

The Spinning-House Abomination

Cambridge

In my last letter I endeavoured to give some account of a celebrated lodging-house in the town of Cambridge, well known among the members of the begging profession. I propose in the present to treat of another institution in the same town, the iniquitous proceedings connected with which were so strongly represented to me by several highly respectable and influential residents, that I feel I should not be fairly discharging my duty were I to omit giving the result of my inquiries with respect to it. The establishment has more than once been brought prominently before the notice of the public, in connexion with the mode of treatment there adopted towards a very numerous class of persons residing in that town—I mean prostitutes.

The institution in question is called “Hobson’s Workhouse,” but is more generally known as the “Spinning-house.” I endeavoured to obtain information from the University authorities as to its management, but my request to be furnished with copies of the rules and regulations was peremptorily refused. I was, however, enabled, notwithstanding this refusal, to obtain some information which I will now proceed to lay before the reader.

It appears that by an indenture of feoffment, dated 30th July, 1628, made between Thomas Hobson on the one part, and five members of the University of Cambridge, and six other persons described as of the town of Cambridge, of the other part, the said Thomas Hobson, in acknowledgment of God’s mercies and blessings upon his labours, and in testimony of his earnest and fervent wish to do good to the poor of the University and town wanting means to live upon, and settle themselves in some honest calling, and that they might thereafter be employed and set to work, and brought up and instructed in some trade or occupation, and thereby not only enabled to live of themselves, but by their labours become profitable members of the commonwealth, and helpful to others among whom they should live—and in consideration that there were then, at the only care, cost, and charges of the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University, and the Mayor, Bailiff, and Burgesses, in a great part erected and builded upon the property included in the said indenture, divers buildings and houses, intended only for the benefit and employment of the poorer sort of people of the said University and town—the said Thomas Hobson conveyed unto the parties of the second part certain messuages and tenements, upon trust that they should, within the space of four years, build, erect, and finish one or more convenient house or houses upon the premises, as well for setting the poor people of the said University and town to work, as for a house of correction for unruly and stubborn rogues, beggars, and other persons who should refuse to work; and also, in convenient time, should provide a sufficient quantity of wool and flax, and other materials for setting of the said poor people to work; and should from time to time thereafter well and sufficiently maintain and repair the said houses to be by them erected, and all other the premises; and so use the same and every part thereof, and all rents and profits arising from the same, for and towards the uses aforesaid.

Since the date of this indenture a considerable amount of property has been bequeathed to the support of Hobson’s Workhouse; and the wishes of the testators have been expressed in almost the same language. How far their benevolent objects have been carried into effect may be learned from the fact that, for the last half-century, the buildings have been used as a receptacle for profligate and disorderly women, and common prostitutes committed by the Vice-Chancellor; such persons being allowed to remain there not only in a state of complete idleness, but in a condition as discreditable to the authorities of Cambridge as it is physically and morally injurious to the wretched inmates themselves.

The Spinning-house, or prison as it now is, is one of the most wretched and miserable places of the kind that I have ever seen. The direction of the founder, "that they should well and sufficiently repair the premises," is as unheeded as is the other part of his wishes with respect to the purpose and aim of the establishment. The building is in a most dilapidated condition; the walls are cracked, the arches over many of the windows are fractured, and some of them have already fallen in.

The interior as well as the exterior presents altogether a wretched and desolate appearance. It consists of four wards, which contain together about sixty cells, with a day-room in each ward for the prisoners. To each of the wards there is a small triangular-shaped piece of ground, enclosed with high walls and iron gates. The length of these enclosures, or yards, is about thirty feet, and at the upper portion, or entrance, about six feet.

The building—consisting of two storeys, each containing a row of cells—is situated at the rear of the other premises which face the road, and is enclosed upon each side by portions of adjoining tenements, thereby effectually excluding the admission of any currents of air. The cells are six feet in width by eight in length, and are each furnished with an iron bedstead, a straw mat and flock bed, two blankets, and a counterpane.

