

Giving Alms no Charity

Daniel Defoe

1704

Giving Alms no Charity and Employing the Poor A Grievance to the Nation, Being an Essay Upon this Great Question, Whether Work-houses, Corporations, and Houses of Correction for Employing the Poor, as now practis'd in England; or Parish-Stocks, as propos'd in a late Pamphlet, Entituled, A Bill for the better Relief, Imployment and Settlement of the Poor, etc. Are not mischievous to the Nation, tending to the Destruction of our Trade, and to Encrease the Number and Misery of the Poor.

Addressed to the Parliament of England.

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Giving Alms No Charity

To the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses in Parliament Assembled.

Gentlemen,

He that has truth and justice, and the interest of England in his design, can have nothing to fear from an English Parliament.

This makes the author of these sheets, however despicable in himself, apply to this Honourable House, without any apology for the presumption.

Truth, Gentlemen, however meanly dress'd, and in whatsoever bad company she happens to come, was always entertain'd at your bar; and the Commons of England must cease to act like themselves, or which is worse, like their ancestors, when they cease to entertain any proposal, that offers it self at their door, for the general good and advantage of the people they represent.

I willingly grant, that 'tis a crime in good manners to interrupt your more weighty councils, and disturb your debates; with empty nauseous trifles in value, or mistaken schemes, and whoever ventures to address you, ought to be well assur'd he is in the right, and that the matter suits the intent of your meeting, viz. To dispatch the weighty affairs of the kingdom.

And as I have premis'd this, so I freely submit to any censure this Honourable Assembly shall think I deserve, if I have broke in upon tither of these particulars.

I have but one petition to make with respect to the author, and that is, that no freedom of expression, which the arguments may oblige him to, may be constru'd as a want of respect, and a breach of the due deference every Englishman owes to the representing power of the nation.

It would be hard, that while I am honestly offering to your consideration something of moment for the general good, prejudice should lay snares for the author, and private pique make him an offender for a word.

Without entering upon other parts of my character, 'tis enough to acquaint this Assembly, that I am an English freeholder, and have by that a title to be concern'd in the good of that community of which I am an unworthy member.

This Honourable House is the representative of all the freeholders of England; you are assembl'd for their good, you

study their interest, you possess their hearts, and you hold the strings of the general purse.

To you they have recourse for the redress of all their wrongs, and if at any time one of their body can offer to your assistance, any fair, legal, honest and rational proposal for the publick benefit, it was never known that such a man was either rejected or discourag'd.

And on this account I crave the liberty to assure you, that the author of this seeks no reward; to him it shall always be reward enough to have been capable of serving his native country, and honour enough to have offer'd something for the publick good worthy of consideration in your Honourable Assembly.

Pauper ubique jacet, said our famous Queen Elizabeth, when in her progress thro' the kingdom she saw the vast throngs of the poor, flocking to see and bless her; and the thought put her Majesty upon a continu'd study how to recover her people from that poverty, and make their labour more profitable to themselves in particular, and the nation in general.

This was easie then to propose, for that many useful manufactures were made in foreign parts, which our people bought with English money, and imported for their use.

The Queen, who knew the wealth and vast numbers of people which the said manufactures had brought to the neighbouring countries then under the King of Spain, the Dutch being not yet revolted, never left off endeavouring what she happily brought to pass, viz. the transplanting into England those springs of riches and people.

She saw the Flemings prodigiously numerous, their cities stood thicker than her peoples villages in some parts; all sorts of useful manufactures were found in their towns, and all their people were rich and busie, no beggars, no idleness, and consequently, no want was to be seen among them.

She saw the fountain of all this wealth and workmanship, I mean the wool, was in her own hands, and Flanders became the seat of all these manufactures, not because it was naturally richer and more populous than other countries, but because it lay near England, and the staple of the English wool which was the foundation of all their wealth, was at Antwerp in the heart of that country.

From hence, it may be said of Flanders, it was not the riches and the number of people brought the manufactures into the Low Countries, but it was the manufactures brought the people thither, and multitudes of people make trade, trade makes wealth, wealth builds cities, cities enrich the land round them, land enrich'd rises in va1ue, and the value of lands enriches the Government.

Many projects were set on foot in England to erect the woollen manufacture here, and in some places it had found encouragement, before the days of this Queen, especially as to making of cloath, but stuffs, bays, says, serges, and such like wares were yet wholly the work of the Flemings.

At last an opportunity offer'd perfectly unlook'd for, viz. the persecution of the Protestants, and introducing the Spanish inquisition into Flanders, with the tyranny of the Duke D'Alva.

It cannot be an ungrateful observation, here to take notice how tyranny and persecution, the one an oppression of property, the other of conscience, always ruine trade, impoverish nations, depopulate countries, dethrone princes, and destroy peace.

When an English man reflects on it, he cannot without infinite satisfaction look up to Heaven, and to this Honourable House, that as the spring, this as the stream from and by which

the felicity of this nation has obtain'd a pitch of glory,
superior to all the people in the world.

Your Councils especially, when blest from Heaven, as now we trust they are, with principles of unanimity and concord, can never fail to make trade Sourish, war successful, peace certain, wealth Sowing, blessings probable, the Queen glorious, and the people happy.

Our unhappy neighbours of the Low Countries were the very reverse of what we bless our selves for in you.

Their kings were tyrants, their governours persecutors, their armies thieves and blood-hounds.

Their people divided, their councils confus'd, and their miseries innumerable.

D'Alva the Spanish Governor, besieg'd their cities, decimated the inhabitants, murder'd their nobility, proscrib'd their princes, and executed 18,000 men by the hand of the hang-man.

