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Voght Kaspar, Freiherr von
Account of the management of
the poor in Hamburgh.

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ACCOUNT
OF THE
MANAGEMENT
OF THE
POOR IN HAMBURGH,
BETWEEN
THE YEARS 1788 AND 1794.

IN A LETTER
TO
SOME FRIENDS OF THE POOR
IN GREAT BRITAIN.

BY BARON VON VOGHT.

PUBLISHED IN 1796.

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NOW RE-PUBLISHED BY PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR.

LONDON.

1818.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The little Work, now reprinted, bears evidence of the humanity as well as of the profound political wisdom of its Author; and it is confidently offered to the public, in the hope that, under the present circumstances of the United Kingdom, its principles may be not only examined, but approved, disseminated, and acted upon, to their utmost extent: how far the particular practices in regard to Works of Industry may be usefully adopted, it is difficult to determine; but "where there is a will, there is a way:" local habits and circumstances must be the guides.

January, 1817.

TO THE
RIGHT HON. GEORGE ROSE, M. P.

SIR,

A COPY of the following work, published in 1796, was put into the hands of a Gentleman, who, at a parish meeting, had forcibly stated the injurious consequences from offering subsistence independent of labor, and the policy and true charity of providing some employment for the distressed poor. The pamphlet contained such evidence of the benevolence and profound political wisdom of its Author, and so much valuable information founded on experience, that we were satisfied we could not render a more essential benefit to society, at the present crisis, than by reprinting and circulating it. Through the medium of Messrs. D. H. & I. A. Rucker and Co. a letter has been received from Baron Von Voght, dated Flotberg (near Altona), 7 Feb. 1817, which has assured us of his free permission to republish the work; and that his observations in various countries, during a period of more than twenty years, on the interesting subject of the guardianship of the poor, had invariably confirmed the correctness of the opinions and regulations which it contains.

We are anxious, on the present occasion, to offer this interesting work to the public under the sanction of your name, as an acknowledgment of the high sense we entertain of your exertions to improve the condition of the laboring classes.

The noble and intelligent Author has pointed out in the clearest manner, some of the causes which have tended to increase

pauperism in this country, even at a period of unprecedented demand for labor; and the inevitable consequences of departing from that principle of sound policy on which our poor laws are founded, "*that employment, and not alms, should be given to those who have the ability to work, however small that ability may be.*" Situation and circumstances must determine the mode of employment; but the principle should be invariably adhered to; and no labor should be considered as unprofitable, that preserves the laborer in habits of industry.

Some legislative measure may be required to give permanence to any system adopted upon the principles here recommended; and to accomplish an effectual superintendence, perhaps a division of the large and populous parishes will appear the most obvious and practical method. By extending the present system of education, and the establishment of provident institutions, religion, morality, and industry, will then unite to ameliorate the condition of the lower orders of society, and thereby prevent crimes and consequent misery.

With great respect,

We are, Sir,

Your most obedient servants,

R. WIGRAM.

H. CHARRINGTON.

I. SOLLY.

J. COTTON.

C. H. TURNER.

W. COTTON.

J. WOOLMORE.

W. DAVIS.

J. YELLOLY.

ACCOUNT
OF THE
INSTITUTIONS AT HAMBURGH,
FOR THE
EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT OF THE POOR.

In a Letter to some Friends in England.

DURING a residence of sixteen months in your happy island, where a long-enjoyed security of person and property has called forth, in all ranks, the incalculable powers of human industry, and where domestic comfort rewards every exertion, from the philosopher's study down to the laborer's thatch, such a mass of powers produced, and of happiness enjoyed, strongly attracted all my attention. I admired the daily wonders of industry, the animated exertions of public spirit, and that unbounded active benevolence, become so habitual among you, that you yourselves are hardly conscious of its extent. To each of you, my respectable friends, I have been obliged individually for that information I was so forcibly led to desire: It was you that conducted me to your hospitals, work-houses, Magdalen-houses, and your new prisons, all monuments of British sensibility.

In our conversation on these subjects, I often mentioned the success of our endeavours in Hamburgh in suppressing beggary, encouraging industry, restoring health, and promoting morality, among a numerous class of poor.

You seemed all to think, that in England some consequences of the existing poor-laws made it difficult to obtain these advantages in a degree adequate to the large sums expended: that the right which a poor family has, of living at last at the expense of the parish, encouraged careless idleness: that the *annual rotation of overseers*, and the want of a uniform system in the distribution of different kinds of support, and of a general plan for making it concur in promoting the morality, and consequently the happiness of the supported class, demanded some alteration in the manage-

ment of the immense supplies allowed by that generous country to the wants of her poor.¹

Shrewsbury and Glasgow² have shown what advantages may be obtained, even by a partial deviation from the plans usually followed in both parts of the island. The similarity of the principles they had adopted, with those to which we in Hamburgh owe our success, was striking, and induced you to desire me to give you a more circumstantial account of our institutions.

It is certainly a duty in me, to give you back the little I can give, for the much I have received. The reason why I do not think it unworthy of your notice is, that it is not an ideal scheme, easily formed by a warm heart and a lively fancy; but a real experiment, tried for these six years past, in a population of one hundred and ten thousand inhabitants, who have the misfortune to feed above seven thousand poor, besides two thousand five hundred in their different hospitals. Give me leave, before I proceed, to offer a few general observations, of which the following sheets will contain the application.

Nature seems to have destined all her children for a state of continual exertion: and their perfectibility perhaps depends on the unceasing exercise of their powers for ends never completely attainable. These objects increase in number with the more enlarged sphere of our ideas. In the most numerous classes of men, bodily wants are the main object of their toil, and they struggle only to preserve life. In this contest with necessity all are not equally successful, not equally attentive, assiduous, sober, saving, orderly, honest, and prudent. We generally blame them for it, as if those qualities were so very common in the higher classes, and as if corruption did not always spread from the higher to the lower orders.

