I say from the plan laid before the corporation.

ration. There are thirteen parishes and a half, within the liberties of the city, incorporated under the act, to which are now joined by agreement the poor of the precincts of the cathedral and those of the borough of Staple, both extraparochial, and which may be reckoned to make up altogether fifteen populous parishes. By this settlement, nothing was allowed out of the house; but whenever a pauper applied for relief, he was to be immediately taken into it. This rule he made on a supposition it would keep many from applying, and by that means decrease the expence. He examined the parish books, and found the number of poor in all the parishes, at a medium for the three preceding years, amounted to 154 persons each year, and that they raised at the same medium 14581. 6s. He established a manufacture for hop-bagging, as good a one for the place as could well be devised, considering the great plantation of hops that surround the place, and that old and young, men and women, may be employed in it. He considered their diet, which he set up at two shillings *per* head a week, a high price for that time, when wheat might be had at three shillings a bushel, and beef and mutton at two pence half-penny a pound; and though corn the next year was very dear, yet it continued so only one year, and other provisions did not

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rise at all. He computed their labour to be worth one shilling *per* head a week; here he failed vastly, as it did not bring in a quarter part. In short, according to his computation, there ought to have been an immediate saving of nearly one half. He proposed four other advantages, from which he seemed to think great good would accrue. I will give them in his own words: "1. Although, in the estimate above, provision is made for the whole number of the present poor, yet it is not likely that above three parts in four will come into the work-house. 2. That, by adding a house of correction to the work-house, and employing it rightly, as the law directs, all loose, idle, and disorderly persons, may be duly punished, and the streets cleansed of common beggars, who are no true objects of charity when in health, being as great friends to pilfering, as they are enemies to industry. 3. The disputes about the settlements in the city, and charges thereupon, will probably cease, when all the parties are united in one common interest. 4. The poor children will be trained up in a virtuous and industrious way, whereby, instead of propagating parish charges, they may in time become honest and useful members of the community." Nobody could argue against such a plan but from experience: let us see how it has turned out. The poor, instead of decrea-

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sing, have increased from the beginning, and are now got to 200 in the house, besides what have an allowance out of it. The annual expence from 1458l. increased by degrees to 2500l. though it is now reduced to about 2000l. The house cost only 500l. to fit up, and 500l. more to furnish, and lay in a stock of materials for carrying on their trade, and yet the debt once amounted to more than 2200l.; it is now much reduced, but not yet entirely paid off. The house of correction has no more effect there than in other places; and there are as many beggars in the streets. The disputes in the city about settlements may have in great measure ceased, but that is a very trifling consideration. The children are neither more virtuous, nor quite so industrious, as those that are bred up out of the house; neither do they in general make so good servants, for which very strong reasons may be given, which are confirmed by experience: they see no want, nor the solicitous care there is in poor industrious families, to provide their scanty allowance from day to day; their provisions are all set down before them ready dressed, they hear of no difficulties to procure it. The work they do is by way of stint, for they either have a task, or work so many hours; when that is done, they think no further of it, nor how they are to contribute towards earning their next meal. They

are totally ignorant of every domestic business; whereas in the poorest of houses they are obliged, from their earliest infancy, to set their hands to every thing they can possibly do, and never know an end to their work till night calls them to their necessary rest. For the boys rise and go out to work with their fathers, as soon as they are able to do the least thing, and by that means become handy at any country work, and inured to all weathers; which is the constant ruin of every work-house boy, who, by being more confined in the house, and not so much exposed to the inclemencies of the air, is hardly if ever brought to bear it well, and from the non-use of country business from his infancy, is seldom handy or clever like those bred up to it from their infancy. And as to the girls, they also are taken in to be always doing something with their mothers; and though the very lowest sort do not make the best of servants, they are still good drudges in farm-houses, and always preferable to the work-house girls in the country, whatever they may be in manufacturing towns.

I have proposed this example of the Canterbury work-house, because it seems to have all the requisites of these houses of industry. A number of populous parishes are incorporated, a manufacture established, much the same

same rules and orders enacted with those now intended to be made, the mayor and aldermen, governors, the guardians chosen out of the substantial tradesmen of the town, and each parish has its annual overseers. It has besides two other advantages beyond any of the proposed district work-houses, an annual standing income of 180 l. a year, besides the parish rates, and that the paupers may be conveyed to it with little or no charge, their whole jurisdiction scarcely reaching a mile and a half from the house; whereas, if the others ever come to be established, it will be no inconsiderable expence to transport them fourteen or fifteen miles, or perhaps more.