There are no glazed windows to the cells, the only light that is admitted being through an aperture of about three inches square in the iron shutters which are placed on the outside of the window-frames. There are no means for warming the cells, either by hot air or by fires. "When the beds have not been slept in for some time," said the deputy-governor to me, "they are aired with the warming-pan."

Such is the precaution, and such are the means adopted, for airing the beds in cells where during the day the iron shutters are thrown open, and where there is no glass to prevent the admission of damp and wet. In the winter the floors of the cells are often covered with the snow which drifts through the casements.

With respect to the management of the prison, there are no means of classification or separation of the prisoners. In the day they are congregated idly together, and left without any control or efficient check upon their conduct; and they pass their time in occupations which, to hear them relate, as several of them did to me, would make the most depraved of beings blush.

"It is," said one of the unfortunate creatures who had upon several occasions endured the horrors of the place, "a dark, damp, filthy, dirty, wretched, badly-managed place. There is no order kept, and no one man can keep 'em in order. I was first in twenty years ago; and I was put in last when my little boy was three months old. He is nearly three years old now—and it was as bad the last time as it was at the first.

"You are all huddled together, and sit among yourselves, talking and hearing all manner of bad language, blackguard stuff and slang, and doing the worst kinds of things. There was poor — —; when she went in she was as modest a girl as possible for one of her sort to be, and she would blush when she heard bad language, but she came out as bad as any of us. She used often to say that she got her education finished there. We call it 'going to college.'"

But the charity is not only diverted from the original purpose and intention of the founder, and wretchedly and disgracefully conducted, but even the regulations which have, within the last few years, and since a recent inquest on the body of one of the unfortunate creatures who came by her death in the place, been drawn up for its management, are totally disregarded. They are, in point of fact, a dead letter; and as they are posted up in different parts of the building, they seem only intended to mislead the unwary, or to blind persons to the real character of the place.

As I before said, I was not able to obtain a copy, nor was I allowed to take one, of these regulations; but I could not help seeing that one of them was to the effect that each inmate should have the frequent use of the bath.

Upon my inquiring for the bath-room, I was shown to the kitchen of the establishment, and was pointed to a tub which was used for that purpose. The mode of using the tub, as stated by one who had used it many times, was—“The women strip naked, and one of them gets into the tub, and then the others come and sluice you all over like pigs; and then, when one’s sluiced, she comes out and sluices the others. It is such a beastly dirty place, you are smothered up with smoke and dust, and you are always obliged to have a good wash that way before you come out.”

Another of the regulations requires that the deputy-governor should read prayers every evening at eight o’clock to the inmates. This rule, like many others, is impracticable and unheeded. The deputy-governor has to attend as porter to the establishment, and as he is uncertain when the proctor or his men may bring him another “canary”—for such he calls the prisoners—he is unable to leave his post as “porter” in order to assume the functions of “chaplain.”

The present deputy is literally a host within himself—he is deputy-governor, the gaoler, the cook, the attendant, the porter, the chaplain—he is the witness, as we shall presently see, against the parties—and, in addition to all these multifarious duties, he carries on the business of a tailor, on his own account, on the premises, the fact being notified to the public by a brass plate on his door.

For the performance of his public duties he is allowed £60 per annum, and is consequently obliged to have recourse to his own business in order to support himself. The least that could be expected from the authorities is that they should provide suitable attendance and accommodation for those whom they deprive of liberty; and if their funds will not permit of their so doing, the next best thing they could do for the improvement of the morals of the town would be to give up the establishment altogether, and leave the matter, as in other places, in the hands of an efficient police.

The system at present pursued is totally inefficient for the repression of the evil which it is intended to remove. The terrors of the Spinning-house, great though they may be, have not unfortunately much practical moral force. There are several females in the town who are well known to the proctors and their men as persons of abandoned character, who are nevertheless allowed to continue their course with impunity; for they have been in the place so often that the proctors will not take them any more. One of these individuals has been in, at different times, for not less than 103 weeks; and many others have passed nearly as long a period in it.