Among these poor there are not only victims of incapacity,

¹ The poor rates are allowed to amount to two millions and a half sterling*. It is certainly under the truth to state at a million more, the sums expended through the island in hospitals of all kinds, and in work-houses: if to this are added those large sums distributed annually by the beneficence of the noblemen and gentlemen at their country residences, and numberless subscriptions for immediate relief, &c. I make no doubt, that the sum of British charities amounts to near five millions a year. This is certainly too much. Supposing the extravagant proposition of one man in ten wanting support: in a population of nine millions, 5*l.* sterling would fall to the share of each pauper, out of which undoubtedly one-fourth part is able to perform some work, and the half capable of doing a fourth towards earning their subsistence.

² Vide Mr. Wood's account of the Shrewsbury House of Industry, 1792. Dr. Porteus's Letter on the Management of the Poor Funds in Glasgow.

* Now, in 1817, upwards of eight millions, and private and public benefactions have increased in the same ratio.

folly, and vice, to whom public justice owes instruction and correction : I am afraid by far the greatest number of poor in Europe are of a very different description.

Through a concurrence of numerous circumstances, the price of labor and of the necessaries of life are in a very unfavourable proportion for the poor in most countries of Europe. A man who lives by labor, but requires nothing but bodily strength, has still a right to expect such wages as may enable him to live comfortably ; this, in Britain, is to live in dry and healthy lodgings, eat sound provisions, sufficient to support his labor, to be covered against the inclemency of the weather, and to appear with a certain cleanliness on Sundays ; to rear his children decently, and lay by something to live upon when age has deprived him of his strength. This is indeed the situation of the laboring poor in all new societies of men : there he earns even beyond this, till augmenting population lowers the price of labor, and raises the necessaries of life. Hard labor then procures him no more than a small pittance, upon which he barely lives ; little for comfort, less for the education of his children, and nothing to depend upon in those times when labor is wanting, when sickness confines him, or a rigorous season requires more food, more clothing, and more firing ; then he sells or pawns his bed, his tools, his every thing, till despair takes from him sobriety, order, assiduity, and economy : he first is tempted into drunkenness by his misery, and, by a fatal circle, is miserable for ever by the habit of drinking. Sloth, beggary, and all the train of vices that attend them, completely destroy his industry ; and if this situation has lasted for some time, *he is irrecoverably lost to order and regularity.*

In the south of Europe, where the climate is mild, and men want but little food, less clothing, and hardly any shed, numbers live the life of a savage in the midst of civilization, reconciled to it by habits of security and independence, and by the indulgence of libertinism and idleness. Thousands throng at the gates of the monasteries in Spain for some soup, which they receive as a tribute ; and in Naples forty thousand lazaroni are dreaded by despotism itself.

In those countries, adultery and prostitution are common, the sources of life are tainted by dreadful disease, spies are easily obtained, and assassinations are cheap.

In northern latitudes, where more food, more clothing, and a house are wanted, the effects of misery are more severely felt. Many, many fall a slow sacrifice to chill penury, and starve for months or years. But here the remedy is much easier. Pity prompts to relieve obvious distresses, and the sharpness of want urges men to its antidote, *labor*. In repairing, however, those

evils, which society did not, or could not prevent, it ought to be careful not to counteract the wise purposes of nature, but give the poor a fair chance to work for themselves. *The present distress must be relieved, the sick and the aged provided for; but the children must be instructed; and labor, not alms, offered to those who have some ability to work, however small that ability may be.*

In all the west of Europe, there is hardly a country where the sums which public and private benevolence bestows upon the poor, are not more than adequate to those purposes; but mismanagement has employed them, with very few exceptions, as a reward to sloth, idleness, impudence, and untruth; and has reared new generations of poor wretches, brought up to a life of disgusting profligacy.

Unthinking pity has rashly stopped that natural course of things, by which want leads to labor, labor to comfort, the knowledge of comfort to industry, and to all those virtues by which the toiling multitude so incalculably add to the strength and happiness of a country; and while it neglects that respectable poverty which shrinks from public sight, it encourages, by profuse and indiscriminate charities, all those abominable arts which make beggary a better trade than can be found in a work-shop.

The greatness of the evil must at last carry a remedy along with it. It was intolerable in Hamburgh, when the public, disposed by some speculative discussions on the subject, and encouraged by some private successful exertions, resolved to make it the object of their serious consideration. They largely contributed the money that was requisite; and what was a still greater sacrifice, many of them gave their personal assistance in guiding the benevolence of their fellow citizens into a proper channel. Two hundred of our most respectable inhabitants have been thus employed for the last seven years, and, during that period, hardly a beggar has been seen in Hamburgh.¹

The following general account will, I flatter myself, show, that we not only did much towards the relief of the poor, but that we gained some steps towards the more desirable, yet but slowly attainable end, the *preventing some of the causes of poverty*.

As a still more minute detail, however, may be desirable for those who actually engage in such an undertaking, I must refer to a volume of laws and bye-laws, printed at Hamburgh, 1788; and to a volume containing sixteen reports, given successively to the public from 1788 to 1794. They are deposited, along with all other papers concerning this establishment, with Mr. Creech at

¹ This fact is corroborated by many merchants of the city of London, who witnessed this extraordinary effect.

Edinburgh, who will be so good as to communicate them to any of those to whom this letter is addressed.

To the general causes of poverty, in Hamburg, we have to add, the inclemency of our winters; the fluctuation of several branches of trade on which the poor depend for their subsistence; the number of people attracted out of the poorer adjacent countries, by the expectation, often disappointed, of finding employment or support in a large commercial town, whose inhabitants have ever deserved the reputation of generous benevolence; and lastly, the extraordinary low wages and number of female servants, whose wages on an average do not exceed 2*l.*, and whose number is computed to be near fifteen thousand, and I am sorry to add, that meat and bread pay from 15 to 25 per cent., and bear several taxes exceeding 60 per cent.

It is evident that a number of women must remain unprovided for, when their age renders them unfit for service: and the excise being limited within the walls of the town, our Holsatian and Hanoverian neighbours have a great advantage in carrying on manufactures in competition with our poor.

Some years previous to 1788, a society had united for giving relief to the indigent sick. Another society had procured flax and spinning-wheels, established a spinning-school, and given work to all those who chose to work: their number yet was comparatively small.

