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FARM SERVANTS

AND THEIR

EMPLOYERS:

AN ESSAY

BY A

MEMBER OF THE "TARLAND MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT
ASSOCIATION."

1876.

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AGRICULTURAL PRIZE ESSAY.

AT the close of the winter session of 1875-6 of "The Tarland Mutual Improvement Association," Harry Ross, Esq., Banker, offered a prize of £2 2s. to the Members for the best Essay on "Servants and Employers." The Rev. Mr. Ritchie, Established Church, Coull, having kindly agreed to act as adjudicator, reported that the different points specified as the subject for consideration are treated in their various relations exceedingly well in this Essay; and that he considered the Essay of such merit as to deserve the whole amount of the Prize offered.

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ESSAY

ON

FARM SERVANTS & THEIR EMPLOYERS

THE relation and conflict existing between Capital and Labour present, the subject being well considered, so wide a field, and so many different phases, that it would be idle, in this Short Essay, to attempt to enter upon the treatment of it in a general form. I shall, therefore, confine my attention to what more especially affects Farm Servants and their Employers, and treat upon their past, present, and future condition, morally and socially. For purposes of comparison, it may, at times, be necessary to refer to other branches of Industry, but, where such is the case, it shall be done as briefly as possible. To make the Essay clear and systematic, I shall divide the subject into five heads, and, as far as possible, exhaust each before passing on to the subsequent one. In natural order we have—

FIRST.—*The present relationship subsisting between the Servant and the Employer, and the present condition of the Servant.*

About a century ago, the distinction between Farmers and their Servants was less marked than at present. The farms were then much smaller, the tenants poorer, and their position in the social scale, almost the same as that of their Servants. In the evening they gathered around the same fireside, supped at the same table, and slept under the same roof. Entering freely into conversation, and brought into close contact, the one with the other, their difficulties, wants, and prospects were well understood by both, and an interest was thus created which had a beneficial influence on all concerned. The Servants were careful of the interests of their Masters, and the latter, by their friendship and continuous superintendence, elevated the morals of the former, who cared for, and were solicitous of, their good opinion and approval.

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But recent years have witnessed a great change in the nature of the system on which land is let for agricultural purposes, and this change has produced a corresponding one in the condition of, and relationship between, farmers and their servants. The Landlords, instead of giving leases of small portions of ground, for crofts, as of yore, have now adopted the system of letting their land in large sections to those capitalists who are possessed of means enabling them to stock and labour large farms. Thatched Cottages and Steadings of stone and clay have given place to slated, commodious Dwelling-houses, and substantial stone and lime edifices. The Farmers now have their rooms divided as far as possible from the Servants and are seldom seen in the kitchen except when they go there to give directions about the work. The class of which Farmers are now composed has become of more importance and their condition has been considerably improved. They have now large farms, good houses, a command of money and form an influential body. While the Masters have thus been advancing rapidly, the Servants have in all things, but the matter of wages, been standing still, if not retrogressing. The result of this has been to create a broad distinction between the social position of the master and servant, to put an end to the habitual exchange of opinions, and freedom of speech which before existed, and to render their intercourse more reserved and less friendly. In erecting the large farm steadings no provision appears to have been considered necessary for the comfortable accommodation of the servants. The place-room it cannot be called, allotted to them, for the purpose of sleeping and studying is usually in the end of a hay loft above the stable. Entrance to it is obtained by a ladder from the stable below, or by a stone staircase built to the gable wall. The furniture of this miserable den, wholly consists of a few beds, ranged along the wall, and the servants kits. Chairs and tables there are none. If the occupants wish to sit, they must do so on the beds; if they desire to write, it must be done kneeling on the floor with the paper laid on the top of the clothes chest, and if any one has a mind to try reading, this feat must be accomplished by the aid of a tallow candle stuck in the mouth of an empty quart bottle, or by the faint flicker of an oil lamp, glimmering through the dingy glass of a stable lantern. In the winter time, it is impossible to sit talking, to read, to write, or to do anything else on account of the cold. There is no fireplace, and little to shelter the inmates from the inclemency of the weather. It is no unusual thing on rising, to find the snow lying in drifted ridges along the floor, or to put the feet into a pool of rain water. And sometimes it is even necessary to take boots and shoes to the kitchen fire to be thawed before the feet can be forced into them. Nor can the task of self-improvement be much more successfully pursued in the kitchen. There is too much noise, and the sur-

rounding company distract the attention of the Student, thus rendering concentration of thought impossible. No wonder, therefore, since in the kitchen and in the sleeping apartment it is impossible to study, that there is so much ignorance and immorality among farm servants in general. After their horses are fed and groomed, they set out to pass the evening with the females, in the kitchen of some neighbouring farms. This intercourse between the sexes, unrestrained by the presence of either the farmer or his wife, and ungoverned by the dictates of a cultivated mind, leads to results, the nature, number, and frequency of which, have become notorious. When not in the company of females, the talk generally turns upon licentious subjects, and jokes and stories of an immoral tendency keep the listeners laughing and while the evening hour away. If the servants were better looked after, and more brought into contact with the masters, the case would be much altered for the better, while if proper opportunities for study and reading of books were given, the improvement effected in a short time would be almost incalculable. Farm Servants are not much addicted to the habitual use of intoxicating liquors, but when they meet at the Village they do sometimes imbibe a little too freely. The cheery fire and other comforts provided by the host, contrasted with their cold and dreary homes, have no doubt a strong tendency to entice them to linger at the alehouse.