There is another thing necessary to be taken notice of, and that is, the inconvenience it will bring on the farmers and occupiers in all farming counties in general, and particularly in this, where there is so large a plantation of hops dispersed throughout the county. They make great use of the boys and girls, in weeding their corn, picking stones, tying, stripping, and picking hops, &c. When they are removed many miles off into these houses, they will be totally deprived of their help and assistance, and by that means will be subject to great difficulties, by depriving them of a sufficient number of hands to complete those several operations in their proper seasons.

Thus,

Thus, in compliance with your request, I have thrown a few hints together, as they occurred; and if they are of use in your future deliberations, it will be a pleasure to

SIR,

Your most humble servant, &c.

SIR,

SIR,

SINCE my former Letter was finished, Mr. Gilbert's *Observations upon the orders and resolutions of the House of Commons, with respect to the poor, vagrants, and houses of correction, 1775*, were put into my hands. Mr. Gilbert is undoubtedly praise-worthy for his endeavours, "to employ those, who are able to work, to cherish and support the aged and impotent, and to nurse and educate to labour and habits of industry the infants, who have lost their parents, or whose parents are unable or unwilling to maintain them; to punish the idle, disorderly, and profligate by confinement and hard labour; and to inculcate in the minds of every one principles of religion and morality."

P. 2. Did his plan seem by any means adequate to his purpose, no opposition would be made to it: but it appears too hazardous to be carried into execution. I will just touch upon a few heads, that have not been already taken notice of.

P. 3. As to the merit of this plan's consisting in its simplicity, by only reviving the principles and spirit of the good old law, viz. the act of the 43d year of Eliz. it does not strike me in that light. Whether the power
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of the justices, given by that act, is continued in all respects, and their trouble much eased in many, or indeed the law altered for the better in any, may be more properly handled, when the fourteenth resolution comes under consideration.

P. 4. The alteration by the proposed plan appears to be on the whole nothing less than almost a total subversion of the present system of the poor laws. He says, indeed, *the appointment and power of overseers is continued, but under such checks as, it is hoped, will prevent any abuse of it.* It is certainly so checked, as to reduce it to a mere skeleton of an office; they cannot act, in the most extraordinary cases, without an order from two guardians at least. If a poor man breaks a limb in a field, and an overseer is nigh at hand, should he be humane enough to order him to be taken care of at the parish charge, and the guardians for the parish or township where the accident happened should disapprove of his care, he may be left to pay the charge out of his own pocket, no remedy is pointed out to relieve him; so that the new regulation will reduce him to a mere collector of the rates, and no one person substituted in his room to supply the overseer's place in accidental casualties. If this is not an alteration, what is? I know, it may be said, this is bringing the
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office to its original institution; and that the guardians are the old overseers, and the present overseers mere collectors. This point may be touched upon more fully hereafter.

P. 25. Remarks on Mr. Gilbert's observations.

Resolutions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, have been sufficiently attended to already.

Resolution 7. The advantage of bringing the charge into one county expence, or keeping it in separate districts according to the former plans, does not appear to be very great, as there must be still as many subdivisions in every county as there are different houses. It may indeed take away a few disputes about settlements, which I cannot help calling a trifling advantage.

P. 26. Whether the allowing labourers to settle where they please within the county is a well-judged expedient, time must shew. It has been already tried, and found to be subject to great inconveniencies; and it was these inconveniencies that first introduced certificates. Experience has shewn they also are subject to objections, and that the denying them is sometimes oppressive; but in general they have their advantage. Most parishes in
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the country refuse them to labourers, because they want their labour in their own parish where they belong; few, if any, keep them back from tradesmen or artificers, because it is generally supposed they may maintain themselves better by a greater choice of work abroad, than they can find in a country village at home. The case may be perhaps the reverse in manufacturing counties; but in ours, and in all other husbandry counties, the promiscuous liberty of rambling, given to the common labourers, has been, in all ages, found very prejudicial to the community in general; and as the nature and inclinations of mankind are always the same, if it is introduced again, the same evils it formerly produced may be again expected to flow from it.