Conscience was tramp'l'd under foot, religion and reformation hunted like a hare upon the mountains, the inquisition threaten'd, and foreign armies introduc'd.

Property fell a sacrifice to absolute power, the countrey was ravag'd, the towns plunder'd, the rich confiscated, the poor starv'd, trade interrupted, and the 10th penny demanded.

The consequence of this was, as in all tyrannies and persecutions it is, the people fled and scatter'd themselves in their neighbours countries, trade languish'd, manufactures went abroad, and never return'd, confusion reign'd and poverty succeeded.

The multitude that remain'd push'd to all extremities, were forc'd to obey the voice of nature, and in their own just defence to take arms against their governours.

Destruction it self has its uses in the world, the ashes of one city rebuilds another, and God Almighty, who never acts in vain, brought the wealth of England, and the power of Holland into the world from the ruine of the Flemish liberty.

The Dutch in defence of their liberty revolted, renounc'd their tyrant prince, and prosper'd by Heaven and the assistance of England, erected the greatest commonwealth in the world.

Innumerable observations would flow from this part of the present subject, but brevity is my study, I am not teaching; for I know who I speak to, but relating and observing the connexion of Causes, and the wonderous births which lay then in the womb of Providence, and are since come to life.

Particularly how Heaven directed the oppression and tyranny of the poor should be the wheel to turn over the great machine of trade from Flanders into England.

And how the persecution and cruelty of the Spaniards, against religion should be directed by the secret overruling Hand, to be the foundation of a people, and a body that should in ages then to come, be one of the chief bulwarks of that very liberty and religion they sought to destroy.

In this general ruine of trade and liberty, England made a gain of what she never yet lost, and of what she has since encreas'd to an inconceivable magnitude.

As D'Alva worried the poor Flemings, the Queen of England entertain'd them, cherish'd them, invited them, encourag'd them.

Thousands of innocent people fled from all parts from the fury of this merciless man, and as England, to her honour has always been the sanctuary of her distress'd neighbours, so now she was so to her special and particular profit.

The Queen who saw the opportunity put into her hands which she had so long wish'd for, not only received kindly the exil'd

Flemings, but invited over all that would come, promising them all possible encouragement, privileges and freedom of her ports and the like.

This brought over a vast multitude of Flemings, Walloons, and Dutch, who with their whole families settled at Norwich, at Ipswich, Colchester, Canterbury, Exeter, and the like. From these came the Walloon Church at Canterbury, and the Dutch Churches at Norwich, Colchester, and Yarmouth; from hence came the true born English families at those places with foreign names; as the De Vinks at Norwich, the Rebows at Colchester, the Papilons, &c. at Canterbury, families to whom this nation are much in debt for the first planting those manufactures, from which we have since rais'd the greatest trades in the world.

This wise Queen knew that number of inhabitants are the wealth and strength of a nation, she was far from that opinion, we have of late shown too much of in complaining that foreigners came to take the bread out of our mouths, and ill treating on that account the French Protestants who fled hither for refuge in the late persecution.

Some have said that above 50,000 of them settled here, and would have made it a grievance, tho' without doubt 'tis easie to make it appear that 500,000 more would be both useful and profitable to this nation.

Upon the settling of these forreigners, the scale of trade visibly turn'd both here and in Flanders.

The Flemings taught our women and children to spin, the youth to weave, the men entred the loom to labour instead of going abroad to seek their fortunes by the war, the several trades of bayes at Colchester, sayes and perpets, at Sudbury, Ipswich, &c. stuffs at Norwich, serges at Exeter, silks at Canterbury, and the like, began to flourish.

All the counties round felt the profit, the poor were set to work, the traders gain'd wealth, and multitudes of people flock'd to the several parts where these manufactures were erected for employment, and the growth of England, both in trade, wealth and people since that time, as it is well known to this Honourable House; so the causes of it appear to be plainly the introducing of these manufactures, and nothing else.

Nor was the gain made here by it more visible than the loss to the Flemings, from hence, and not as is vainly suggested from the building the Dutch fort of Lillo on the Scheld, came the decay of that flourishing city of Antwerp. From hence it is plain the Flemings, an industrious nation, finding their trade ruin'd at once, turn'd their hands to other things, as making of lace, linnen, and the like, and the Dutch to the sea affairs and fishing.

From hence they became poor, thin of people, and weak in trade, the flux both of their wealth and trade, running wholly into England.

I humbly crave leave to say, this long introduction shall not be thought useless, when I shall bring it home by the process of these papers to the subject now in hand, viz. The providing for and employing the poor.

Since the times of Queen Elizabeth this nation has gone on to a prodigy of trade, of which the encrease of our customs from 400,000 crowns to two millions of pounds sterling per ann. is a demonstration beyond the power of argument; and that this whole encrease depends upon, and is principally occasion'd by the encrease of our manufacturers is so plain, I shall not take up any room here to make it out.

Having thus given an account how we came to be a rich,

flourishing and populous nation, I crave leave as concisely as I can to examine how we came to be poor again, if it must be granted that we are so.

By poor here I humbly desire to be understood, not that we are a poor nation in general; I should undervalue the bounty of Heaven to England, and act with less understanding than most men are masters of, if I should not own, that in general we are as rich a nation as any in the world; but by poor I mean burthen'd with a crowd of clamouring, unemploy'd, unprovided for poor people, who make the nation uneasie, burthen the rich, clog our parishes, and make themselves worthy of laws, and peculiar management to dispose of and direct them: How these came to be thus is the question.