Some other humane gentlemen made personal visits among the poor, and, by giving their history to the public, awakened its attention to the sufferings of this numerous class, showing, at the same time, the necessity of a general measure.

I lay some stress upon these preliminary essays; partly from my conviction, that the success of such an undertaking depends wholly on the degree in which the public at large is satisfied of its necessity; and partly, because I think that no man is entitled to recommend the execution of any important plan, till it has been already tried upon a smaller scale, and till its parts are in some measure organised for immediate use.

The magistrates took up the business with a zeal adequate to its importance; the outlines of a plan were agreed upon; it was decided, that such revenues as had till then been expended in alms by the several church-wardens, and those whose administration had been connected with the work-house, should be united under one administration, with those sums that could be collected from private benevolence.

The representatives of the citizens went round through all the houses in the different parishes to solicit annual subscriptions,

Every inhabitant in rotation went round weekly, collecting among his neighbours ; and the most respectable of our inhabitants made it a point to collect in person.

The town, after an average calculation of the number of poor in the several parts, was divided into sixty districts, containing each a nearly equal number of poor.

To each district three citizens were chosen for three years ; and the number of wealthy and respectable men who offered themselves for the severe task they were to undergo, will for ever furnish a bright page in the annals of civic virtue in Hamburgh.

Five senators presided at the board of a committee, composed of ten members (whom I shall call directors), and who were chosen for life.

In their meetings, to which (analogous to the organization of those boards by which public business is conducted at Hamburgh), several other members of the commonwealth were added for the most important decisions, the whole of the plan was, during six months, fully prepared for execution.

For the use of the above-named one hundred and eighty gentlemen, whom I shall call overseers, very ample instructions were published.

Actual relief was the first object ; for we all were convinced of the barbarity of preventing beggary, when provision for real want is not previously prepared ; but at the very moment that this provision was secured, measures were taken to prevent *any man from receiving a shilling which he was able to earn for himself.*

This is the basis of every solid provision for the poor ; with it every establishment must stand or fall, become the blessing or the bane of the lower classes of society.

Our overseers had printed interrogatories, which they were to propose to each poor family. The answers were written upon the white column of the page, and verified by a personal visitation, and the evidence of their neighbours, and many queries were formed to discover the average earning of each member of the family ; but this was not a point easily settled.

Few answers were sincere ; and it being the interest of the poor to make their capacity for work appear small, all the tricks were employed which the habits of beggary had rendered but too familiar. The state of health was determined by a visit from a physician and a surgeon.

We now began to make an exact calculation of what each pauper wanted for bare subsistence ; we went down as far as 2s. a week ; but in the course of our investigation respecting the earnings of 3500 families, we were astonished to find that we were

still above that sum with which a considerable part of our poor could make a shift to live.

It was our determined principle to reduce this support lower than what any industrious man or woman in such circumstances could earn : *for if the manner in which relief is given is not a spur to industry, it becomes undoubtedly a premium to sloth and profligacy.*

Very little was still gained : for the poor might even with the bare pittance remain idle, or they might receive this support very undeservedly, if, in the mean time, a more lucrative employment had offered ; the want of which was the cause or pretext of their claims.

At this period of the business, that private society, which had successfully established a flax yarn spinning manufacture, gave over to our institution, the stock, the organization of the whole, the very able teachers and officers, and all the experience acquired in several years.

Six-sevenths of our poor being women and children, we fixed upon this kind of work ; because,

1st. The material is cheap ;

2nd. The sale always sure ;

3d. No nice workmanship is required ;

4th. It is easily learnt, and of use at all times to the instructed poor ;

5th. It can be done by weak and robust, by old and young people, with a difference in the produce of labour proportionate to their capacity for work ;

6th. Because the work can be exactly ascertained by measure ; and by seeing a woman spin an hour, it is perfectly easy to say what she is capable of doing in a day.

A most essential point was, to regulate the spinning by the measure, and not by weight. We sold the clean flax to the poor at a certain low price, and bought a certain measure of yarn again from them at a high price : thus, to whatever fineness the yarn was spun, it was the profit of the poor. This price was 30 per cent, above the usual spinning price ; so that we were sure that all the yarn would be brought into the office established for that purpose. Every pauper brought his book continually with him, wherein the quantity delivered was noted ; thus he had always with him a certificate of his industry, and we, a continual average of the state of industry of our poor. But this establishment procured us many still more essential advantages : we could now safely offer relief to all sorts of poor, because we had it now in our power to make them comply with the only condition required, that they should use towards their support all the exertion they still were capable of. Accordingly the overseers went through their districts, and asked

in all such mansions as could be supposed to harbour want, if the inhabitants stood in need of support. The question to all such poor as wished for relief, and were able to spin, was, whether they did earn by their work 1s. 6d. a week? for experience had taught us, that many poor lived upon that sum; and we knew enough of our poor to suppose that 1s. 6d. avowed earning was something more.

If the answer was affirmative, the pauper stood not in need of weekly assistance.

If it was negative, we gave him work, which, being paid 30 per cent. above its value, afforded him 1s. 6d. a week easily, if he was even an indifferent hand. The far more frequent cases were partial inability by age, or weakness, or want of skill. For poor of the latter description a school was opened, and in three months' time the business was easily learnt. During that time, the pauper got first 2s. a week, and every week afterwards 2d. less, till in the twelfth week he got nothing at all but his own earnings, and was dismissed with a wheel and a pound of flax gratis.

The quantity of work which disabled poor were capable of doing in a week, was easily and accurately ascertained by a week's trial in the spinning-school. The result was produced weekly before appointed members of the committee, and the sum which the poor could earn, was noted down in their small books. The overseer was directed to pay them weekly what their earnings fell short of 1s. 6d. in every such week, when it appeared from their books that they had earned to the known extent of their abilities.

From that moment, applications became less frequent; and we had an infallible standard for distinguishing real want; for whenever the pauper, if in health, (if not he was peculiarly provided for,) had not earned what he could, then he had either been lazy, or had found more lucrative work; in either case he was not entitled to a relief for that week, whatever he might be for the following.