P. 27. Mr. Gilbert acknowledges, that "the success of every plan of this sort entirely depends on the zeal and activity of the gentlemen where it is formed." This is very true, and from hence alone there is great fear it will not succeed. Few, very few gentlemen, indeed, are found to attend public meetings of any sort, where there is not a prospect of an immediate gain or loss to themselves: in this case there is none; for though every charge relating to the poor falls ultimately on the land, the majority of gentlemen, it is to be
6 doubted,

doubted, are not clear-sighted enough to foresee it, or at least to mind it, when it does not come directly out of their own pockets. It might therefore be no impolitic step, to make the cesses a landlord's charge; if any thing would induce gentlemen to attend, this might. One only objection occurs against it, and that is, the leases now subsisting; for as the landlord has let his farm for a term of years, at a certain rent, subject to the poor-cesses, he cannot raise the rents during the continuance of the term; and if the cesses are thrown upon him, and the tenant is eased of them, he will pay double, because he cannot levy them on the tenant, to whom he has already made an allowance for them in the first bargain. But why may not parliament interpose here? *Dignus est vindice nodus.* It may be done by a short clause, without injury to the tenant, to clear him from all such cesses, and empower the landlord to raise the rent upon him in proportion to the poor cesses, taking them at a medium of the last seven years; and, indeed, common justice requires the tenants should have nothing to do with the payment, when the visible and manifest intent of this new law is to deprive them of all management in the disbursements. Whether that intent is on the whole rightly pursued, is another question: the intent is plain.

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P. 33. It is to be wished the mode of bailing may answer. Compulsory methods do not always succeed. If the governors attend only at general meetings once a year; and at only one monthly meeting in the year, I doubt, the accompts, rules, and orders, will be not very nicely examined into; and that the majority of governors will be found to be not so well qualified as they ought, to judge of the matters that will then come before them.

P. 35. Ref. 13. The old and industrious poor will hardly think themselves obliged to the author of this plan, for sending them twenty, or twenty-five miles from home, to live among entire strangers, unacquainted with their former particular circumstances or situations.

Ibid. Ref. 14. As the law now stands, the pauper is to apply to the officers; if they refuse him, he is to go to a vestry; if he can get no vestry called, or they will not relieve him, he has still an appeal to a justice, who, after having summoned the parties, and on their appearance having heard them, or in default of their appearance, may adjudge such relief as he shall think proper. The alteration intended deprives the pauper of these

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these appeals, and sends him directly to the chief farmers in the parish, as his only resort: for, under the new act, who will be guardians but farmers? By Ref. 11, they are to be chosen out of such as have estates of 25 l. a year, or occupy lands, &c. of 50 l. Let us suppose there are only two or three such guardians in a parish, that the pauper applies to the overseer, and he to two of the guardians for their approbation; if they refuse it, what relief can the poor man have? The appeal to a neighbouring justice is taken away, and the pauper left, without remedy, in the hands of the very sort of people the power was put into by 43d of Eliz. who were found to be sometimes tyrannical and oppressive, at other times lavish and profuse; and therefore an act was made in 3 and 4 W. & M. c xi. § 11. to place it entirely in the hands of the justices, by ordering, "that no person shall be allowed to have or receive collection at the charge of the parish, but by authority under the hand of one justice, or by order of the justices in sessions, except in cases of pestilential diseases, &c." The placing all power in the justices was found to be subject to great objections; on which account, in 9th G. I, it was altered to the present method, which in general is very well approved of, and found to be a most prudent regulation after a trial of fifty years.

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years. To bring it back to its worst state, does not become a British Senate. Surely justices, who are for the most part men of the best estates in the country, are fitter to be trusted, and more unbiaſſed, than those of very small estates, and farmers, who are commonly found to be the most partial set of men in the kingdom.

As to the internal regulation of the houses, or what is said about houses of correction, I shall make no observations upon them, unless it is on what is said in p. 28, about the number to be maintained in each house; where there is a plain hint, they are designed to contain from five to eight hundred persons, an overgrown unweildy family, which can hardly be kept orderly, neat, or clean, nor the sick and aged properly attended to. Such numbers in one house will be found very inconvenient, let them be managed with the utmost care; if an epidemical and contagious distemper gets in among them, it will be found very difficult to put a stop to it, till it has gone through the whole. Whether the design is to build these houses under one roof, or as separate cottages, is not said; the first seems to be intended, by the recommendation of purchasing old mansions in the next page, if fit for the purpose; few of these can be found adequate to contain a quarter part of the proposed number,

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number, if they are allowed room to enjoy the benefit of a wholesome air. There are objections against both methods; if they are built like hospitals, it will be a means of dissolving all family connections, for in that case it will be indecent for men and women to lay in the same ward; and if man and wife are separated, it will be a virtual divorce, after having lived together perhaps 40 or 50 years, and that too at a time of life when they want all indulgence possible, and the mutual assistance each can afford the other. If they are built in separate cottages, there are great inconveniencies attending this method also; for it will be apt to introduce separate *cote-ries*, which may lead to faction. A mixture of both seems preferable, wards for boys and girls, single men and women; and cottages for the married. Though the least hazardous method, and most consonant to the present laws, is that hinted at towards the end of the little essay, an inspector or middle man between the paupers, parish officers, and justices, first thought of, I believe, by Mr. Burn in his History of the Poor Laws.