And first I humbly crave leave to lay these heads down as fundamental maxims, which I am ready at any time to defend and make out.

1. There is in England more labour than hands to perform it, and consequently a want of people, not of employment.

2. No man in England, of sound limbs and senses, can be poor merely for want of work.

3. All our work-houses, corporations and charities for employing the poor, and setting them to work, as now they are employ'd, or any Acts of Parliament to empower overseers of parishes, or parishes themselves, to employ the poor, except as shall be hereafter excepted, are, and will be publick nuisances, mischiefs to the nation which serve to the ruin of families, and the encrease of the poor.

4. That 'tis a regulation of the poor that is wanted in England, not a setting them to work.

If after these things are made out, I am enquir'd of what this regulation should be, I am no more at a loss to lay it down than I am to affirm what is above; and shall always be ready, when call'd to it, to make such a proposal to this Honourable House, as with their concurrence shall for ever put a stop to poverty and beggary, parish charges, assessments and the like, in this nation.

If such offers as these shall be sighted and rejected, I have the satisfaction of having discharg'd my duty, and the consequence must be, that complaining will be continued in our streets.

'Tis my misfortune, that while I study to make every head so concise, as becomes me in things to be brought before so honourable and august an assembly, I am oblig'd to be short upon heads that in their own nature would very well admit of particular volumes to explain them.

1. I affirm, that in England there is more labour than hands to perform it. This I prove,

1st. From the dearness of wages, which in England out goes all nations in the world; and I know no greater demonstration in trade. Wages, like exchanges, rise and fall as the remitters and drawers, the employers and the workmen, ballance one another.

The employers are the remitters, the work-men are the drawers, if there are more employers than work-men, the price of wages must rise, because the employer wants that work to be done more than the poor man wants to do it, if there are more work-men than employers the price of labour falls, because the poor man wants his wages more than the employer wants to have his business done.

Trade, like all nature, most obsequiously obeys the great law of cause and consequence; and this is the occasion why even all the greatest articles of trade follow, and as it were pay homage

to this seemingly minute and inconsiderable thing, the poor man's labour.

I omit, with some pain, the many very useful thoughts that occur on this head, to preserve the brevity I owe to the dignity of that assembly I am writing to. But I cannot but note how from hence it appears, that the glory, the strength, the riches, the trade, and all that's valuable in a nation, as to its figure in the world, depends upon the number of its people, be they never so mean or poor; the consumption of manufactures encreases the manufacturers; the number of manufacturers encreases the consumption; provisions are consum'd to feed them, land improv'd, and more hands employ'd to furnish provisions: All the wealth of the nation, and all the trade is produc'd by numbers of people; but of this by the way.

The price of wages not only determines the difference between the employer and the work-man, but it rules the provisions rates of every market. If wages grow high, rise in proportion, and I humbly conceive it to be a mistake in those people, who say labour in such parts of England is cheap because provisions are cheap, but 'tis plain, provisions are cheap there because labour is cheap, and labour is cheaper in those parts than in others; because being remoter from London there is not that extraordinary disproportion between the work and the number of hands; there are more hands, and consequently labour cheaper.

'Tis plain to any observing eye, that there is an equal plenty of provisions in several of our south and western counties, as in Yorkshire, and rather a greater, and I believe I could make it out, that a poor labouring man may live as cheap in Kent or Sussex as in the bishoprick of Durham; and yet in Kent a poor man shall earn 7s. 10s. 9s. a week, and in the north 4s. or perhaps less; the difference is plain in this, that in Kent there is a greater want of people, in proportion to the work there, than in the north.

And this on the other hand makes the people of our northern countries spread themselves so much to the south, where trade, war and the sea carrying off so many, there is a greater want of hands.

And yet 'tis plain there is labour for the hands which remain in the north, or else the country would be depopulated, and the people come all away to the south to seek work; and even in Yorkshire, where labour is cheapest, the people can gain more by their labour than in any of the manufacturing countries of Germany, Italy or France, and live much better.

If there was one poor man in England more than there was work to employ, either somebody else must stand still for him, or he must be starv'd; if another man stands still for him he wants a days work, and goes to seek it, and by consequence supplants another, and this a third, and this contention brigs it to this; no, says the poor man, that is like to be put out of his work, rather than that man shall come in I'll do it cheaper; nay, says the other, but I'll do it cheaper than you; and thus one poor man wanting but a days work would bring down the price of labour in a whole nation, for the man cannot starve, and will work for any thing rather than want it.

It may be objected here, this is contradicted by our number of beggars.

I am sorry to say I am obliged here to call begging an employment, since 'tis plain, if there is more work than hands to perform it, no man that has his limbs and his senses need to beg, and those that have not ought to be put into a condition not to want it.

So that begging is a meer scandal in the general, in the able 'tis a scandal upon their industry, and in the impotent 'tis a scandal upon the country.

Nay, the begging, as now practic'd, is a scandal upon our charity, and perhaps the foundation of all our present grievance. -- How can it be possible that any man or woman, who being sound in body and mind, may as 'tis apparent they may, have wages for their work, should be so base, so meanly spirited, as to beg an alms for Godsake. -- Truly the scandal lies on our charity; and people have such a notion in England of being pittiful and charitable, that they encourage vagrants, and by a mistaken zeal do more harm than good.