This has constantly held good during these six years; and whenever, by some relaxation of regularity on the part of the overseers, the relief has been in some years larger, we always found, that the thermometer of industry had been lower, viz. less yarn spun; and that whenever, as in the summer 1792, the principle was enforced, the industry again increased accordingly.

I have been the more particular here, as I am convinced, that it is to this measure alone we owe our success.

It is obvious, why it was desirable to choose but one kind of work, because in this way only the different degrees of industry in the different poor could be compared; and why such a kind of work was chosen, as could leave to no under office the smallest arbitrary power: a kind of work, lastly, where it was impossible to be cheated

either by the poor, the seller, the buyer, or the servant.

This gave a pivot to the whole superstructure, and a simplicity to our complicated machine, without which I do not think it could have stood one year.

This simplicity lost very little by our employing the men and boys in making rope yarn, picking oakum, or cleaning the streets and mending the roads at 4*d.* a day. All this work was calculated upon the same principle.

But want of employment for poor in tolerable health was one source of misery; old age and incurable diseases, sickness, and the difficulty of supporting a numerous family, were evils which also called for assistance.

For the first, we provided an hospital; and, in some cases, gave to individuals the money which the boarding in the hospital would have amounted to.

Five physicians, five surgeons, and as many midwives were appointed, one for each twelve districts; who, upon the request of the overseer, (a request which he was bound to make whenever applied to,) went immediately to the lodgings of the patient, if he was not able to appear at the appointed hour of the day at the physician's or surgeon's house, who was obliged to make an immediate report, and to note down in a book, kept at the house of the directors of these twelve districts, how far the cure was advanced, and the moment when the patient was able to work again. Till that moment, the physician prescribed, not only the diet, which was obtained, according to previous contracts, from the *traiteurs* of that quarter of the town, and the medicines, which were made up at very low prices after a *pharmacopœia pauperum* which we had carefully revised; but he informed the overseer of what money he thought necessary for supplying the want of labour, and the extraordinary expenses. This made a particular article of support, under the name of sick money, which was given with the greater liberality, as no bad effects could possibly arise from indulging here those feelings, which it is the hardest task of every overseer to restrain.

A numerous family is too heavy a burden, not only for poor reduced to the lowest earnings, but even for many an industrious couple in a better way of employment; too heavy, in all cases, upon widows.

Two ways offered to provide for them; the one, to take such children into an hospital; the other, to give to the mother an allowance in money.

We were very averse to the first, and the poor mothers would have been still more so. May all the favourers of those houses, such as they are, seriously reflect, if the advantages they offer can compensate for the education of the heart which nature yields in

those huts of poverty, where both parties become so necessary to each other, and where heroic exertions of parental and filial piety, are not seldom become habitual. Could the humane and philosophical overseer look through the rags and the filth of pale misery; calculate the sacrifices daily made in many families, and amongst neighbours; and enjoy the rapture with which a mother embraces her son, whom she sees swallow the crumb of bread she refused to her own wants; the annals of the poor might reconcile him to human nature, when disgusted with the list of crimes which blacken the page of history.

On the other hand, it is but too true, that misery and drunkenness, particularly in the male poor, lead to the neglect of their unhappy children: nor can it be doubted, that in this manner many fall victims to wretchedness and immorality.

Wherever children under six years of age were in this unhappy situation, *we intended to board them in the houses of the better sort of poor*: and many a good motherly woman we found, who became an excellent nurse.

In other cases, we allowed the mother from six to twelve pence a week for each child; and we are now busy in preparing in every parish a warm room, and bread, milk, and potatoes in plenty, where such parents as go out to work may deposit their children during the day, and thus prevent any obstacle to their own industry, or to that of their elder children.

We determined to oblige them to send all their children from six to sixteen to school, in which they shall work two thirds of the time, and the remainder of it be instructed in reading, writing, casting accounts, religion, and church music.

We determined, and this is the second hinge upon which the institution turns, that to no family any relief should be allowed for a child past six years; but that this child, being sent to school, should receive, not only the payment for his work, but also an allowance, in the compound ratio of his attendance at school, his behaviour, and his application to work; which amounted to an average of twelve or eighteen pence a week, exclusive of other premiums.

By this measure the number of children, far from being a burden, became a great convenience; for the greater number of individuals messing together at a certain rate, the better their fare, and cheaper.

By these means we as effectually excluded those parents who did not wish to send their children to school, as we had excluded those that did not choose to work; and children became accustomed to look from their infancy upon the means of subsistence, as the recompence of labour, or at least of exertion.

How this was modified, and what other views were obtained by it, will appear hereafter. I wish only to state the principle here.

In the above proportion of 2s. a week an allowance was made for lodging; but as this is paid every six months, and the pauper receives his allowance weekly; it seemed to us to require more than common fortitude in a person thus circumstanced, to refuse to himself the much-wanted comfort which the 4d. a-week (he ought to lay aside for house rent of his family) would have procured him, were it continually in his reach; he would, of course, run in debt, and become ruined again.

We reduced, therefore, twenty-four pence to twenty pence, and paid his rent to the landlord; and thus we not only got him out of debt, but procured him a warmer and more comfortable lodging than what otherwise he could have a right to expect.

In the mean time, while we were employed in establishing schools for five or six hundred grown poor, and schools for above a thousand children, and in organizing our medical establishment, the overseers had prepared for the board, as the result of their inquiries, a complete list of the poor, and the necessary details with respect to each of them.

We knew now all the poor, and having provided means for their relief, we announced to the public, in October, 1788, that from that moment no deserving poor person could, nor would remain unnoticed. We had lists printed, distributed, and annexed to our almanacks, where the names of the streets which had fallen to the lot of each overseer, were enumerated, so that no pauper could plead ignorance of the place where to apply, nor any man in Hamburg give more effectual assistance to the poor, than in directing them to the proper places.

We distributed instructions by thousands among the poor, how to procure and to employ the offered relief.

We entreated the public to inform the directors, if any pauper had not been duly attended to; and I must add, to my infinite satisfaction, that I know of no fact, during six years, where this neglect has been proved.