July 10th, 1775.

The

The following Letters (by other hands) containing several useful hints upon the same subject; they are added by permission of the Gentlemen who wrote them.

S I R,

AS you did me the honour, when I met you at the assizes at —, to ask my sentiments upon the resolutions of the House of Commons, in regard to the poor laws; I take the liberty of sending you a small pamphlet I distributed among my friends in the year 1770, and laying before you a short account of the state of the poor in the parish of —, for the last four years.

It was about the latter end of the year 1770, that another gentleman and myself came to the resolution of exercising the kind of superintending power given to the justices by the work-house act, the 9th of Geo. I, and the 43d of Eliz.; and of putting the poor of the parish of — under some regulation. We called to our assistance the principal inhabitants of the parish, who unanimously engaged, with a becoming alacrity, in this new undertaking, and agreed to appoint a kind of select vestry, or committee of twenty-four, who

who were in rotation to meet us weekly at the work-house, and to see to the management of the poor in general during their respective months. This select vestry, or committee, has ever since consisted of the principal gentlemen, farmers, and tradesmen, of the parish; and I do them but justice in saying, they have been so constant in their attendance, and diligent in their enquiries, that I apprehend we must have had advantages in this respect over many houses of industry.

It appears, by our accounts for the last four years, that the poor in the work-house (which have consisted of nearly an equal number of children and adult persons, and of sixty-two in number upon an average) have not been maintained *per* head, for a less sum than two shillings and threehalf-pence *per* week, besides their work; and that the poor of all ages out of the house (with their work) subsisted upon an average on one shilling and eight pence half-penny *per* week. The yearly rates have, upon an average, been at about four shillings in the pound; and we must add to this account a voluntary contribution, in the year 1772, of eighty-six pounds, for reducing the price of provisions to the necessitous and industrious poor; and a small collection last year, for reducing the price of coals; besides which, I must observe to you, H that

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that the private charity of the inhabitants to individuals is very great and extensive; that a public-spirited tradesman saved the parish last year 45*l.* in the article of cloaths, by setting on foot a manufactory of linen and woollen; and that there has not been (as I believe) one single farthing expended, in supporting litigations concerning settlements.

The very great attention I saw paid to this subject, by gentlemen of the first abilities, in the Committee of the House of Commons, last winter, makes me diffident in offering to you observations upon the orders and resolutions of that house, with respect to the poor; but, if I can form any conjecture from my attendance at ——, it is, that houses of industry may be found to succeed in counties where there are large and extensive manufactories; and yet will not reduce the rates, or answer the good ends proposed, in counties where the poor depend upon labour in the field for their maintenance and support.

I will just beg leave to mention what has occurred to me, upon considering the difficulties that arose with you as well as myself, to reconcile the average rate. I think it would be better to lay the tax upon the landlord, in the first instance, instead of the tenant; with a compulsive clause in the act, for

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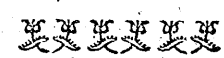
for the tenant to pay the landlord an additional rent, in proportion to the average rate for the last seven years. My reasons for it are these: If there is any hazard in the undertaking, it is proper that the landlord should run it, and not the tenant, who is only a farmer; and if there is any advantage to arise, the landlord, who has the most permanent interest, should certainly receive it. The tenant cannot complain, because he must at all events be *in statu quo* as to the quota he is to contribute; and he will be in some sort benefited, as he most probably took his farm under the apprehension of an increase, and certainly with no reasonable hope of a reduction. Besides, this may be the means of preventing the clamour of the smaller occupier, who, if he is to contribute to the tax as a tenant's charge, will think he has a kind of prescriptive right to see to the disposal of the money. If there was this alteration in the mode of laying the tax, we should then embark with one and the same interest; and gentlemen might be induced to give their attendance when they found the money going out of their pockets by hundreds, though they take so small a share of this burthen upon them now it goes out of their tenants pockets by pounds. Upon this plan, I cannot think the average rate will be so exceptionable; for property is so much dis-

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perfed (and particularly by our gavel-kind tenure in this county) that the fame landlord may perhaps pay fix-pence in one parish, and four fhillings in another, and fo find it much the fame thing as if he paid an equal rate through the whole county.

I am, &c.