This is a large scene, and much might be said upon it; I shall abridge it as much as possible. -- The poverty of England does not lye among the craving beggars but among poor families, where the children are numerous, and where death or sickness has depriv'd them of the labour of the father. these are the houses that the sons and daughters of charity, if they would order it well, should seek out and relieve; an alms ill directed may be charity to the particular person, but becomes an injury to the publick, and no charity to the nation. As for the craving poor, I am perswaded I do them no wrong when I say, that if they were incorporated they would be the richest society in the nation; and the reason why so many pretend to want work is, that they can live so well with the pretence of wanting work, they would be mad to leave it and work in earnest; and I affirm of my own knowledge, when I have wanted a man for labouring work, and offer'd 9s per week to strouling fellows at my door, they have frequently told me to my face, they could get more a begging, and I once set a lusty fellow in the stocks for making the experiment.

I shall, in its proper place, bring this to a method of tryal, since nothing but demonstration will affect us, 'tis an easie matter to prevent begging in England, and yet to maintain all our impotent poor at far less charge to the parishes than they now are oblig'd to be at.

When Queen Elizabeth had gain'd her point as to manufactories in England, she had fairly laid the foundation, she thereby found out the way how every family might live upon their own labour, like a wise princess she knew 'twould be hard to force people to work when there was nothing for them to turn their hands to; but as soon as she had brought the matter to bear, and there was work for every body that had no mind to starve, then she apply'd herself to make laws to oblige the people to do this work, and to punish vagrants, and make every one live by their own labour; all her successors followed this laudable example, and from hence came all those laws against sturdy beggars, vagabonds, stroulers, &c., which had they been severely put in execution by our magistrates, 'tis presum'd these vagrant poor had not so encreas'd upon us as they have.

And it seems strange to me, from what just ground we proceed now upon other methods, and fancy that 'tis now our business to find them work, and to employ them rather than to oblige them to find themselves work and go about it.

From this mistaken notion come all our work-houses and corporations, and the same error, with submission, I presume Was the birth of this bill now depending, which enables every parish to erect the woollen manufacture within it self, for the employing their own poor.

'Tis the mistake of this part of the bill only which I am enquiring into, and which I endeavour to set in a true light.

In all the parliaments since the Revolution, this matter has been before them, and I am justified in this attempt by the House of Commons having frequently appointed committees to receive proposals upon this head.

As my proposal is general, I presume to offer it to the general body of the House; if I am commanded to explain any part of it, I am ready to do any thing that may be serviceable to this great and noble design.

As the former Houses of Commons gave all possible encouragement to such as could offer, or but pretend to offer at this needful thing, so the imperfect essays of several, whether for private or publick benefit. I do not attempt to determine which have since been made, and which have obtain'd the powers and conditions they have desir'd, have by all their effects demonstrated the weakness of their design; and that they either understood not the disease, or know not the proper cure for it.

The imperfection of all these attempts is acknowledg'd, not only in the preamble of this new Act of Parliament, but even in the thing, in that there is yet occasion for any new law.

And having survey'd, not the necessity of a new act, but the contents of the act which has been proposed as a remedy in this case; I cannot but offer my objections against the sufficiency of the proposal, and leave it to the consideration of this wise assembly, and of the whole nation.

I humbly hope the learned gentleman, under whose direction this law is now to proceed, and by whose order it has been printed, will not think himself personally concerned in this case, his endeavours to promote so good a work, as the relief, employment, and settlement of the poor, merit the thanks and acknowledgment of the whole nation, and no man shall be more ready to pay his share of that debt to him than my self. But if his scheme happen to be something superficial, if he comes in among the number of those who have not search'd this wound to the bottom, if the methods propos'd are not such as will either answer his own designs or the nations, I cannot think my self oblig'd to dispense, with my duty to the publick good, to preserve a personal value for his judgment, tho' the gentleman's merit be extraordinary.

Wherefore, as in all the schemes, I have seen laid for the poor, and in this act now before your Honourable House; the general thought of the proposers runs upon the employing the poor by work-houses, corporations, houses of correction, and the like, and that I think it plain to be seen, that those proposals come vastly short of the main design. These sheets are humbly laid before you, as well to make good what is alledg'd, viz. That all these work-houses, &c., tend to the encrease, and not the relief of the poor, as to make an humble tender of plain, but I hope, rational proposals for the more effectual cure of this grand disease.

In order to proceed to this great challenge, I humbly desire the bills already pass'd may be review'd, the practice of our corporation work-houses, and the contents of this proposed act examin'd.

In all these it will appear that the method chiefly proposed for the employment of our poor, is by setting them to work on the several manufactures before-mention'd; as spinning, weaving, and manufacturing our English wool.

All our work-houses lately erected in England, are in general thus employ'd, for which without enumerating particulars, I humbly appeal to the knowledge of the several members of this Honourable House in their respective towns where such

corporations have been erected.

In the present Act now preparing, as printed by direction of a member of this Honourable House, it appears, that in order to set the poor to work, it shall be lawful for the overseers of every town, or of one or more towns joyn'd together to occupy any trade, mystery, &c. And raise stocks for the carrying them on for the setting the poor at work, and for the purchasing wool, iron, hemp, flax, thread, or other materials for that purpose. Vide the Act publish'd by Sir Humphry Mackworth.

And that charities given so and so, and not exceeding 200 l. per annum for this purpose, shall be incorporated of course for these ends.

In order now to come to the case in hand, it is necessary to premise, that the thing now in debate is not the poor of this or that particular town. The House of Commons are acting like themselves, as they are the representatives of all the commons of England, 'tis the care of all the poor of England which lies before them, not of this or that particular body of the poor.

In proportion to this great work, I am to be understood that these work-houses, houses of correction, and stocks to employ the poor may be granted to lessen the poor in this or that particular part of England; and we are particularly told of that at Bristol, that it has been such a terror to the beggars that none of the strouling crew will come near the city. But all this allow'd, in general, 'twill be felt in the main, and the end will be an encrease of our poor.