The proctor, arrayed in his gown and band, and accompanied by two men, perambulates the streets of Cambridge during term-time, and occasionally out of term, armed with powers to arrest any female whom he may suspect of being an improper character; and many respectable females have been grossly insulted by these functionaries, and compelled to pass through the ordeal of an examination from which every modest woman would shrink with abhorrence.

Proctorial laws, unlike other police laws, do not require that the person of abandoned character should accost any individual in order to constitute an offence cognisable by the authorities; and, in point of fact, the accosting of an individual, which in most places is made to serve as a criterion of character, is entirely overlooked.

The form of trial—if it be not an abuse of words to apply such a term to the process which the prisoner undergoes previously to her final committal—is as repugnant to every principle of justice as it is opposed to the notions of every person who boasts of English customs and of English liberties.

The Vice-Chancellor attends at a private room in the establishment every morning during term, to sit in judgment upon the presumed offenders. The public are not admitted; no friends of the prisoner are allowed to be present; all legal assistance and advice is denied; and the accused can call no witnesses.

The proctor, or one of his men who arrested her, the gaoler—or the *multum in parvo* who acts as such—and the Vice-Chancellor who sentences her, are the only persons privileged to attend this extraordinary court of justice during the trial of the unfortunate culprit.

The proceedings are very secret, very simple, and very summary. The prisoner is brought in by the gaoler; her name, age, and address are entered in the minute-book by the Vice-Chancellor. The proctor, or one of his men, states that he saw her in such a street or place, and, “suspecting her of incontinence,” he arrested her.

The gaoler is asked if he knows her, or if she has ever been under his charge before. If he replies in the affirmative, the warrant of committal, for such period as the Vice-Chancellor may direct, is made out, and the prisoner is ordered to be removed. The warrant—though I was not able to obtain a copy of it—sets forth that the person therein named was brought before the Vice-Chancellor upon such a day, she “being suspected of incontinence”; and that, as he is “satisfied of the accuracy of such a charge,” the governor is thereby directed to keep the said person in his safe custody for the period therein mentioned.

The whole, therefore, that is necessary to obtain a conviction in this court is to be suspected by the proctor or his men, and to be known by the gaoler. No evidence is required to prove any overt act on the part of the prisoner; it is not necessary that she should even accost any man in the streets, or be seen in his company. Although proceeding upon most legitimate business through the streets, any female whom the proctor may chance to suspect of incontinence is liable to be dragged off to this sink of iniquity.

But it was stated to me by several who partly justified these proceedings that the proctors and their men, from their extensive knowledge and intimate acquaintance with abandoned characters, would be certain not to suspect an innocent person. Unfortunately for this defence, numerous facts prove that even proctors are liable to err, like other men.

I was informed by the editor of one of the Cambridge papers that he had had, a short time since, a somewhat severe struggle with the proctor to prevent his wife being taken off to this den while walking through the streets in the open day. I extract from the *Cambridge Independent* the following case, which occurred some time since:—

THE PROCTORS AND THEIR MEN

The following case has come to our knowledge from the lips of a most respectable female, who is naturally indignant at the treatment she received on Tuesday evening last from a proctor and his men. A few weeks ago she and her husband came to this town to embark in business, they having a competency. A shop not being available, the husband, who is a tailor, rather than be idle, obtained work at Mr. Parfitt’s, in St. Mary’s-passage.

It is her habit to meet her husband in the evening, to accompany him home; and, as they have an appointed time, they wait for each other against St. Mary’s Church. On Tuesday the husband, having done work before the usual time, accompanied a friend to a house to have a small glass of ale. In the interim the wife came up, and before she had waited three minutes the proctor and his

men came up, and the latter rudely thrust their faces under her bonnet, and, after a vulgar gaze, exclaimed—

“Who are you? What’s your name?”