The Masters have no great interest in the welfare and character of their servants. They care not a whit where they go or what they do at nights, provided they are able to perform their work in a satisfactory manner. If a master gets "the worth of his money" out of his servant, his interest extends no farther. On the other hand the servants are careless and slovenly in the performance of their duties. They try how little they can do, and still escape censure, and how easily they can earn their food, lodging, and wages. This relationship is a very unsatisfactory one. The Masters have it in their power to benefit their servants by associating with them and setting them a good example—the latter loose by their not doing so. The Servants, through leaving damagable material in an unprotected state, when stopping work for the day, and by carelessness in managing horses, often cause great loss to their employers. If a better understanding existed between them, both parties would gain greatly. This could be brought about by the engagement of Farm Servants on the same principle as Town's Tradesmen, with monthly payments. Since this would put it in the power of either party to break the engagement when displeased with the other, there would be little ill-feeling—each one whenever he thought himself aggrieved giving intimation that the arrangement was to terminate. Each would then, if contented with the bargain, and sensible that they were being justly dealt with,

endeavour by every means in their power to procure the continuation of their relationship. The Master by kindness to the Servant, interest in his pursuits and anxiety and provision for his comforts, would endeavour to secure the services and attachment of an efficient and respectable workman. The Servant, by attention and good behaviour, seeking to render himself indispensable to, and esteemed by, his employer, so that the latter might be prevailed on to provide a comfortable abode as an inducement for him to remain. Both parties would reap great benefits from this, both in a pecuniary sense and morally. The moral condition of the servants has great need of improvement. The males, in their ordinary conversation, employ expressions and talk familiarly on subjects the mere mention of which would be an insult to ears polite. The Domestic have a natural liking to be in the company of the males, and give the latter (who are never slow to avail themselves of the opportunity) every encouragement to visit them privately in the kitchen at night, and when occasion offers, they do not hesitate to go with the men to their sleeping apartments. The conversation between the sexes is of a very loose and immoral nature, and the more they associate the more disgraceful and abandoned become their speech and actions. And those women who are outworkers and continually in the company of men, hearing and learning evil, soon become quite destitute of all shame and sentiments of modesty. A great deal of this is attributable to the insufficient provision made for, and interest taken in, their social and moral well-being. Were the accommodation better, there would be more opportunities afforded the males for self-improvement, they would have greater pleasure in staying at home, and their cultivated minds would guide them to a truer, a nobler, and a higher sense of duty. If the Master and Mistress were constantly among them, in the habit of holding family worship and enforcing their attendance regularly thereat, or when employing overseers, took care to engage none but servants of respectability and good moral character—such would exercise a healthy and beneficent authority, the spread and prevalence of evil communications would be checked. The length of the servants working day is a drag on the improvement. They have to start grooming and feeding their horses at five in the morning, and the work of the stable is never completed till between eight and nine at night. They have thus only a very short time which *could* be employed in study during the season when they might sit and read in the open air. There are very few innocent winter evening recreations in which they can engage, and even although there were, they would require to be of a more humorous nature than those already tried, in order to make them popular and to be appreciated by the average run of servants, who, with their present Education and tastes, do not relish anything unless very

laughable. It is no marvel that their position in the moral scale is low. Until they are more on terms of equality with, better cared for, and more thought of, by the masters, better housed, and more opportunities afforded for reading and spending the evenings in harmless amusements, it cannot be expected that their condition will be much ameliorated. Their condition, at present in everything, except the matter of wages, is far worse than that of tradesmen, who have time and can spend it in studying during the long evenings, or in visiting some harmless place of amusement.

They earn considerable wages, yet this avails them little. They are ignorant of the way to spend them to the best advantage, and having, as a rule, no aim or fixed object in view in life, they spend them in a very senseless manner. There are, of course, plenty of opportunities and inducements held out to persuade them to do so, among the most prominent of which are the feeing markets. This brings me on to

SECOND.—*The effects of the present system of half-yearly Feeing Markets, with all their accompaniments, on Servants, and suggestions for amelioration.*

Feeing Markets are unquestionably a very ready and business way of finding servants and situations. One of the great points in their favour is, that in them the parties have the opportunity of choosing from a large number the person required. They also see on what terms others are engaging and being engaged, thus enabling them to make as good bargains as their neighbours. The Farmer in search of a servant can ascertain verbally from the former master the capabilities and character of the person who wishes to be engaged, and whom he may intend to employ. The information thus gained is far more satisfactory than any written certificate, for these only state so much, while oral examination elicits any and every point which it is necessary for the questioner to know, or on which he may wish to satisfy himself more fully. The Servants look forward to them as a sort of holiday; and, indeed, it is the only one they get from one half-year's end to the other. Yet, these Markets have their drawbacks, and I am safe to say these more than counterbalance their merits. In going to a Feeing Market to be hired, I consider the Servants place themselves nearly on a level with the slaves of the United States before they were liberated, with this difference only—that the slaves were sold by their masters, while the Servants sell themselves. The Farmers, in engaging servants at Feeing Markets, try to select—not an intelligent man—for they cannot judge the intellectual capabilities of those around them—but the man among the multitude who seems to possess the requisite bone and muscle, he who is posses-

sed of the most brute strength. I conceive that the mere fact of Farm Servants standing up in a public market place to sell their labour, relying on their physical contour for an engagement, has in itself a most degrading effect. The Markets present great temptations for drinking; and "when drouthy neighbours neighbours meet" in the course of the day, the tents being so handy, and the parties not seeing each other very often perhaps, it is considered a fit time to celebrate the meeting by partaking of the social glass; and the result is, that, by the close of the fair, sobriety is the exception—not the rule—among the Farmers and their Servants, more especially amongst the latter. A great deal of money is spent upon intoxicating liquors, the quality of which is very bad. The whisky supplied by the innkeepers—who sell it in temporary booths erected on the ground—is of the very worst description, specially, and more than usually adulterated for the occasion. This not only arouses the fiercer passions of the partakers, but does great injury to their health, entails on them a headache next day, and a lassitude and inability to perform their duties aright for days to come. The money spent recklessly and foolishly at these markets is something fabulous. The practice, which the usage of centuries has confirmed, and from which there is no escape, of giving all the females of their acquaintance a "market fairin'," as it is termed, alone absorbs many shillings of the earnings of the men. The small shows, "Cheap Johns' " auctions, and all the minor attractions accompanying them, combine in enticing the people to spend money; and pounds are spent without the smallest visible return for the same, beyond temporary gratification, and that of an inferior kind. All the itinerant vendors of useless articles, penny showmen, shooting gallery and dancing booth proprietors, resort to them, well aware that they will reap a rich harvest from the "gullibility" and half-drunken foolishness and recklessness of the assembled crowd. The presence of these characters in such numbers is in itself sufficient proof that much money is needlessly and heedlessly thrown away. There is much rowdyism at them; fights are frequent, and the police have often great difficulty in preserving order. This is apparent from the large number of assault cases usually brought before the courts on the days following the Markets. The parties concerned in these cases thus not only lose more money, but also their good name; and this evil is all attributable to the Feeing Markets. Altogether, the influence they exercise on the great bulk of the Servants, is of the most debauching and demoralising kind. As no way seems to present itself in which they could be improved, it would be necessary, in order to put an end to their evil effects, to abolish the cause entirely. Then the question is—What method is to be adopted in their stead, in order to afford opportunities for the Masters to find Servants, and the latter