1. The manufactures that these gentlemen employ the poor upon, are all such as are before exercis'd in England.

2. They are all such as are manag'd to a full extent, and the present accidents of war and foreign interruption of trade consider'd rather beyond the vent of them than under it.

Suppose now a work-house for employment of poor children, sets them to spinning of worsted. -- For every skein of worsted these poor children spin, there must be a skein the less spun by some poor family or person that spun it before; suppose the manufacture of making bays to be erected in Bishopsgate-street, unless the makers of these bays can at the same time find out a trade or consumption for more bays than were made before. For every piece of bays so made in London there must be a piece the less made at Colchester.

I humbly appeal to the Honourable House of Commons what this may be call'd, and with submission, I think it is nothing at all to employing the poor, since 'tis only the transposing the manufacture from Colchester to London, and taking the bread out of the mouths of the poor of Essex to put it into the mouths of the poor of Middlesex.

If these worthy gentlemen, who show themselves so commendably forward to relieve and employ the poor, will find out some new trade, some new market, where the goods they make shall be sold, where none of the same goods were sold before; if they will send them to any place where they shall not interfere with the rest of that manufacture, or with some other made in England, then indeed they will do something worthy of themselves, and may employ the poor to the same glorious advantage as Queen Elizabeth did, to whom this nation, as a trading country, owes its peculiar greatness.

If these gentlemen could establish a trade to Muscovy for English serges, or obtain an order from the Czar, that all his subjects should wear stockings who wore none before, every poor child's labour in spinning and knitting those stockings, and all the wool in them would be clear gain to the nation, and the

general stock would be improved by it, because all the growth of our country, and all the labour of a person who was idle before, is so much clear gain to the general stock.

If they will employ the poor in some manufacture which was not made in England before, or not bought with some manufacture made here before, then they offer at something extraordinary.

But to set poor people at work, on the same thing which other poor people were employ'd on before, and at the same time not encrease the consumption, is giving to one what you take away from another; enriching one poor man to starve another, putting a vagabond into an honest man's employment, and putting his diligence on the tenters to find out some other work to maintain his family.

As this is not at all profitable, so with submission for the expression, I cannot say 'tis honest, because 'tis transplanting and carrying the poor peoples lawful employment from the place where was their lawful settlement, and the hardship of this our law consider'd is intolerable. For example.

The manufacture of making bays is now establish'd at Colchester in Essex, suppose it should be attempted to be erected in Middlesex, as a certain worthy and wealthy gentleman near Hackney once propos'd, it may be suppos'd if you will grant the skill in working the same, and the wages the same, that they must be made cheaper in Middlesex than in Essex, and cheapness certainly will make the merchant buy here rather than there, and so in time all the bay making at Colchester dyes, and the staple for that commodity is removed to London.

What must the poor of Colchester do, there they buy a parochial settlement, those that have numerous families cannot follow the manufacture and come up to London, for our parochial laws empower the Church-wardens to refuse them a settlement, so that they are confin'd to their own countrey, and the bread taken out of their mouths, and all this to feed vagabonds, and to set them to work, who by their choice would be idle, and who merit the correction of the law.

There is another grievance which I shall endeavour to touch at, which every man that wishes well to the poor does not foresee, and which, with humble submission to the gentlemen that contriv'd this Act, I see no notice taken of.

There are arcanas in trade, which though they are the natural consequences of time and casual circumstances, are yet become now so essential to the publick benefit, that to alter or disorder them, would be an irreparable damage to the publick.

I shall explain my self as concisely as I can.

The manufactures of England are happily settled in different corners of the kingdom, from whence they are mutually convey'd by a circulation of trade to London by wholesale, like the blood to the heart, and from thence disperse in lesser quantities to the other parts of the kingdom by retail. For example.

Serges are made at Exeter, Taunton, &c. stuffs at Norwich; bayes, sayes, shaloons, &c. at Colchester, Bocking, Sudbury, and parts adjacent, fine cloath in Somerset, Wilts, Gloucester and Worcestershire, coarse cloath in Yorkshire, Kent, Surry, &c. druggets at Farnham, Newbury, &c. All these send up the gross of their quantity to London, and receive each others sorts in retail for their own use again. Norwich buys Exeter serges, Exeter buys Norwich stuffs, all at London; Yorkshire buy s fine cloths, and Gloucester coarse, still at London; and the like, of a vast variety of our manufactures.

By this exchange of manufactures abundance of trading families are maintain'd by the carriage and recarriage of goods,

vast number of men and cattle are employed, and numbers of inholders, victuallers, and their dependencies subsisted.

And on this account I cannot but observe to your honours, and 'tis well worth your consideration, that the already transposing a vast woollen manufacture from several parts of England to London, is a manifest detriment to trade in general, the several woollen goods now made in Spittlefields, where within this few years were none at all made, has already visibly affected the several parts, where they were before made, as Norwich, Sudbury, Farnham, and other towns, many of whose principal tradesmen are now remov'd hither, employ their stocks here, employ the poor here, and leave the poor of those countries to shift for work.

This breach of the circulation of trade must necessarily distemper the body, and I crave leave to give an example or two.

I'll presume to give an example in trade, which perhaps the gentlemen concern'd in this bill may, without reJection upon their knowledge, be ignorant of.

The city of Norwich, and parts adjacent, were for some ages employ'd in the manufactures of stuffs and stockings.

The latter trade, which was once considerable, is in a manner wholly transpos'd into London, by the vast quantities of worsted hose wove by the frame, which is a trade within this 20 years almost wholly new.