Not aware of the existence of proctors or their men, and consequently ignorant of their high prerogative, she thought their conduct most insolent, but politely told them her name and the occasion of her standing there.

“This must be inquired into!” said the proctor; and she was taken into Mr. Parfitt’s and questioned. They detained her there about a quarter of an hour, asking her various questions. While this was going on in the house, several persons had congregated around, they having seen the female in charge of the proctor. The husband, at his appointed time, came up and looked for his wife; and, seeing a crowd assembled, he inquired the occasion.

“Why, the proctors have got a woman in that house!” was the answer.

Not seeing his wife at that moment, he entered his employer’s to see what was going on; and, to his astonishment and dismay, he found his wife in an excited state, with the proctor and his men. On asking what it all meant, the proctor, with much dignity, said, “We have been doing for your wife what you ought to have done. We have protected her!” A conversation followed, during which the proctor said, “Take off your hat; you don’t know our power.” Both husband and wife were allowed to go home, and the next day she was very ill.

Another instance of a similar kind took place shortly afterwards, in the case of a respectable and modest young woman, the wife of an exciseman in the town. The account which she gave me of the insult thus offered to her was the following:—

“I had been out to a shop to make some purchases, and was returning home. When I was near St. Mary’s-passage, some man stepped up to me, and, taking hold of me by my arm, said, ‘The proctor takes you, if you please.’ I asked him what he wanted of me. I had never heard of the proctors or their men, and had only been a few months in the town. The man made no answer, but dragged me to the proctor, who asked me my name. I told him what it was, and he asked me where I lived. I told him. I had just moved from there, and I directly said, ‘Oh, I have told you wrong; it is — — Street.’ I was so frightened I hardly knew what I said.

“The proctor said, ‘Oh, I see how it is, you don’t know where you live,’ and turned round to the man and said, ‘Bring her along.’ I was walking along crying between the men when I met Mr. — —, who lives in the neighbourhood, and who had known me a long time before I came here, and he said, ‘My child, what are they going to do with you?’ I said I did not know, but that they had just taken me from St. Mary’s-passage.

“He then asked the proctor if he knew who he had got there, and he said, ‘Oh, yes, it’s all right; she can’t give any account of herself.’ I caught hold of Mr. — —’s arm and told him to take me away, for I was very poorly and frightened. Mr. — — then said, ‘I know her very well; she is a respectable young woman, and lives close by me.’ The proctor then let me go, and Mr. — — and I walked home together, the proctor and his men following us all the way.

“When Mr. — — had seen me home, and was leaving the house, the same men were standing at the door, and they asked him if what he said was true. He said yes, and told them they had better go and apologise to me for it. They said indeed they would not, and requested him to go back and do it for them.”

A day or two afterwards the young woman pointed out the proctor to a gentleman who accompanied her, as being the person who arrested her; and when spoken to on the subject he replied, "Whatever was done, and all that was done, I did it, and I am the proctor," and refused to make the slightest apology for the insult.

Long-established usages may reconcile persons to the performance of almost any humiliating services, and it is upon that hypothesis only that we may cease to wonder when we see such duties so performed by gentlemen of education and of high literary attainments.

From the arrest of these persons on suspicion, and their committal without evidence, I will proceed to their treatment while undergoing their punishment. Upon this point I am compelled to give the statements of the unfortunate creatures themselves, who have at various times been incarcerated in the Spinning House. These statements are, of course, to be received with due allowance and care. From the manner, however, in which they were given, and the evident desire of the narrators to state nothing but the truth, I believe that they are in the main perfectly correct, and they furnish the strongest possible proof of the worse than inefficiency of the present system.