situations. Some may advocate the substitution of register offices as a good means of effecting this;—but the register offices have been tried already, and do not seem to find favour or meet the requirements of the parties interested. The keeper of the register requires a fee for putting parties into communication with each other. A correspondence then ensues; but, during the time this is going on, either of the correspondents may get a chance of suiting himself otherwise with less trouble, and, rather than incur delay, when the issue at most is but doubtful, may—acting on the old adage, that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”—close with the intermediate offer, and so put an end to the transaction. The other party, then, not only loses the fee paid by him to the keeper of the register, but also the time already spent in what proves to be a vain correspondence. In the course of correspondence, also, points in the character of the servant may be brought to view in anything but a true light. This would invariably be the case if he had left his master through any ill-feeling arising between them; and so the negotiation ceases, the register fee is lost, and the result is an aggravating disappointment. In the place of Feeing Markets, however, I would recommend the system of engaging on the same principle as that employed in the cases of tradesmen, shopmen, and labourers. In opposition to this it may be urged that, since, in the country, the parties are resident so far apart, and so little communication exists between places any distance apart, no one would know where to apply in case he or she wanted to employ or be employed. But, to answer by illustration: Suppose, in the country, a church has to be built, a wood planted, or a road made. The undertaking is let to a contractor. He does not require to go to a Feeing Market to get men to do the work; nor does he apply to the keeper of a register office. Where the work is, there will the workers also be; and it is a matter of astonishment how soon the fact of a man being in want of work, or a master in want of a servant, spreads. The workmen soon present themselves; and, without the interference or aid of any middleman, or other medium, the wants of both parties are satisfactorily provided for. In a case which lately came under my own observation, a farm servant happened to be disengaged and in quest of employment about the middle of the half-year. Had the Feeing Market been the only medium through which he could obtain a situation, he would have been compelled to remain unemployed for about two months. Two days, however, after he was in a position to accept of employment, he heard that a farmer, resident a good few miles from his district, was in want of a man; and, on applying to him, he was engaged at a good rate of wages. Nor is this all; during the next week he was sought after by two or three farmers, who wished to employ him, and who had heard of his being open for engagement.

How they had obtained their information I cannot tell, yet such was the case. This shows how engagements may be effected without any aid from Feeing Markets or Register Offices. Very few domestics are now engaged at Feeing Markets, unless those belonging to the worst class. They are nearly all engaged in the manner I have already indicated ; and, since Feeing Markets can be, and are dispensed with in the case of the one class, why not also in that of the other ? Were the Feeing Markets entirely done away with, the condition and class of Farm Servants would be immensely improved. Doubtless, masters would endeavour—by providing better accommodation and offering higher wages—to secure servants possessed of good capabilities and character, and endowed with superior qualifications, and possessed of an unblemished reputation, who would serve them faithfully and well ; while it is no less certain that servants—by strict attention to their work and otherwise—would seek to merit their employers' approbation, and conduct themselves in such a manner as induce masters to make them these liberal offers. The Farm Servants would, however, by the abolition of Feeing Markets, be deprived of a holiday. But I have no doubt that an arrangement could be made by which they would receive a half-yearly holiday instead. Upon such a holiday they could take a trip to any place of interest, attend any event of importance, visit their relations, or otherwise enjoy themselves. A day thus spent would prove cheaper, healthier, more instructive and amusing, and could be looked back to with feelings of greater pleasure than any half-yearly Feeing Market. When the Servants are better educated they will themselves see these evils, and lend their aid to the discontinuance of these Markets.

In addition to the abolition of Feeing Markets, and the engagement of Servants in the manner employed with regard to town's tradesmen, I would also suggest the introduction of the system of monthly payments, also, on the same system as that employed in some cases in towns—I may mention clerks as an example. I can with certainty aver that in towns a far better feeling exists between employer and employed than is the case in the country ; and this, I consider, is owing to the fact that the engagements are made for shorter periods. At the Feeing Markets the bargains are made in far too loose a manner to prove satisfactory to either party. Farmers have it in their power, since food and lodgings form a part of the Servants' salary, to infringe the bargain in a very great degree ; and this is very frequently done. The Farmer, at the commencement of a half-year, often seems very attentive and careful lest he should in any way offend the Servant, who could, in inclement weather, cause great loss by leaving perishable material in an unprotected state, that he might be revenged. Thus, during the former part of the half-year, the food is perfectly good and wholesome ; but,

during the latter part, when the crops are safely garnered, and if the engagement is not renewed, or if anything conspire to make the farmer think the servant will leave at the first term, a change is almost certain to take place, and the quality of the victuals supplied becomes of an inferior nature. As the food and lodging afforded the Servant amounts in value to about one-third part of the whole salary, this, as might be expected, displeases the most simple, and is the cause of many a dispute arising between Farmer and Farm Servant, which ultimately appears in the Sheriff Courts.