Now as the knitting frame performs that in a day which would otherwise employ a poor woman eight or ten days, by consequence a few frames perform'd the work of many thousand poor people; and the consumption being not increased, the effect immediately appear'd; so many stockings as were made in London so many the fewer were demanded from Norwich; till in a few years the manufacture there wholly sunk, the masters there turn'd their hands to other business; and whereas the hose trade from Norfolk once return'd at least 5,000s. per week, and as some say twice that sum, 'tis not now worth naming.

'Tis in fewer years, and near our memory, that of Spittlefields men have fallen into another branch of the Norwich trade, viz., making of stuffs, drugets, &c.

If any man say the people of Norfolk are yet full of employ, and do not work; and some have been so weak as to make that reply, avoiding the many other demonstrations which could be given, this is past answering, viz. That the combers of wool in Norfolk and Suffolk, who formerly had all, or ten parts in eleven of their yarn manufactur'd in the country, now comb their wool indeed, and spin the yarn in the country, but send vast quantities of it to London to be woven; will any man question whether this be not a loss to Norwich; can there be as many weavers as before? And are there not abundance of workmen and masters too remov'd to London?

If it be so at Norwich, Canterbury is yet more a melancholy instance of it, where the houses stand empty, and the people go off, and the trade dyes, because the weavers have follow'd the manufacture to London; and whereas there was within few years 200 broad looms at work, I am well assur'd there are not 50 now employ'd in that city.

These are the effects of transposing manufactures, and interrupting the circulation of trade.

All methods to bring our trade to be manag'd by fewer hands than it was before, are in themselves pernicious to England in general, as they lessen the employment of the poor, unhinge their hands from the labour, and tend to bring our hands to be superior to our employ, which as yet they are not.

In Dorsetshire and Somersetshire there always has been a very

considerable manufacture for stockings, at Colchester and Sudbury for bayes, saves, &c. most of the wool these countries use is bought at London, and carried down into those counties, and then the goods being manufactur'd are brought back to London to market; upon transposing the manufacture as before, all the poor people and all the cattel who hitherto were employ'd in that voiture, are immediately disbanded by their country, the innkeepers on the roads must decay, so much land lye for other uses, as the cattle employ'd, houses and tenement on the roads, and all their dependencies sink in value.

'Tis hard to calculate what a blow it would be to trade in general, should every county but manufacture all the several sorts of goods they use, it would throw our inland trade into strange convulsions, which at present is perhaps, or has been, in the greatest regularity of any in the world.

What strange work must it then make when every town shall have a manufacture, and every parish be a ware-house; trade will be burthen'd with corporations, which are generally equally destructive as monopolies, and by this method will easily be made so.

Parish stocks, under the direction of Justices of Peace, may soon come to set up petty manufactures, and here shall all useful things be made, and all the poorer sort of people shall be aw'd or byass'd to trade there only. Thus the shop-keepers, who pay taxes, and are the support of our inland circulation, will immediately be ruin'd, and thus we shall beggar the nation to provide for the poor.

As this will make every parish a market town, and every hospital a store-house, so in London, and the adjacent parts, to which vast quantities of the woollen manufacture will be thus transplanted, too great and disproportion'd numbers of the people will in time assemble.

Tho' the settled poor can't remove, yet single people will stroul about and follow the manufacturer; and thus in time such vast numbers will be drawn about London, as may be inconvenient to the government, and especially depopulating to those countries where the numbers of people, by reason of these manufactures are very considerable.

An eminent instance of this we have in the present trade to Muscovy, which however design'd for an improvement to the English nation, and boasted of as such, appears to be converted into a monopoly, and proves injurious and destructive to the nation. The persons concern'd removing and carrying out our people to teach that unpolish'd nation the improvements they are capable of.

If the bringing the Flemings to England brought with them their manufacture and trade, carrying our people abroad, especially to a country where the people work for little or nothing, what may it not do towards instructing that populous nation in such manufactures as may in time tend to the destruction of our trade, or the reducing our manufacture to an abatement in value, which will be felt at home by an abatement of wages, and that in provisions, and that in rent of land; and so the general stock sinks of course.

But as this is preparing, by eminent hands, to be laid before this House as a grievance meriting your care and concern, I omit insisting on it here,

And this removing of people is attended with many inconveniences which are not easily perceived, as

1. The immediate fall of the value of all lands in those counties where the manufactures were before; for as the numbers of people, by the consumption of provisions, must where ever they

encrease make rents rise, and lands valuable; so those people removing, tho' the provisions would, if possible, follow them, yet the price of them must fall by all that charge they are at for carriage, and consequently lands must fall in proportion.

2. This transplanting of families, in time, would introduce great and new alterations in the countries they removed to, which as they would be to the profit of some places, would be to the detriment of others, and can by no means be just any more than it is convenient; for no wise government studies to put any branch of their country to any particular disadvantages, tho' it may be found in the general account in another place.

If it be said here will he manufactures in every parish, and that will keep the people at home,

I humbly represent what strange confusion and particular detriment to the general circulation of trade mention'd before it must be, to have every parish make its own manufactures.

1. It will make our towns and counties independent of one another, and put a damp to correspondence, which all will allow to be a great motive of trade in general.

2. It will fill us with various sorts and kinds of manufactures, by which our stated sorts of goods will in time dwindle away in reputation, and foreigners not know them one from another. Our several manufactures are known by their respective names; and our serges, bayes and other goods, are bought abroad by the character and reputation of the places where they are made; when there shall come new and unheard of kinds to market, some better, some worse, as to be sure new undertakers will vary in kinds, the dignity and reputation of the English goods abroad will be lost, and so many confusions in trade must follow as are too many to repeat.