Of course, all giving of alms ceased, *the only effectual way to extirpate beggary*. The very wise law, which fined 2l. every man who gave charity in the streets, or at the doors, was scarcely found to be necessary.

To secure the execution of so complicated a plan was rather difficult; but we have been so fortunate, that, small variations excepted, the machine has gone on these seven years with much less friction than could reasonably have been expected.

This makes it worth while to enter here into some further details.

The three overseers appropriated to each district, after visiting and examining the poor, ascertaining the number of their children, and informing themselves by the report of the physicians, of their ability to work, determined, agreeable to the rules above mentioned,

1st. Whether any weekly relief was to be allowed, or if only work was to be given.

2. Whether bedding or clothing was to be bought, goods pawned to be released, or old debts to be extinguished.

3. Whether sick or school tickets were wanted.

At the same time they communicated to the Board what they could collect about the morals of the pauper, and their opinions concerning his circumstances.

With regard to the first point, I must beg leave to make the following observations :

The situation of our poor in summer and winter is totally different. Every kind of manufacture and garden work goes on during the former season, at the same time that provisions are plentiful and extremely cheap. During the winter most kinds of labour cease, provisions get dearer and scarcer, and fuel and warm clothing are new wants.

It was absolutely necessary to make different allowances, and accordingly we adapted our interrogatories to the period, in such a manner as to ascertain every change of circumstance materially influencing the relation of the poor to the institution. The new support was regulated agreeably to the information we received, and amounted generally from four to eight pence more in winter than in summer. During the most severe winter weeks, four-pence was still added if extraordinary cold happened ; but the weekly relief was fixed never to be above twenty-four pence, in whatever manner it was paid. We did not allow a larger sum, whatever might have been the former situation of the poor. This may seem hard in some instances ; but we were convinced, that if the least door was opened to the inequality of distribution, the bad consequences would have been incalculable in an institution of this magnitude ; as all we could do by the strictest rules, was to make 180 gentlemen act in every quarter of the town in conformity to these principles. We thought further, that if those poor had formerly been in a more respectable situation, they would be worthy objects of private benevolence, of which no public institution ought to supersede the exertions.

2. We found the poor destitute of every thing ; therefore not only clothing and bedding were required, but their things being

pawned, it became necessary to redeem them. The only effectual way to prevent their pawning them again, was to mark them indelibly as the property of the institution, which the pauper was to hold only as long as he behaved well.

3. I have already said, that a sick-ticket excepted a pauper from the common rules, as long as it was continued, and that a school-ticket for a child was considered as 12d. given weekly to the parent.

The proposals of the overseers about the weekly allowance of the poor, were brought to one of the members of the committee, each of them superintending six of those districts. He was advocate for the institution, as the overseers were for the poor, and all cases being much simplified, they easily agreed.

The director made his report to the board, with respect to each district, separately; and the resolution settled for the next six months was then written down upon the same sheet of paper which contained all the queries made to the pauper, together with his answers; which paper always remained with the overseer after its contents had been brought into tables in the director's book, containing an account of all the poor of six districts, and their weekly relief. He received weekly from the overseer the account of what was wanted for his fixed support, for occasional relief to the sick for accidents, and for discretionary assistance to the poor whose cases could not yet be investigated.

This account of the overseers was certified by the director, and then sent to the treasurer for payment.

The treasurer made his balance every week, and presented it every month to the committee, when the ten directors presented theirs, which checked each in such a manner as to make any error impossible.

The books were closed every Saturday; and out of the very numerous payments made by the treasurer in a year, the smallest could be found out in a quarter of an hour.

Very soon we found the number of ten directors too small; five others were added, (they are always taken out of the number of the overseers,) who constituted a committee:

For the manufactures.

For the schools.

For the procuring of clothes, and

For the police of the poor:

All of them have several officers, keep their accounts separate, and once a month give them to the treasurer and to the board.

The division of every kind of expense is so scrupulously kept that no particular branch could be mentioned, of which the account in certain given periods could not be immediately made out.

After several repeated trials, we found that there was a great waste in leaving the distribution of clothing to the overseers alone; partly because they paid too dear, by creating a competition of many buyers, and partly by giving without control.

This committee, therefore, bought the cloth, and had the shirts and clothes made by some of the poor, employing this kind of work at the same time as a means of instruction for their children in the schools. The pauper who stood in need of clothing, presented to the committee a recommendation, signed by the overseer and the director, and then got the clothes.

Children got shirts and clothes only through the committee superintending the schools, according to their behaviour.

4. Hamburgh is unfortunately situated in this respect, that, from all the poor countries surrounding, numbers flock in, and among them many foreign poor. It was established, that three years' residence should entitle to relief; allowance at the same time being made for accidents, illness, or child-bed, which in all cases were thought proper objects of charity. A hospitium open for foreign poor, where they could live three days, after which they were forwarded with a viaticum. At the same time, it was prohibited to receive a stranger, without acquainting the magistrate or the overseer, under the penalty to bear alone the expense of maintaining the man, if he should become an object of charity within three years.

Upon these principles we began our institution in October, 1788. We had before-hand given to the public the most minute detail of our views, and of the obstacles we met with, requesting its advice at the same time that we solicited its support. We continued to give two reports yearly; one containing the history of the institution during the preceding year, about the time of the new subscription; the second containing the yearly balance and an explanatory account. The originals were left open for the inspection of the public at large.

A short extract of these reports will best shew the result of our endeavours. I shall arrange them according to the objects of our expenses, adding necessary illustrations; taking only the first and the last year, unless some observations occur on the expense of some particular years. I refer, at the same time, to the table annexed, for the general comparison of the expenses of the several years.

1. We found 3903 families, making 7391 individuals, four sevenths women, two sevenths children, one seventh men, in the highest want of immediate relief. great part of them had not seen a bed for many years; and the misery of those who were not yet turned beggars, exceeded all description.