DEAR SIR,

I am much obliged to you for the perufal of your obfervations on the poor laws, and your strictures on Mr. Gilbert's plan. They are fo judicious and humane, that I wifh you would digeft them into a proper form, and lay them before the publick, before the fubject comes on again in parliament; for it is a fubject of fuch great importance, that it demands the moft mature confideration, and it is to be hoped every affiftance will be given it by capable perfons. The plan of the infpector for a number of parifhes, more or lefs according to their fize, appears to me the moft eligible upon many accounts; and you have fufficiently proved how uncertain, or rather how improbable, it is, that any good, either as to leffening the poors rate, or the comfortable provision of the poor,

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can arife from diftrict houfes: the villages will to a degree be unpeopled; the farmer will be diftreffed for hands; and the impotent poor, when their labour is over, be condemned to what they will not unreafonably deem banifhment or imprifonment. This rate has, to be fure, of late encreafed to fo alarming a degree, as to make it neceffary that fomething fhould be done to prevent its farther extenfion; the making it a landlord's tax feems, at firft fight, likely to awaken the attention of gentlemen, to prevent at leaft its further encrease; but, I fear, would only make thofe few exert themfelves, who refide chiefly in the country, and who, in a little time, may grow tired of a burthen which refts folety on them; and as to the occupiers, their quantum being fettled in the way of additional rent, it is to be apprehended, they would in general be very indifferent to a charge which falls only on the landlord. This objection, however, I own, will in a great meafure be removed, by the appointment of the infpector, or middle man; otherwife the occupier, being the difpenfer of the rate, as at prefent in the office of churchwarden or overfeer, will not pay that regard to œconomy he in juftice ought to do. The great miffortune is, that the middling gentry, refident heretofore on their paternal acres, which they occupied themfelves in part, in moft counties

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are now almost annihilated; and those of higher rank either reside little or not at all at their seats; or, if they do, are too indolent, or too high, to attend to parish concerns, however great their property. There is also another evil, which is marching on with great strides, and, if not checked, will have a most sensible effect on the morals of the poor, and consequently on the poor's rate; and that is, the non-residence of the clergy on their benefices: how they can answer it to their consciences, being a spiritual concern, I am not casuist enough to say; but the love of pleasure, and dissipation of time (in matters indeed in themselves innocent enough), seems to run through all ranks more or less; and its baneful influence begins to extend itself even to the lowest classes. The decrease of the value of money must, however, of course increase the rate to a greater sum, and consequently we must not expect ever again to see it in general so low as it has been twenty years back. It has been doubled in my parish within that period, and yet my predecessor was no inattentive observer of the increase; it is now full three shillings at full rents, and at present there is no prospect of a reduction. Another cause has also arisen of late years, never I fear to be removed; by which the poor's rates has been influenced; and that is, the demolition
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of little farms and cottages with a cow-keep; so that there remains now no inducement for sober servants in husbandry to lay by their wages as heretofore, in order to take a little business. And what is the consequence? We see it every day. The servants in general now spend their wages before, or as soon as, they are due; the maid servants dress themselves trimly, and go with the young men to fairs and hops; pregnancy generally follows; the man runs away, or marries the girl, both of them together seldom having more than the cloaths on their backs; and, when he happens to fall sick, or his family encreases, he comes directly to his parish officers, and demands relief. I wish the country gentlemen, more especially in inclosed countries, would take this matter into their serious consideration, and secure to every sizeable farm (*i. e.* such as requires one or more constant labourers) a sufficient quantity of land to their cottage or cottages; or, if there be no cottages, erect them on the most convenient part of their farm or farms (the labourers being parishioners); or else oblige their tenants to keep a cow for each labourer, with their own, at a fixed reasonable price. The difference of a cottager and his family on this bottom (for some such we have in these parts), and of him who subsists himself and family on bread and cheese and tea, as to
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the appearance of health and strength, is very striking. Another disadvantage the village poor lie under is, that the pieces of butchers meat bear the same price, whether coarse or fine. Those who live in towns, where weekly open markets are kept, have a great advantage; but the butchers say, they must have a living profit; and, unless the principal people would take the best pieces at a higher price, they cannot make any difference themselves.

Not to trouble you any longer with minute observations; I am fully convinced that great good may be done in villages, especially where a gentleman or clergyman resides, if they can persuade themselves to give their attention to the matter: this is evident in your own parish; and the occupiers (barring uncommon accidents) will find their charges lessen; the deserving poor, suitable relief and encouragement; and the idle and contumacious will be kept in awe, and made to do something.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

F I N I S.