The monthly payment of wages might affect the moneyed interests of the Farmers a little, but is only what the Servants are entitled to. Since the former, for the most part, receive cash payments, I do not understand why they should be so long in paying their servants. Such a course would be but fair, and would put both parties on an equal footing in this respect. This system would prevent much litigation, and immensely benefit the Servants. It would enable them to pay for their purchases in ready cash, and secure the discount given in such cases; and also enable them to avoid the payment of the extra charges made by merchants on goods purchased on credit. Altogether, I think that monthly engagements and monthly payments would produce a better relationship between Farmers and their Servants, and would, in many ways, be much to the advantage of the latter.

We shall now pass on to, and take into consideration, the part of this Essay which is embraced in Section

THIRD.—The effects of the present Poor Law Act on Servants, and suggestions as to the best remedy of the same, where adverse.

It would be interesting to trace the gradual development of our present system of Legal Relief for the Poor through the centuries that have elapsed since the subject first attracted the notice of Parliament. Space, will not permit me, however, to enter minutely and exhaustively into the subject, nor to bring before you the different efforts made by the Legislature to reduce Pauperism; the different means adopted to effect this, wherein these answered or failed to answer, the expectations of their projectors, nor even to give a sketch of the changes made on the Act, and principles of the Act, under which relief is now given. Could I do so, it would explain the matter more clearly than I can hope to do without such an introduction. It is absolutely necessary to go back a little, but I must be brief. The earliest efforts of the Parliament, in dealing with Pauperism, beginning with an Act of the year 1424, were exclusively confined to the suppressing of vagrancy and the regulation of begging. A distinction was made between those destitute persons who were

sick and impotent, and those who were able, but not willing, to exercise an honest employment. Rigorous measures were taken for the suppression of the latter, while the former were, under certain conditions, permitted to beg. This statutory permission to beg was, for nearly a century and a-half after 1424, the only provision made by Parliament in favour of the Poor. At length in the reign of Elizabeth, the Act of 1579, Cap. 74, laid the foundation of our Poor Laws, by introducing compulsory assessment for the relief of Paupers.* Under this, and subsequent Acts, the burden of maintaining its own Poor was laid on every Parish. The assessment was laid one-half on the Landowners, and the other half on the Tenants, according to their substance, as ascertained from the Valuation Roll. The relief to the Poor is dispensed by a Parochial Board consisting of the Heritors, Four or Six nominees of the Kirk Session and a certain number of Representatives elected by the Ratepayers in the Parish, these Parish Boards being all controlled by a central Board of Supervision. The main features of the Act are:— (1). That no one need be entirely destitute; their wants being relieved on application to the Inspector of Poor of the Parish in which they may be: and (2). The means for their relief shall be obtained by Local Taxation—which relief may be of two kinds, Out-door and In-door, out-door relief meaning, relief to those who are not—in-door relief, relief to those who are, inmates of the Poor's House. The Local Taxation clause has affected the supply of Farm Servants. The mode of giving relief, their condition. When it was enacted that the Poor should be relieved by Local Taxation, the Proprietors of Land, on whom a large proportion of the Poor Rate would naturally fall, thought, that they would partially relieve themselves of a serious burden by diminishing the number of small Crofts and Cottars' houses on their Estates, the occupants of which, struggling with adversity and having no resources to fall back on, were likely, in the end to be vanquished, and in their old age dependent for the support of themselves and families, on the provisions of the Act. Acting upon this idea they set themselves to the task of reducing the number of small Farms. They swept away the Cottars' houses on their lands, throwing their possessions into large sections and letting to one Tenant the portions which, before had been occupied by many and so diminished the class from whence "the sturdy peasant came" and the supply of Farm Servants was derived. This policy was a short-sighted one, and the effects have been productive of much harm to the nation at large. For so it comes to pass that many of the small Farmers and their families—expelled from the homes occupied for generations by their ancestors, have swelled the mass of those who, in the towns,

*Guthrie Smith on the Poor Law. Introduct. Chap.

dwell in privation and seek to wrest a living from amongst the thousands who, so despairingly, strive to do likewise. They struggle awhile with poverty but inevitably sink into pauperism; the demand for unskilled labour being insufficient to afford employment to them, and those like them. While, even if they succeed in obtaining work, the remuneration is incapable of furnishing them with the necessaries of life. Had they been allowed to remain in the country they would, in all likelihood, have eked out a subsistence; scanty, no doubt, but still sufficient to keep them from becoming a burden on the Parish. Others have emigrated and their country has for ever been deprived of the benefits accruing to it through their labour or power of population. Since the class from which Farm Servants were formerly drawn has been thus exterminated, as might have been expected, there followed a scarcity in the supply, and a rise in the wages of those who could be obtained. The cost of tilling the soil having, consequently, increased, a corresponding rise has taken place in the price of all agricultural products, which has weighed heavily on our land, and, no doubt been the cause of much pauperism—a pauperism occasioned by a desire to reduce the number of prospective paupers. In order to increase the supply of Farm Servants it would be necessary to break down many of the large farms, to build more houses and divide the land into small Crofts. Some of the more enlightened Landlords have already begun to do so. No doubt this would be the cause of some immediate expense and perhaps diminish the rental of the Landlords for a few years, but ultimately the price of products would be reduced and higher rents got for the Farms, since the labour of tilling them would be less costly. Nor would the good effected end here. The advantages would be national ones. The products would be cheapened to the mass of the nation and the working classes would reap the benefit. In the country, persons can live more cheaply than in the town, and better also, because they can rear many of the necessaries of life at little cost. The land would then be thickly populated by an industrious peasantry, not wealthy, but above absolute want and an approach would be made to that utopian ideal of a perfectly balanced agricultural community when “every rood of land maintains its man.” Who will say that such an arrangement would not be for the advantage of the nation? Now to condense, and in a sentence or two show plainly the point treated on. The effect of the Poor Law Act has been to make Landlords believe that in eradicating the small Farmers, Crofters, and Cottars, the class from whence Farm Servants are derived, they would escape a high assessment. And what has the result of this been? Harm to the nation at large, by raising the price of agricultural products, burdening towns with paupers and exterminating the peasantry, its pride and power. Harm to the Landlords themselves, since they cannot

take the money in rent from the Farmers which they pay in increased wages to their servants; and a reduction in the supply of servants. The remedy for this is—more Cottars' houses and small Farms.