"I have been in the Spinning House," said one of these females, "altogether I don't know how many times. They won't take me now; they always pass me in the streets as if they didn't know me. When they first take you to the cage, they put you in the cell where the bed is. There is no light and no seat in the place. The governor brings in the warming-pan and warms the bed for you. They don't give you any supper the first night. We are kept in the cell till about nine o'clock the next morning, when the governor comes to us and takes us into the Vice-Chancellor's room—there's nobody there but the governor and the proctor, beside himself and us. The Vice-Chancellor says, 'Now let us hear what the proctor has got to say about this.' Then the proctor says, 'Well, sir, I was walking down such a street and met this girl, and I think she is an improper character.' 'Did she come quiet?' the Vice-Chancellor asks. 'Very quiet indeed,' perhaps he'd say, and then a paper is signed and given to the governor, who takes us back to our cells.

"There used to be 7d. a-day allowed for our keep, and the keeper used to buy the food. The allowance of food that they gave me last time was six ounces of bread for breakfast, two ounces of tea, about half a pound of sugar, and a pint and half of milk—that was for the week. Four days in the week I had for dinner five ounces of cooked meat and bread or potatoes; for the other three days a pint and a half of soup and five ounces of bread—that was, if there were more than three girls there—if there were less than four, it was twelve ounces of suet pudding. The supper was six ounces of bread and one ounce of cheese. I think that's about it. [This account exactly corresponds with the dietary table, a copy of which I took when in the Spinning House.] There is a blue striped cotton dress for you, if you like to wear it, but if not, you may wear your own. We sit all together in the day-room, and there's some very pretty conversation and goings on, you may be sure. [The young woman went on to give some account of the proceedings, but they were of such a character that I forbear to give publicity to them.] There is no place for us to wash at, except at the pump in the kitchen; and when I was there last they wouldn't give us any soap till we kicked up a row about it, and said we'd go to chapel dirty if they didn't let us have some."

"I have been in," said another female, "17 or 18 times, I won't be sure which, but I always have a bit of a shindy with 'em. Once I had nearly every individual thing torn off me by the porter's men. When they got me in, they locked me up in the cell, and wouldn't give me any supper; and in the morning, because the other girls all said it was a shame to serve me so, they locked us up in the day room, and would not bring us our breakfast till late in the day, so we sat and shied coals at the windows, and broke three hundred squares of glass, and they gave me and the other girls three months in the House of Correction for that."

"I have been," said another of these women, "kept in the place for 103 weeks altogether, and they won't take me any more, I think. When I kicked up a row there once, they put me in a large cell, in the top row, and kept me there for three days and three nights without any bed to lie upon—nothing but the bare floor. When I first went we used to be allowed to have anything we liked to send out for, if we had money, or anything anybody liked to send us, except liquors; but we used often to have gin and brandy sent in to us in bottles, marked 'bottled porter.' The last time I was in, the gaoler brought me a bit of bread in the morning, and I threw it at him, and said I wouldn't eat such stale stuff as that. About twelve o'clock he brought me a little sugar and a spoonful or so of tea. When the other governor was there we had no knives or forks, and we were obliged to take our victuals to our mouths with our fingers. I have often seen the girls dragged by the hair of their heads from the sitting-room into their cells, because they did not keep quiet. I have been served so myself many times. Once, when they took me in the streets, they tore nearly everything off me: the proctor twisted my arm almost out of its socket, and I bit a piece out of his.

"When I was in my cell the gaoler came to take me before the Vice-Chancellor, but I refused to go quietly. He then said, 'If you go quiet I will do all I can for you before the Vice-Chancellor.' When he got me in, he said, 'Now, you wretch, you shall have all that I can ever make him give you.' I was so enraged that I seized the inkstand and threw it at him. I could not get my shoes off quick enough before the proctor's men and the gaoler got hold of me, or else I would have thrown them at him, so I smashed some of the windows in the Vice-Chancellor's room with my fist, and cut it all terribly with the glass. At last they got me away and put me in the dark hole, where I lay curled up in a pool of blood on the floor like a snake, with my new black mantle over my head. I slept so all that night.