3. Either our parish-stock must sell by wholesale or by retail, or both; if the first, 'tis doubted they will make sorry work of it, and having other business of their own make but poor merchants; if by retail, then they turn pedlars, will be a publick nuisance to trade, and at last quite ruin it.

4. This will ruin all the carriers in England, the wool will be all manufactured where it is sheer'd, every body will make their own cloaths, and the trade which now lives by running thro' a multitude of hands, will go then through so few, that thousands of families will want employment, and this is the only way to reduce us to the condition spoken of, to have more hands than work.

'Tis the excellence of our English manufacture, that it is so planted as to go thro' as many hands as 'tis possible; he that contrives to have it go thro' fewer, ought at the same time to provide work for the rest -- as it is it employs a great multitude of people, and can employ more; but if a considerable number of these people be unhing'd from their employment, it cannot but be detrimental to the whole.

When I say we could employ more people in England, I do not mean that we cannot do our work with those we have, but I mean thus:

First, It should be more people brought over from foreign parts. I do not mean that those we have should be taken from all common employments and put to our manufacture; we may unequally dispose of our hands, and so have too many for some works, and too few for others; and 'tis plain that in some parts of England it is so, what else can be the reason, why in our southern parts of England, Kent in particular, borrows 20,000 people of other counties to get in her harvest.

But if more foreigners came among us, if it were 2 millions,

it could do us no harm, because they would consume our provisions, and we have land enough to produce much more than we do, and they would consume our manufactures, and we have wool enough for any quantity.

I think therefore, with submission, to erect manufactures in every town to transpose the manufactures from the settled places into private parishes and corporations, to parcel out our trade to every door, it must be ruinous to the manufacturers themselves, will turn thousands of families out of their employments, and take the bread out of the mouths of diligent and industrious families to feed vagrants, thieves and beggars, who ought much rather to be compell'd, by legal methods, to seek that work which it is plain is to be had; and thus this Act will instead of setting and relieving the poor, encrease their number, and starve the best of them.

It remains now, according to my first proposal page 37, to consider from whence proceeds the poverty of our people, what accident, what decay of trade, what want of employment, what strange revolution of circumstances makes our people poor, and consequently burthensome, and our laws deficient, so as to make more and other laws requisite, and the nation concerned to apply a remedy to this growing disease. I answer,

I. Not for want of work; and besides what has been said on that head, I humbly desire these two things may be consider'd.

First, 'Tis apparent, that if one man, woman, or child, can by his, or her labour, earn more money than will subsist one body, there must consequently be no want of work, since any man would work for just as much as would supply himself rather than starve. -- What a vast difference then must there be between the work and the work-men, when 'tis now known that in Spittle-fields, and other adjacent parts of the city, there is nothing more frequent than for a journey-man weaver, of many sorts, to gain from 15s. to 30s. per week wages, and I appeal to the silk throwsters, whether they do not give 8s. 9s. and 10s. per week, to blind men and cripples, to turn wheels, and do the meanest and most ordinary works.

Cur Moriatur Homo, &c.

Why are the families of these men starv'd, and their children in work-houses, and brought up by charity; I am ready to produce to this Honourable House the man who for several years has gain'd of me by his handy labour at the mean scoundrel employment of tile making from 16s. to 20s. per week wages, and all that time would hardly have a pair of shoes to his feet, or cloaths to cover his nakedness, and had his wife and children kept by the parish.

The meanest labours in this nation afford the workman sufficient to provide for himself and his family, and that could never be if there was a want of work.

2. I humbly desire this Honourable House to consider the present difficulty of rising soldiers in this kingdom; the vast charge the kingdom is at to the officers to procure men; the many little and not over honest methods made use of to bring them into the service, the laws made to compel them; why are gaols rumag'd for malefactors, and the Mint and prisons for debtors, the war is an employment of honour, and suffers some scandal in having men taken from the gallows, and immediately from villains, and housebreakers made gentlemen soldiers. If men wanted employment, and consequently bread, this could never be, any man would carry a musket rather than starve, and wear the Queen's cloth, or any

bodies cloth, rather than go naked, and live in rags and want; 'tis plain the nation is full of people, and 'tis as plain our people have no particular aversion to the war, but they are not poor enough to go abroad; 'tis poverty makes men soldiers, and drives crowds into the armies, and the difficulties to get English-men to list is, because they live in plenty and ease, and he that can earn 20s. per week at an easie, steady employment, must be drunk or mad when he lists for a soldier, to be knock'd o'th'head for 3s. 6d. per week; but if there was no work to be had, if the poor wanted employment, if they had not bread to eat, nor knew not how to earn it, thousands of young lusty fellows would fly to the pike and musket, and choose to dye like men in the face of the enemy, rather than lye at home, starve, perish in poverty and distress.

From all these particulars, and innumerable unhappy instances which might be given, 'tis plain, the poverty of our people which is so burthensome, and increases upon us so much, does not arise from want of proper employments, and for want of work, or employers, and consequently,

Work-houses, corporations, parish-stocks, and the like, to set them to work, as they are pernicious to trade, injurious and impoverishing to those already employ'd, so they are needless, and will come short of the end propos'd.

The poverty and exigence of the poor in England, is plainly deriv'd from one of these two particular causes.

Casualty or Crime.

By Casualty, I mean sickness of families, loss of limbs or sight, and any, either natural or accidental impotence as to labour.