I shall now sketch the effect the Poor Law Act has on the Servants themselves. Pauperism removes a very large proportion of the motives which act through wholesome fear—dread of consequences, from the mind of the labourer. It not only discourages forethought, thrift, and self-denial, but sharply marks them out as folly. According to it, he that provideth not for his own, may indeed be “worse than an infidel” but is not very unwise in his own generation. It causes the annihilation of the family affections and the sense of family obligations. The clause in the Act which tends most to produce these effects is that sanctioning Out-door relief. Mr. Briscoe, Superintendent under the Scotch Poor Law Act, says: “Out-door relief in the Highlands has deteriorated truth, industry, morality, self-respect, self-reliance, the natural affections, independence of character; it appears as if the whole of the humbler classes had completely changed their character. There is no shame whatever in demanding relief. The state of things in the Highlands is perfectly deplorable, and every person admits it.” And in the report of the Friendly Societies' Commission of 1875 their appears: “There is a growing class in Scotland who feel that they need not insure in any Friendly Society as the Poor Law provides them with a certainty of Sick pay.” To check this the practical conclusion, I have arrived at is,—That all Poor Relief should be confined by Law to Workhouses; the Workhouse Relief to be given to all its inmates on the same general principles. By a clause in the Act, Parochial Boards have the power to unite in order to build such Workhouses so that the erection, which would fall heavily on one, would not be so much felt when several are combined. Each parish could pay in proportion to the number of inmates sent by it. In a well-ordered Workhouse alone are you sure of giving exclusive relief, and exclusive relief is the only relief which you can be sure is neither inadequate nor excessive. There you can tell exactly what each inmate should have, and you can be sure that he gets it and that he gets no more than it. The Out-door Relief you order to A, in itself is almost certain to be unequal as between B, C, D, &c., you cannot tell how far it is supplemented by alms or secret hoarding, it is nearly sure to be too much or too little; and lastly, we well know there is too much reason to fear that the Relief given is not always enjoyed, but is abstracted from the supposed recipient by others, generally members of his own family. I conceive it to be plain that the Workhouse alone enables us to comply with the requirements of the Law which are, to provide the physical necessaries of life, food, lodging, clothing, while attaining the object that pauperism shall

be distasteful to the pauper. In the receipt of these necessaries, the Pauper is even better—certainly not worse off than the average of independent labourers outside. To render it unattractive—to deter the approach to it—is the only way to escape importunate claims for admission. It follows, then, that the adjuncts of these mere necessaries must be that in which the repellent element shall be found. It is unattractive, and we know how it is so. The mere fact of compulsory confinement, the common rules of discipline and good order, the prescribed regularity, aye, the compulsory cleanliness are distasteful to the population from which Paupers are drawn. The fact I have stated is a well authenticated one that the provisions of the Act, authorizing Out-door Relief tend to make Servants thriftless, idle, and heedless of their future, while it encourages profligacy, destroys family ties, and produces moral debasement. The suggestion I make for the the remedy of this I consider the only practical and effectual method. All those who really require and apply for relief are, I hold, entitled to be supplied with the necessaries of life. Yet it is necessary to render the accompaniment to these unattractive in order to deter the idle and those who are not absolutely in want from putting in claims. Out-door Relief is, and In-door Relief is not, attractive. The abolition of the practice of giving Out-door Relief would at once make the Servants more careful of their earnings, and incite them to habits of thrift and industry in order to save money, that they might keep out of the Workhouse. It would also, by reducing the number of Paupers, reduce the Poor Rate. It would tend to restore the healthy moral tone and independent spirit which was before a characteristic of the Scottish peasantry, but which has been fast dying out from among them. To remedy the adverse effects of the Poor Law Act on the supply and condition of Farm Servants, I recommend the increase of Houses for the accommodation of the Labouring Classes, and the entire abolition of the practice of giving Out-door Relief to Paupers. Let us now take up Section

FOURTH.—*The probable effect of the present Education Act on the Labouring Classes and on the future supply of Servants.*

The prominent principle of the Act is Compulsory Education. Every child must attend school for a certain number of years, and must also pass a fixed standard. Should their parents neglect or refuse to allow them to go to school the law has power to punish them. An assessment is levied for the education of those children whose parents are unable to pay the school-fees. Before the Education Act was passed parents were not bound to send their children to any school unless they pleased. Many

children were never sent at all, others were sent only for a very short time, and taken away again on becoming of the most use to their parents. Those who were not sent at all grew up entirely ignorant. Those who were sent for a short time only, were very little better, since they were not sufficiently advanced to enable them to comprehend, and derive pleasure from, the simplest book of narrative, however interesting. The children when not at school were allowed to associate with the lowest and most depraved companions, and having nothing particular to do, since they did not attend school and were not yet able to render much assistance, they passed away their time doing evil and becoming proficient in sin. Having no power of enjoying high-class amusements, the youths either wandered about in the company of blackguards or resorted to the "free and easies" and low concert rooms to spend their evenings. To spend them at home was out of the question, for few attractions were to be found there. They were unable to read, and generally the family relations were on anything but an amicable footing. They had no keen sense of right or wrong, no strict sentiments of honour or morality, and in their behaviour and conversation they were most repellent and disgusting. The want of good training and watchful care, to counteract the ever recurrent influences of evil and vicious companionship, left them free to become immoral and depraved without any check, externally or from within. Now, the Education Act compels the attendance of a child so many hours a day at school. During that time it is beyond the reach of evil communication. The attendance must be regular and punctual and steady habits are thus engendered. Cleanliness is made habitual by the rule that every child must be washed and have his hair combed. By the example of the teacher the children learn to be polite and well-bred; a taste for neatness and beauty is also inculcated. All these influences, as well as many others I could name, when brought to bear upon pliant infancy, cannot fail to produce a golden harvest; and children thus brought up can never sink so low as to take pleasure in the vicious practices of the ignorant. The powers also acquired of reading and writing provide an evening's amusement more absorbing and more calculated to induce a person to remain at home than anything else, and this power while giving pleasure is also beneficial in extending the reader's knowledge. The party thus educated becomes capable of enjoying harmless and elevating amusements, and of spending the evening at lectures given to diffuse knowledge; also, when a young man is given the education rendered compulsory by the Act, he is master of the potentiality of possessing any amount of knowledge he pleases. The effect of the Act will be a large increase in the average knowledge, and an elevation of the morals of the people. Upon the farm servants the Education Act will exert a powerful influence. At present they shift about from place to place growing up like a vegetable,