"In the morning I was so cold and in such pain that I began to cry, and asked him to forgive me; and he said, 'No, you wretch, you nearly killed me yesterday; I won't forgive you,' and he dragged me out of that cell, and put me in another, and said, 'You wretch, stop there; that's a haunted cell; there was a man cut his throat there.' I begged and prayed of him to let me out, and at last he said, 'I can't have the heart to keep you locked up any longer, although I was told to keep you locked up for twelve days and nights.' Then I was let out.

"When we were all together we made up our minds that we would get out of the place. The first thing we did was to break the pan off the fire-shovel, and that left it like a chisel. We set to work and got one brick out of the wall, and then we got some water and poured upon the mortar to soften it, and so we could remove another brick, and at last, by about two o'clock in the middle of the day, we had made a hole big enough for us to get through. The people who lived on the other side of the wall saw what we were about, and they hung up something over the hole to hide it, till we were ready to get out, and when we were all out we ran as fast as we could—the whole five of us, some with shawls and some without, but all covered with dust and mortar—up to Barnwell. Once when the proctor came to see us, he went into one of the cells, and we locked him in, and while he was there we called him a 'wretched prostitute;' and asked him if he was not ashamed of himself for following such a wicked course of life. One of us gave him a long lecture on the impropriety of his conduct, and when we let him out, we told him that if he was ever caught again he should be locked up for a longer time. The longest time I was ever in for at one time was three months."

"On one occasion," said another, "the proctor and his men came into my room, and said I must go with them. I said I was undressed, and could not go. They said that that should not prevent them taking me; so they called a coach, dragged me down stairs, threw a blanket over me, put me into a coach, and drove me off to the Spinning House; while the crowds of people in the streets were pelting the coach and the driver with stones and anything they could lay their hands on."

Several others who had been incarcerated in this hole gave me accounts of the neglect which they experienced while there; and one and all agreed in denouncing it as a wretched, dirty, and ill-managed place.

Before concluding my account of the condition of these four counties, it will probably not be uninteresting to the reader if I refer briefly to the leading social and moral features of these and other counties to which my attention has been directed. In order to enable the reader the more readily to ascertain the difference which exists in the condition of their respective inhabitants, in point of ignorance, pauperism, crime, improvidence, and illegitimacy, I have placed in a tabular form the percentage, above or below the average of the whole of England and Wales—which average I have adopted as the standard—in which the particular features predominate in each county. I have included the counties of Northampton, Leicester, Rutland, Nottingham, and Derby, to the state of which I shall have occasion to refer in subsequent letters, and also Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, already described in previous communications.

In the following table the first column contains the population of each county; the second, the percentage of ignorance in each county above the average of England and Wales, as indicated by the numbers of persons who have signed the marriage register with their marks, and who may be assumed to be incapable of writing their names. The third column contains the proportions of the youthful population receiving education, as shown by the results of the Church School inquiry, instituted in 1847. The fourth and fifth columns exhibit the percentages, above the average, of improvident marriages—that is, of marriages in which the males were under twenty-one years of age—and of illegitimacy, as shown by the returns of the Registrar-General. The sixth column shows the condition of each county so far as pauperism is concerned, and is calculated upon the proportion, to the whole population, of persons relieved in each county in the year 1847. In the last column is shown the amount of crime, as indicated by the gross criminal commitments of males to the assizes and quarter sessions during the same year. The numbers in the table under each particular head show the amount per cent. in each county above the average of the whole of England and Wales; and in order to simplify the table as much as possible, I have omitted all the fractional parts:—

County	Population	Ignorance above average	Education of juvenile population	Improvident marriages above average	Illegitimacy above average	Pauperism above average	Crime above average
Eastern							
Norfolk	412,664	38	1 in 10½	21	53	60	17
Suffolk	315,073	42	1 in 9	24	27	36	7
Essex	344,979	42	1 in 9½	35	19	30 below	17
East Midland							
Herts	156,207	33	1 in 9	69	5	17	15
Beds	107,936	53	1 in 8	142	17	26	13
Cambridge	164,459	33	1 in 11	39	average	27	1 below
South and East Midland							
Hunts	58,549	38	1 in 8	122	18 below	8	18 below