The sum paid in weekly allowance, during the first eight months, on an average of twelve pence a-week for each family, was						£6729
During the second year	-	-	-	-	-	8297
Third year	-	-	-	-	-	9318
Average of the first 2½ years						9129
The house-rent allowed to the poor was	-	-	-	-	-	2100
						£11229

The first clothing of this alarming number of poor would indeed have exceeded even the powerful support the institution enjoyed, had not our ladies largely contributed ready-made shirts and clothing, as soon as they knew how much they were wanted. Still this expense was, on the average of the first three years, 977*l*. It may not be uninteresting to add, that we tried in the first year to buy potatoes and fuel for the poor, to distribute amongst them at the first cost. But experience shewed us, what I have seen confirmed every where under similar circumstances.

1. That it is impossible to prevent waste, if not robbery.
2. That the poor have a dislike to what you oblige them to buy.
3. That giving large portions, you encourage the practice of selling it out again.
4. That when small portions are given, the loss of time for fetching them, which is considerable when such a number must be provided, makes it expensive to every industrious pauper, even if he was to get them for nothing.
5. That the necessary housing and storing, together with the number of necessary officers, make it very expensive to the institution.

We found it cheaper, and the poor found it more convenient to receive, instead of the extraordinary supply, four-pence a-week, and to buy for themselves. Some overseers took the trouble to provide it for fifteen or twenty families under their care; where this was done, the poor got it best and cheapest.

A different plan may do, where the community is very small, or where the poor are not taught to know the value of their time.

The depth of misery in which we found our poor subjected us to another unexpected expense. The itch was become so general, and had so perfectly infected the work-house, to which some poor were always sent for correction, that neither there nor in the narrow lanes and alleys, where the poor live crowded together, was the cure possible. We were obliged to establish a temporary lazaretto out of town, where we sent the most infected; and in three years made

it superfluous. This occasioned an additional expense of 438*l.* in each of the first three years.

A very heavy expense was incurred by the purchasing of spinning wheels and other tools, and by the establishment and maintenance of a school; where, for the first years, five hundred poor at a time were taught to spin; the indemnification for their loss of time during learning, was paid them, as well as the loss upon their work. The sum of these expenses amounted to 1175*l.* a-year. But after three years, two thousand poor, who at the time they entered the school, could do nothing at all, did earn from eighteen-pence to twenty-pence a-week, at such time and at such hours as were formerly quite lost to them; and the din of industry was heard where sloth or riot had inhabited before.

Our schools, which at the time of their establishment were a collection of the most abandoned and profligate children, most of whom had been used to beg, required a great length of time before they could do even as much as to give to these unhappy creatures the habit of fixing their attention upon any work, not to speak of instruction. *Gentle means and perseverance got at last the better of great part of the vices that grow in children who are trained up to begging.*

Our medical institution got sooner to its perfection, and I must refer to an excellent report on that subject, in the first volume of our yearly reports.

It is a fact, that in three years the number of sick had been 12969, whose cure had, including broth, &c. not cost 3*s.* 6*d.* each.

It is evident how much we saved by not having a salaried apothecary, nor a particular appropriated house.

We employed always some poor women as nurses, when the family could not attend the patient, and found them of very great use in fetching the medicines, and reporting to the physician the health of the patient; and with this slight addition, we thought that (a very few cases excepted,) the result of our experience was unfavourable to hospitals.

The patient is more comfortable in his own bed amongst his family and his neighbours, gets into no habits of idleness, and employs usefully the moments of his convalescence. The fact proves, that it is also the cheapest method.

Our expense at the end of three years, amounted to £44085

It had been annually increasing; private charity ceasing, all poor at last had recourse to the means offered them: from a corrupted race, however, little good could be expected; and what education we had been able to give, could not yet have any sensible effect. It was

still the time of struggle ; but the public, who always knew perfectly all circumstances, support us cheerfully, notwithstanding the receipt of - - - - - £41596

Which in three years (vid. Tab.) fell short of the expenditure by the sum of - - - - - 2489

Desirous, on our side, to save for the public what we possibly could, we subjected again all our expenses to a new scrutiny, of which the result is contained in the fourteenth report. It seemed that the overseers had slackened a little in attending to the work of the poor. The committee for the manufactures had found, that in 1791, but half the usual quantity of yarn had been spun ; yet the allowance had rather been increased, without an augmentation of the poor. The rules were anew enforced in the beginning of summer, as the most proper season ; and at the approach of winter, all those who needed assistance from want of work, instead of getting the usual augmentation from the overseer, were sent to the committee, who either gave them work, or procured them employment from tradesmen and manufacturers, with whom they had connected themselves for that purpose. This was in some respects expensive, but became a very great saving, as it had this effect, that out of 276 poor who applied for an augmentation of allowance from want of work, *only forty accepted of the work offered them.* During that year 3000 bundles of yarn more were spun, 300 children more went to school, and the institution saved 1250*l.* which would have fallen to the share of idleness, and which is nearly the amount of the greater earnings of the poor in that year.

I insist upon these facts, because they prove, not only the wisdom of a measure which makes the relief of the poor dependent on their industry, and obliges them to a kind of work, the produce of which is the undoubted measure of the exertions they employed ; but because they prove also the necessity of enforcing this measure, daily enfeebled by the cunning, and the obvious misery of the lazy poor, operating on the sensibility of the overseers. It is undoubtedly the most difficult part of their duty to shut their ears to the cries of misery, and leave those to their fate who will not comply with the conditions under which they are to be relieved. We have seen incredible instances of hardship suffered, rather than go to work, or send their children to school. If, in single instances, indulgence is shewn, *where, according to law, it ought not, then all is lost* ; abuse creeps in, and in a short time this weekly allowance becomes a pension, *that supersedes the necessity of working* : then it becomes a matter of protection, and the whole a system of corruption ; worse a thousand times by being systemized, *than if no provision had been made*, and if every thing had been trusted to chance, and to the exertions of private benevolence. These pre-

miums held out to vice, must of course increase the number of the idle and the profligate; and what must be the feelings of the honest industrious workman, *who, with the honest exertions of his strength, hardly earns the bare necessities of life; when next to his door Sloth sits in undeserved ease, and reaps where it has not sown.*

It is literally true, that where no man can want, many will be idle; and that the natural course of things in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, would have forced the wretch to labour, and perhaps secured him comfort; if pity, like an unskilful physician, had not stepped in, and *by a palliative remedy prevented the cure.* I think then, that we may safely ascribe the success I am going to shew you in the account of the last year, to our steadiness in adhering to this fundamental principle. It was from the beginning of 1792 we began to feel its good effect.