and as ignorant as an animal of the lower orders. In winter, their leisure hours are generally spent dozing in their beds or by the kitchen fire ; in summer, basking in the sun viewing nature, animate and inanimate, with a gaze as dull and stupid as that of an ox. Knowing no way in which the understanding may be improved ; having no desire for intellectual pursuits and no conception of the pleasures to be derived from them, they remain ignorant and careless of all higher and nobler modes of spending time and benefiting themselves. Now, all human beings are born with the same organs of sensation, so also must they all be born with almost the same degree of intellectual powers. There is no difference between peer and peasant in this respect—all have the same, or very nearly the same, aptitude for the exercise of the intellect provided the path of life be smoothed for them and their attention in early life directed towards intellectual pursuits. The Education Act will do this. The average intelligence of the agricultural labourers will, therefore, be most immensely improved. They will no longer delight in vice in its coarser and more animal phases ; for to the well-educated mind the conversation and behaviour now prevalent would be repulsive. The more a man is educated the more refined does he become in his tastes, and it is impossible for an educated man to take pleasure in the same rude and boorish amusements that the uneducated are accustomed to spend their spare time upon. We must allow that agricultural labourers have feelings, tastes, and reasoning powers (if they were cultivated) like other human beings, although this fact seems to be lost sight of often, and, allowing this, we cannot think that when they are educated they will still follow the example of their ignorant predecessors. They will become more polished in manner, and their conversation will be of a higher and purer nature. Being able to understand what they read, they will have a more extensive general knowledge. They will then be able to speak in an interesting way upon many subjects, and matter for rational discussion will usurp the place of the foolish talk with which they at present entertain each other ; they will also be better qualified for their work, whether mechanical, agricultural, or domestic. Morally, they will be greatly elevated. The early Christian teaching will have implanted in them a definite knowledge of right and wrong, and in their youth they will have imbibed a reverence for things good and a hesitation and fear to do things evil which, if afterwards properly strengthened, will not be readily overcome or rashly broken through. The development of their thinking powers will conduce to lead them in the path of wisdom and rectitude, and will form an effectual control over the inclinations and suggestions of the passions. The necessity of acquiring and preserving a good name will appear more distinctly to them, and, in the endeavour to do so, they will place themselves on a higher moral and intellectual platform than that occupied by

their forerunners. Servants, when thus educated, and their tastes and power of appreciating refinement, in its many varied forms, developed, will eschew the habits of staying from home during the night and sitting playing cards. They will, of course, require something to fill up the time thus, at present, employed. I believe that circulating libraries, debating and literary societies, evening lectures, &c., will be among the substitutes. It would be well if influential parties among servants themselves, and such, though too rarely there are, would endeavour to start such provisions for the benefit of servants, in order that they might be ready—standing with open arms as it were—to greet the first attempts at raising the nature of agricultural labourer's pursuits to a higher and nobler standard, and to hail and assist those who first seek to ennoble themselves. The Education Act, as it raises servants in the intellectual and moral scale, will cause them to ask for, and receive, better house accommodation. No educated, respectable person would bear with the way in which they are presently treated in this respect. When they incline to stay at home and read and improve themselves, they must have a suitable place in which to do so; this they surely are entitled to, and, when they see they are so, they will demand it. It is thought by practical persons that such accommodation should be provided by the proprietors where the farm extends to over one hundred acres, and that where smaller, the farmers could and would do so. I consider the most prominent effect, in the relationship between farmers and servants, produced by the act will be that the farmer will be forced to provide, or get provided, good accommodation in order to get good servants, and in cases where they are unwilling to do so they will find a difficulty in obtaining servants at all. It is not likely that the Education Act will cause much difference in the supply of farm servants. The soil has long been cultivated and will be so still. At present the supply is below the demand; this is owing to the want of house accommodation for married servants. The great cry for sometime past has been the want of farm servants. Now, who is to blame for this? Farmers blame proprietors for turning field to field and farm to farm, while they have been as eager, if not more so, to get them thus. For my own part, I consider that the Highland glens of Scotland might have supplied in some measure the demand, which would have been of far more use to the nation than the rearing of a head of game or a herd of destructive red deer which serve only to gratify the luxurious tastes of the proprietor. Some affirm that the immediate effect of the Act will be to cause a rush into towns, and that servants will there seek to push their fortunes, having shorter and stated hours, and time and opportunities for self-improvement. But, how would they succeed should they leave the country for the town? Their town rivals will be as well educated as they, so they will have no advantage on that score.