Northampton	199,228	15	1 in 7	84	11 below	20	10
Rutland	21,602	38 below	1 in 7	14	9	3	1
Midland							
Leicester	216,307	2 below	1 in 10	104	23 below	18	25
Nottingham	349,310	1	—	31 below	18	26 below	15.8 below
Derby	272,217	13 below	—	16 below	30	44 below	39 below

It will be seen from the above table that those counties which are more exclusively agricultural in their character are the most ignorant and the most depraved. The average of the nine counties included in the Eastern, East Midland, and South-east Midland districts, which are comparatively destitute of manufactures, shows that ignorance is to crime as 6 to 1 *above* the average; while in the Midland counties, which are the seat of the great hosiery business, and also of iron and mining operations, the proportion of ignorance to crime is as 1 to 6 *below* the average.

On reference to the two counties of Herts and Beds, it will be seen that there is an aggregation of every social evil. Vast numbers, as we have already seen, of the women and children of these counties, are employed in the light domestic manufactures of lace-making and straw plaiting, which appear to have the effect (among other ill consequences) of encouraging the evils of bastardy and of improvident marriages, with a consequent increase in the population—who in their turn become dependent upon a fluctuating and badly-remunerated trade, the effect of which is to be seen in a vast amount of pauperism and crime.

Mr. T. Fletcher, in his valuable work on the *Moral Statistics of England and Wales*, states that “the most pauperized districts are those in which the farmers in the boards of guardians, and in the administration of the highway rates, still, in a sordid misconception of their own interests, use the public funds to the full extent of their ability, to keep up that excess of labour in the market—and, therefore, as they vainly imagine, that cheapness of it—which the farmers of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire find, without any such contrivance, among the poor peasantry of those counties, half dependent on their petty domestic manufactures of straw and lace.”

The proportion which ignorance bears to pauperism varies considerably in each group of counties. In the Eastern group the proportion of ignorance to pauperism above the average is as about 8 to 7; in the East Midland about 2 to 3; in the South-east Midland 1 to 2; and in the Midland about 1 to 3 below the average.

The proportion, however, which one particular form of evil may bear to another, and the connection which may fairly be supposed to subsist between these varied moral features, will, at all times, be liable to great fluctuations; and not unfrequently we find appearances which at first sight are seemingly opposed to long-established theories on the subject. Adequate employment will prevent the ignorant man from unnecessarily becoming a pauper, and a fair remuneration for his labour will often save him from the fate of a criminal. Comparative cheapness in the price of provisions and of the necessities of life, combined with the means of employment, will often enable those who may have contracted improvident marriages to support themselves independently of the parish, and will prevent the issue of their ill-timed union from swelling the number of pauper children. The offspring of illegitimacy may be spared from becoming tainted with pauperism, when employment gives the parent the means of supporting it; and even should the pauper child become an inmate of the workhouse, yet, if shielded by watchfulness and attention from its contaminating influences, he

may be rescued by institutions such as that of the Boys' Home at Norwich—a description of which I gave in a former letter—from the eventual disgrace of a felon.

A “FOX.”

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING CHRONICLE.

Sir—It may please the author of the very interesting papers on “Labour and the Poor,” which appear in your journal, to learn, in reference to Letter XIX., that his conjectures as to the origin of the cant term *fox* for a sword are pretty near the mark.

During last spring a deceased friend purchased a fine old sword, apparently of foreign manufacture, on the blade of which was engraved a *fox courant* (heraldic). This struck me at the time; and, perceiving no notice of any so marked a weapon in the Shakespeare commentators, I transmitted a memorandum of it to my esteemed friend Mr. J. P. Collier for his information, as I now do the same for that of your contributor.

I have the honour to be, sir,
Your most obedient servant,

W. ROBT. TURNBULL,
Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.
Edinburgh, 25, Great King-street, Dec. 31, 1850.