These as infirmities meerly providential are not at all concern'd in this debate; ever were, will, and ought to be the charge and care of the respective parishes where such unhappy people chance to live, nor is there any want of new laws to make provision for them, our ancestors having been always careful to do it.

The crimes of our people, and from whence their poverty derives, as the visible and direct fountains are,

1. Luxury.
2. Sloath.
3. Pride.

Good husbandry is no English vertue, it may have been brought over, and in some places where it has been planted it has thriven well enough, but 'tis a forreign species, it neither loves, nor is belov'd by an English-man; and 'tis observ'd nothing is so universally hated, nothing treated with such a general contempt as a rich covetous man, tho' he does no man any wrong, only saves his own, every man will have an ill word for him, if a misfortune happens to him, hang him a covetous old rogue, 'tis no matter, he's rich enough, nay when a certain great man's house was on fire, I have heard the people say one to another, let it burn and 'twill, he's a covetous old miserly dog, I wo'nt trouble my head to help him, he'd be hang'd before he'd give us a bit of bread if we wanted it.

'Tho this be a fault, yet I observe from it something of the natural temper and genius of the nation, generally speaking, they cannot save their money.

'Tis generally said the English get estates, and the Dutch save them; and this observation I have made between forreigners and English-men that where an Englishman earns 20s. per week, and

bit just lives, as we call it, a Dutch-man grows rich, and leaves his children in very good condition; where an English labouring man with his 9s. per week lives wretchedly and poor, a Dutch-man with that wages will live very tolerably well, keep the wolf from the door, and have every thing handsome about him. In short, he will be rich with the same gain as makes the English-man poor, he'll thrive when the other goes in rags, and he'll live when the other starves, or goes a begging.

The reason is plain, a man with good husbandry, and thought in his head, brings home his earnings honestly to his family, commits it to the management of his wife, or otherwise disposes it for proper subsistence, and this man with mean gains, lives comfortably, and brings up a family, when a single man getting the same wages, drinks it away at the ale-house, thinks not of to morrow, lays up nothing for sickness, age, or disaster, and when any of these happen, he's starv'd, and a beggar.

This is so apparent in every place, that I think it needs no explication; that English labouring people eat and drink, but especially the latter three times as much in value as any sort of foreigners of the same dimensions in the world.

I am not writing this as a satyr on our people, 'tis a sad truth; and worthy the debate and application of the nations physicians assembled in Parliament, the profuse extravagant humour of our poor people in eating and drinking, keeps them low, causes their children to be left naked and starving, to the care of the parishes, whenever either sickness or disaster befalls the parent.

The next article is their sloath.

We are the most lazy diligent nation in the world, vast trade, rich manufactures, mighty wealth, universal correspondence and happy success have been constant companions of England, and given us the title of an industrious people, and so in general we are.

But there is a general taint of slothfulness upon our poor, there's nothing more frequent, than for an Englishman to work till he has got his pocket full of money, and then go and be idle, or perhaps drunk, till, tis all gone, and perhaps himself in debt; and ask him in his cups what he intends, he'll tell you honestly, he'll drink as long as it lasts, and then go to work for more.

I humbly suggest this distemper's so general, so epidemick, and so deep rooted in the nature and genius of the English, that I much doubt its being easily redress'd, and question whether it be possible to reach it by an Act of Parliament.

This is the ruine of our poor, the wife mourns, the children starve, the husband has work before him, but lies at the ale-house, or otherwise idles away his time, and won't work.

'Tis the men that wont work, not the men that can get no work, which makes the numbers of our poor; all the work-houses in England, all the overseers setting up stocks and manufactures won't reach this case; and I humbly presume to say, if these two articles are remov'd, there will be no need of the other.

I make no difficulty to promise on a short summons, to produce above a thousand families in England, within my particular knowledge, who go in rags, and their children wanting bread, whose fathers can earn their 15 to 25s. per week, but will not work, who may have work enough, but are too idle to seek after it, and hardly vouchsafe to earn any thing more than bare subsistence, and spending money for themselves.

I can give an incredible number of examples in my own knowledge among our labouring poor. I once paid 6 or 7 men

together on a Saturday night, the least 10s. and some 30s. for work, and have seen them go with it directly to the ale-house, lie there till Monday, spend it every penny, and run in debt to boot, and not give a farthing of it to their families, tho' all of them had wives and children.

From hence comes poverty, parish charges, and beggary, if ever one of these wretches falls sick, all they would ask was a pass to the parish they liv'd at, and the wife and children to the door a begging.

If this Honourable House can find out a remedy for this part of the mischief. If such Acts of Parliament may be made as may effectually cure the sloath and luxury of our poor, that shall make drunkards take care of wife and children, spendthrifts lay up for a wet, day; idle, lazy fellows diligent; and thoughtless sottish men, careful and provident.

If this can be done, I presume to say, there will be no need of transposing and confounding our manufactures, and the circulation of our trade; they will soon find work enough, and there will soon be less poverty among us, and if this cannot be done, setting them to work upon woollen manufactures, and thereby encroaching upon those that now work at them, will but ruine our trade, and consequently increase the number of the poor.

I do not presume to offer the schemes I have now drawn of methods for the bringing much of this to pass, because I shall not presume to lead a body so august, so wise, and so capable as this Honourable Assembly.

I humbly submit what is here offered, as reasons to prove the attempt now making insufficient; and doubt not but in your great wisdom, you will find out ways and means to set this matter in a clearer light, and on a right foot.

And if this obtains on the House to examine farther into this matter, the author humbly recommends it to their consideration to accept, in behalf of all the poor of this nation, a clause in the room of this objected against, which shall answer the end without this terrible ruin to our trade and people.

FINIS.