They are unaccustomed to the work of the town. The supply always exceeds the demand, and the payment for unskilled labour would not nearly equal wages for farm work, which is better remunerated than even tradesmen's labour, and no apprentice time to serve nor tools to afford. The work in the country is more healthy than that in towns, living is cheaper, and less money is required for clothes in order to be dressed like one's neighbours. The opportunities afforded for self-improvement will, in some measure, be in a few years as attainable in country as in town, and although the hours can never be shortened, yet there are many advantages sufficient to counterbalance this one disadvantage. As it is, farm servants are ahead of town's tradesmen in the matter of wages, they can save more money, and once they had better houses and more opportunities of marrying (which would help to improve their morals) they will be as well in every respect, if not even better. A great boon the Act will confer on society is the education and enlightenment of the females. In the country their state is deplorable—the ignorance of the domestics being extreme. It is evident that the mother has always the greatest share in the training and moulding of the nature of the child. It is impossible to expect a moral, well-behaved, and intelligent class of farm servants when their mothers are quite the reverse. Now, how many of the mothers of our young farm servants can even assist their children in their primary school tasks. In a great many cases neither father nor mother are competent to show their children how to do a question in the "simple" rules of arithmetic. The Education Act will alter this state of things, and then it will be a pleasant and not uncommon sight to see father and mother, when the day's toil is over, sitting by the fire-side, conversing rationally with each other, and with mutual interest and zeal striving to educate their children and instil into their minds the germs of knowledge. Educated mothers who have thus trained their children will always hold a higher place in the affection of the latter, who will look up to them with respect and consider them no burden, although they require their assistance in old age, —I cannot say that such is the case at present. Generations afterwards the good seed thus sown will have ripened into a rich and plentiful harvest. When the females are educated and able to train their children and teach them aright in their infancy, then the lever which is to move the state of agricultural servitude in all its aspects and elevate the social and moral condition of the servants—male and female—from the degradation of the present to the nobler future will have been set in operation by our teachers and legislators, and the fulcrum of this lever is the Education Act. We now arrive at the last division of this Essay, being Section

FIFTH.—*The Future Prospects of Servants.*

I consider that the Future Prospects of Farm Servants are extremely brilliant. As any attempt to unveil the future and speak positively upon what will be their condition—in time to come—partakes so much of the nature of a speculative theory, and must be attended with such a degree of uncertainty, since so many events—which it is utterly impossible to foresee—may happen to prevent the most apparent and probable results. I shall not endeavour to sketch any imaginary future condition, but will confine myself to showing what can be done to raise the class of Agricultural Labourers. This I shall endeavour to do under two heads.

In the first place :—What can be done for the Farm Servants by Farmers, Proprietors, and others? The Farmer could—by taking an interest in them and caring for their wants—establish a better relationship between employer and employed, by associating with them, setting them a good example, holding family worship, and employing overseers who would discountenance swearing and check the prevalence and spread of vice, elevate their moral condition. By the Abolition of Feeing Markets, the temptations there held out to spend money and degrade themselves by foolish profligacy, and selling their labour in a public market would be removed. By Monthly Engagements, an inducement would be held out for Servants to acquire a reputation for steadiness and respectability in order to secure continuous employment, and a more friendly, because more independent, relationship would be established. By Monthly Payments, Servants would be benefited, since they could save the discount given on cash, and the interest charged on credit purchases; and they would also have interest on their savings for a longer period. By the confinement of Parochial Relief to the Workhouse, a more thrifty and independent spirit would be engendered amongst them. By the instituting of Circulating Libraries, Literary Societies, and such like throughout the rural districts, knowledge—and the desire to obtain knowledge—would be imparted; this would elevate their moral tone and make them more useful and more pleasant members of society. But that which would, next to the Education Act, have the greatest influence for good, would be the increase and improvement of House Accommodation for the Servants—married and single. Many of the thinking married men say, and surely they are qualified to express a suitable opinion on the matter, that the best provision for them would be—that on every farm of one hundred acres in extent a house should be furnished by the proprietor with ground attached for the purpose of keeping a cow. The rent of this house and ground to be paid, not to the farmer, but to the proprietor himself. If the possession were held of the farmer he would have it in his power to make many

unjust exactions from the Servant by threatening him with ejection from his comfortable home. In that case, the Servant would be even in a worse position than they are at present. I believe that on the Estate of Warthill, belonging to William Leslie, Esq., late M.P. for the County of Aberdeen, the above-mentioned provision has been successfully carried out, and I am also told that the Marquis of Huntly is resolved to provide in like manner for the married Servants labouring on his Aboyne Estates. Opportunity would thus be afforded for Servants marrying and immorality would become less extensive. The supply of Servants would soon equal the demand. The Servants would be better as a class, and this would surely be to the advantage of their employers. Mr. M'Combie of Tillyfour says:—"Were there fewer bad Servants there would be fewer bad Masters, and were there fewer bad Masters there would be fewer bad Servants." This means that did each party do his duty to the other he would himself be advantaged by so doing. Surely it is to the advantage of both Proprietor and Farmer to have a class of good Servants on their possessions. If they did but clearly comprehend the benefits they would reap were the good results which would flow from the above-mentioned alterations brought about, I have no doubt that they will assist in soon producing them. The attention of all classes is being directed to the question between Farmer and Farm Servant, and the time is not far distant when these facts will be forced upon them, and when so brought under their notice they cannot fail to be acted upon.

In the second place:—What the Servants can do for themselves. The condition of the Farm Servant is good as regards wages. I have heard tradesmen say that the pecuniary position of agricultural labourers is better than theirs. When quite a boy, the Farm Servant receives food and lodging and as much money in wages as provide clothes for himself. A good Servant is now in receipt of wages varying from £17 to £20 in the six months with food and lodgings, which are equal to, at least, 8s. in the week, or about £10 10s. in the half-year. This shows a yearly salary of, in some cases, £61. Let us, however, take the most general rate, and say at least £57 in the year. Of this sum, after deducting the £21 calculated as representing the value of his food and lodging, he receives the amount of £36 in cash. Out of this he has to pay for his washing and mending about £1 5s., for clothing and boots, say £7. In the country, Servants do not require to wear so fashionable clothes as in the town, and a rougher, stronger material is used which wears longer. The sum I have mentioned is more than sufficient to provide decent clothing. I know many Servants, who, allow only £4 to meet this demand. Allow him now £1 15s. for luxuries, and we find that, with the smallest degree of economy, he can save £26 every year. If he should enter on the married state he would perhaps require £20 for house-