In 1793 the number of poor families was reduced to 3234, to more than 1-6th less than what they were at the time of the establishment; the sum of their allowance in money and house-rent to 9678*l.*, which is 1432*l.* less than the average of the first years.

Yet this difference is so little owing to an increase of mortality among the poor, that we have, on the contrary, witnessed the most satisfactory effects, not only of our early assistance in sickness, by attention, medicines, and better diet; but I think still more, by cleanliness and comfort of dress, warmer lodgings, and the prodigious influence industrious activity has upon the constitution. In the year 1790-91, the number of new claimants was 431. In 1792-93, 119.

The reduction of this traffic of beggary, as soon as it was known, was so profitable to our city, that in the year 1792, only 126 vagrants were sent out with a viaticum, when the number in 1791 had been 272.

Not only the number of sick among our poor had decreased from 3710 successively to 2672 in 1793, but the mortality among the sick had diminished in a surprising proportion:

In 1788-89	. 7 per cent.
1789-90	. 6
1790-91	. 5
1791-92	. 4½

The private medical institution that preceded ours had an average mortality of 11 per cent. May all good and humane men share the heartfelt pleasure with which I relate these facts!

The better clothing of the poor was now mostly confined to the children, whose rags were now all changed to decent dress; yet the average expense of the last three years was not above 689*l.* per annum.

The schools for teaching spinning to the grown people were no longer necessary. 3354 spinning-wheels had been distributed to such as had proved themselves able to spin. Several hundreds of these were constantly, and all of them occasionally, employed in spinning, when a more lucrative employment was not to be found. The average of all expenses attending the employment of the poor, during the last three years, including the loss at the sale of the manufactured goods, was 611*l.* per annum. We calculated that, to procure to a pauper the means of earning, in the worst case, five guineas a year, had cost us half a guinea.

I trace with pleasure these progressive steps, by which our institution, after having relieved the first wants of the poor, enabled us to apply a greater share of our funds and of our attention to one of the most effectual means of preventing misery *the better education of children.*

A plan had been laid down and agreed upon, in 1788, which we now began to execute, but on which many improvements remain to be made. It is contained in page 144 of the reports.

Thus far we had, in 1794, been able to proceed.

We had established three kinds of schools, one for such children as had no other employment. After the proper divisions of sexes and ages, they were again divided into classess, where their employment changed with their age; spinning, knitting, weaving, and plain work, were taught in the different classes of the school of industry: but we took care to make the instruction in the schools, of morality and religion, reading and writing, go hand in hand with the increase of their capacity for work; so that, at the age of sixteen, we might with safety recommend them to places in decent families. We were so lucky in 1792 and 1793, as to put about 260 girls and boys into service, who a few years before were covered with rags and vermin, weakened in their constitution, and immersed in vice. The boys went to sea, or to different trades. Most of them have turned out well. The number of children that in 1793 had been in the schools was 2046.

We not only made a point to finish entirely the education of these children, but whenever they left service again, we continued to offer them such a temporary support, as might diminish the danger of their relapsing from actual want, into vice and profligacy.

2. For other classes of instruction, schools were opened in the evening hours, for such children as work in the day time for manufacturers, or for their parents, and who gain in that manner more than they can or ought to gain in our establishment.

It is perhaps not out of place to observe here, that we were very anxious to know, what could be gained by the poor children, at a

very moderate rate of wages, when employed in constant work that required no particular skill; as we were determined to pay their labour something lower than the rates paid by the manufacturers; as the prejudice to the individuals, and the detriment to industry, that must necessary result from the smallest inattention to this point, is obvious.

3. We established Sunday schools for such children as were employed through the whole week, and which many of those girls continued to attend, that had been brought into service.

In these schools, there were now upwards of 600 children, all of such parents as received support from the institution, and whose decent appearance in the Sunday schools was remarkably pleasing.

The average amount of the expense for the last three years, was 0*l.* per annum.

The whole amount of our expense for the year				
1793-94, amounted to	-	-	-	£ 14,773
Our revenues were	-	-	-	16,917
				<hr/>
Hence an exceeding revenue	-	-	-	£ 2,144

It is but justice to the beneficence of the citizens of Hamburgh to mention, that this increase is greatly owing to their contributing largely to put the revenue upon an equal footing with the necessary expenditure.

Our institution has only two sources of revenue, independent of public benevolence, and of the satisfaction of the public with the measures of its administration.

They are, a contribution levied upon the apparent fortunes amounting to - - - - - £ 2,000

And half per cent. of the amount of goods sold by public sale, with one quarter of the brokerage of them.

This upon an average is about - - - - - 2,300

£ 4,300

Thus the institution is dependent for more than ten thousand pounds on the annual charity of the public.

This joined to the publicity of the accounts, is, I believe, the third cause of success.

It is this only that prevents all institutions of this kind from becoming a job, the directors from being careless of the public approbation or censure, and the whole administration from falling into the hands of under-officers, who afterwards know so well how to embroil the business, that no subsequent one ever is able to unravel the clue.

This at least is the history of nearly all the workhouses and many hospitals in Europe.

It may be worth while to remark, that in an institution, where 14,000*l.* are yearly received and paid in small sums, and where books of every description are regularly kept; where the subscriptions must be collected; and where, beside personal attendance, numberless messages are necessary between the directors and the overseers, the overseer and the treasurer, and the overseer and the poor; that all these details are managed and executed by eleven officers, whose salaries do not exceed together 400*l.*, and fifty poor, who get 1*s.* per week, perhaps, more than what the institution would be obliged to allow them.

The remainder of the sum wanted was raised by the following means:

1. A subscription, which, at an average, brought yearly £ 5,850 and since the second year never varied 200*l.*

2. A weekly collection through all the houses of the town who had not subscribed, - - - - 1,340

3. Unsubscribed donations. This indeed is one of the most interesting sources of our income, in respect to the feelings that occasion them. Some of them the expression of gratitude of a merchant who has either escaped some loss, or gained some unexpected profit. Others a joint donation made by two disputing parties, of the sum about which they did not agree. A considerable part, the produce of near 3000 poor-boxes, kept in different families, in order that their children or their servants may have an opportunity of indulging their pity; and where, in the midst of conviviality, many a collection is made for the poor. They serve too in the counting-houses of the merchants for collecting a trifle, when a bargain is concluded, or when at the end of the year large sums are paid. And they are presented to strangers in the hotels, who thus enjoy the pleasure of doing good, without being tormented by the aspect of disgusting misery. This sum amounts to an average of - - - - 1,375

Legacies, which have yet only amounted to a yearly average of - - - - 200

Half of the money collected in the churches on Sundays 1,050

Two extraordinary collections in the churches, the one intended to supply the clothing, the other the extraordinary fuel for the poor - - - - 1,430

Annually contributed by public benevolence, - - £ 11,245

I would stop here, if I did not recollect many a conversation with several of the respectable men to whom this letter is addressed, the result of which was, that relieving the present distress, though the first essential thing in providing for the poor, is by no means the most difficult. That the less easy task is, to distribute supplies in such a manner as may not, by increasing the number of the poor, leave real want unrelieved, and give encouragement to vice and idleness; and that, even after the attainment of this object, much remains to be done by the friends of humanity. An investigation of the sources of poverty, we often thought, might indicate the means of preventing the evil; and might suggest such measures for supporting the falling, as would, in many cases, counteract that combination of circumstances, which impose on a man the dishonourable necessity of throwing himself on the charity of the public.

But I do not presume to give my ideas, I only wish to state facts.

Certain it is, that the extension of the benefits of the schools, and of the medical institution, to those not yet entitled to receive support, may prevent many a family from ever being in want of it. We ascribe the diminution of the annual increase of poor, partly to our having given medical assistance to 1135 persons of that description.

The establishment of beneficent societies, founded upon solid calculations, and under the direction of the institution, might be a good substitute for that private economy, so seldom to be met with among the poor; it might even be a very good policy, to receive the sums thus collected, and to allow the beneficent societies, not only more than the legal, but even compound interest. The institution, by sacrificing a few hundred pounds yearly, certainly would encourage establishments that might in time save as many hundred families from the necessity of being a burden to the public charity.

A timely payment of house-rent, or releasing of pawned goods, &c. might save many a family. But these charities, where much must be left to discretion, cannot make a part of the general system: it must be referred to a committee, composed of gentlemen perfectly aware of the danger attending misapplication of benevolence. The multiplication of employments for the female part of the children, such as hair-dressing, making of clothes, shoes, &c. and all possible easy work for the manufactures of the country, ought to be attended to.

A careful moral education of all the children, would undoubtedly be the most effectual way of promoting the happiness of the rising generation. Towards this desirable end, the establishment of male and female seminaries would be the first step. I think we are far

back in this respect every where, but something less in Germany than in any country I know of.

Nursing-rooms, such as those mentioned above, would do a great deal towards the health of the infants, and the earnings of the mother and the elder children.

Magdalen-houses, well conducted, would certainly be a palliative of a great moral disorder, whose sources are so deeply rooted in our manners, that a radical cure will only be the work of time, and the triumph of a happier generation.

When once the history of the poor is well known, it will be seen how large a proportion of the miseries of the lower orders arise from local errors and prejudices, from ignorance and want of advice. Surely it could not be thought unworthy of the leisure of any true philosopher, to point out those prejudices and give those advices, in popular language, in the shape of an almanack, either gratis, or so cheap that it could be in the hands of every body.

As for our prisons, who knows not, that the very place which ought to bring back the offender to industry and to virtue, is the school of crimes! Who feels not for men whose only crime is poverty, when he sees them crowded into the same work-houses with shameless profligates; and into such work-houses!

The incalculable harm caused by these circumstances, may give us an idea of the good that might be produced; and ought to invigorate our earnest resolution to do every thing which our situation will permit us to do in so great and worthy a cause. Whenever any exertion succeeds, it is a moral discovery, which it is criminal to conceal; and wherever a man meets another in the intention of doing good, there at least he may be sure to shake the hands of a brother.

TABLE.

	Money dis- tributed to the poor.		House- rent.		Clothing and bed- ding.		Teaching the grown people to spin, and loss upon the produce of labor.		Educa- tion of children.		Expenses attending the police of the poor.		Extraordi- nary fuel allowed dur- ing a severe winter.	
	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>
From November, 1788 } to 1st July, 1789 }	6728	16	931	12	1553	16	1390	7	465	4	142	2	619	0
1789—90	8296	8	1980	8	426	9	1232	2	411	10	245	5		
1790—91	9317	5	2297	7	582	18	852	10	433	7	238	7		
1791—92	8862	9	2314	0	747	15	763	12	485	12	262	10	241	5
1792—93	7524	12	2154	9	553	2	411	12	797	12	221	2	145	4
1793—94	7590	14	2105	18	765	10	692	12	832	5	243	12	332	4
To the														
	Medical establi- shment.		Boarding to the Hos- pitals and Bridewell.		Poor Esta- blishment in the suburbs.		Printing and binding.		Salaries and sun- dry ex- penses.		Total.		Number of families.	
	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>		
From November, 1788 } to 1st July, 1789 }	437	15	9	9	23	0	339	0	504	0	13323	10	3903	
1789—90	650	12	240	0	55	16	71	15	330	16	14487	16	3742	
1790—91	796	16	235	12	203	8	149	0	370	0	15771	0	3764	
1791—92	773	12	342	12	237	10	143	2	433	5	15612	4	3640	
1792—93	686	12	450	3	237	10	85	14	377	2	13624	19	3219	
1793—94	723	8	613	2	300	0	73	10	470	16	14773	11	3234	

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VOL. XI.

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Voght, Kasper, Freiherr von
Account of the management of the poor in
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