hold furniture, and £15 a year to maintain his wife. These items would increase his annual expenditure to about £18 per annum. Let us compare this with the case of the tradesman in a town. When a young man determines to learn a trade he has to become bound apprentice for a term of four or five years. During this time he earns scarcely so much as pay for his food and lodging. After this, when he becomes a full-fledged journeyman, a good hand, and work plentiful, he can earn perhaps 30s. in the week. Out of this he has to pay for food and lodging over 10s. ; for clothes, 5s. ; for washing and mending, over 1s. ; for keeping up a set of tools, for sundry small expenses, payment of money to trades unions, &c., at any rate 4s. He *may* thus save 10s. a-week, or £24 in the year. But, at the outset, he has to provide himself with a chest of tools. He has also to pay the cost of shifting from place to place, and if trade is dull he has to remain out of employment for an indefinite period, perhaps, in the year. I do not believe a tradesman, though steady and fairly prosperous, can save more than £20 in the year, if he can succeed in saving that. Thus is shown the fact that a Farm Servant can save a good few pounds more in the year than a first-class tradesman although the latter may get steady employment, which he cannot always do, and be in the receipt of what is reckoned "splendid wages." The sum of £26, which can be saved by the Farm Servant, can be placed in the bank, or, better still, may be invested in some Company, such as the North of Scotland Canadian Mortgage Company (Limited), or the Aberdeen Land Association (Limited). If so invested, it will yield a return of about £1 6s. in the year. This, in the space of 10 years—he saving £26 each year—will show an accumulated capital of over £330. In the 20 years, that of over £800, or in the case of a married man, £200. Thus, in 20 years, the diligent, thrifty Farm Servant has laid up a sum yielding a yearly interest of £40 which is sufficient to keep him comfortably all the rest of his life. Or, if he desires to do so, he may lay aside the occupation of farm servant, and betake himself to commerce. If he is a cautious shrewd man, with this capital of £800, he is sure to succeed in any undertaking to which he may determine to devote his energies. No well-doing servant need therefore become dependent upon the Poor Law Act for relief in old age, and the Proprietors need not be afraid to encourage population in case they may become paupers. Servants might provide as much as leave their wives an immediate support, in the case of their early death, by insuring their lives. We know not what an hour may bring forth, and since the lease of life is so uncertain, it is but an act of prudence to do so, and thereby much misery may be avoided. At the age of 18 an Insurance for £100 at death may be effected for the payment of the yearly premium of £1 12s. or even commencing at the age of 25 a

premium of 3d. a day will ensure a payment of £200 at death. This would not be a heavy burden on the servants wages, and would be the means of starting their widows in some small undertaking or business which would support them and their families in comfort, and enable them to dispense with parochial relief. It would also provide a borrowing power on the security of which the servants could obtain money in case of any emergency. The money now spent at feeing markets, and in foolish profligacy would be more than sufficient to pay the premium necessary to secure the payment of £100 to the heirs of the insurer at his death. I would advise every man to insure his life, and also to insure early, for the longer it is delayed, the yearly premium becomes larger. The Servants could better themselves much by staying at home at nights. Not only would they have the time spent foolishly in degrading pursuits left for purposes of self-improvement, but they would be more healthy, better able to perform their work, and also much more respected by their Employers. As it is impossible for the Landlords to cultivate the soil for want of sufficient capital, without the intermediate aid of the Farmers, so also is it impossible for the Farmers to dispense with the assistance of the Servants ; so that the relationship existing between all three is of a fixed character. It is to the advantage of each that the other two should be of as good a class as possible : therefore, if Servants attend to their work, and acquire and maintain good reputations, are thrifty, industrious, and show a desire to improve themselves, the opportunity will be afforded them so to do, and they will soon be looked upon as an important body, and will occupy a high position in the social scale. The attention of influential parties, and that of the Legislature, will be directed to their wants and condition. They will be even better than the Farmers, for the seasons will not affect their incomes ; their money will be sure, and, except their labour, they risk no capital. The soil yields to the farmer only a small rate of interest on the money sunk in stocking and working the farm, and even this return is uncertain. To the Farm Servant, the interest on the money he may put in the bank, or invest in a Company, and also his wages, are certain returns, and in the former case without any expenditure of labour. It is only necessary to look around among the agricultural community and elsewhere, to see in many of our own prosperous, respected acquaintances—instances of those, who, by their own thrift and industry, have in the past risen from the rank of Farm Servants to be themselves large employers. And if this was possible at a time when remuneration for farm labour was very low, how much more so is it now, when such a high rate of wages is everywhere given. The Education Act will have a most powerful effect on all parties. The unmarried Servants will be more moral, capable of understanding better what

they read, hear, and see ; more intelligent in conversation and more tolerant of the opinions of others. The females will in every way be better qualified to undertake and sustain and satisfactorily perform the duties appertaining and devolving upon them as wives and mothers. The house accommodation which will be demanded by, and provided for, the educated servants will be of such a description as enable them to improve themselves. It will afford opportunities for entering the bonds of matrimony, and this will check immorality. Servants will be better fitted to instruct their children and train them up in the paths of virtue, so that in the course of two or three generations, the whole moral tone of the labouring classes will be greatly improved. Marriages will be more productive of happiness and contentment, since both parties will be able to converse and interchange opinions rationally. Agricultural Employés will better understand the true relationship which ought to exist between them and the Farmers. They will know their own proper position, with all the rights and privileges thereof ; the manner in which they ought to be treated ; and the duties incumbent on them in the same. Knowing this, they will also have the sense neither to infringe on the position of their employers, nor allow their own to be infringed upon. They will have a more just idea of the place they really occupy in society ; and if they make a good use of the opportunities which will then be given them, and those which they themselves can command, of improving themselves (which their education will show them it is to their interest to do), they will become conspicuous members of the same. In short, when the time comes (a time which will come, and is not far distant, when, by education's power, the Labouring classes are prepared to exercise the privilege aright) when the Franchise will be extended, the Farm Servants will be qualified to employ discernment, and choose representatives who will take care of their interests, plead their cause, and procure redress for their grievances, in the most important tribunal of the kingdom—The House of Commons.

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