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Proposals for Building, In Every County, A Working-Alms-House or Hospital

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Proposals for Building, In Every County, A Working-Alms-House or Hospital

PROPOSALS

For Building in every *county*

A working-almshouse or hospital;

As the Best Expedient to perfect the *Trade* and *manufactory* of Linnen-Cloth.

LONDON,

Printed by *W.G.* for *R. Harford*, at the Sign of the *Angel* in *Cornhil*, 1677.

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PROPOSALS for Building in every County a working-almshouse or hospital, as the best Expedient to perfect the Trade and Manufactory of Linnen Cloth.

Whereby,

I. All Poor people and their Children from five or six years old may be employed and maintained; as also all Beggars, Vagrants, *&c.* restrained and for ever prevented, and so all Parishes eased of that intolerable Burden.

II. Many Hundred Thousand Pounds kept at home, which now every year goes out of the Kingdom for *Linnen*, whereby our Wealth becomes a prey to other Nations.

III. Much Land improved in every County to great advantage of Landlord and Tenant.

Humbly Offered to the Consideration of the great Wisdom of the whole Nation, now Assembled in Parliament.

Considering the great Complaints of Poverty, the heavy Burdens most Parishes lie under to maintain their Poor, which daily encrease; the Swarms of Beggars, Vagrants and Idle People in City and Countrey; the great, and 'tis fear'd, irrecoverable decay of our Ancient Trade for Woollen Cloth; the vast Charge we are yearly at in purchasing Linnen, *&c.* from other Nations, whereby our Treasure is exhausted, and our Lands fall for want of being improved some other way, besides planting Corn, breeding for Wool, *&c.* Which are become of so low a price, as scarce to turn to Account: And understanding, that for remedying thereof, the Improving the Manufactory of Linnen is now under Debate, I have taken the boldness to Offer the following *proposal*, which if thought fit to be put in practice, will (in my opinion) infallibly conduce to all the good Ends desired and intended; *viz.*

That there may be Erected in every County according to its Extent or Populousness, a greater or lesser Working-Alms-House, wherein the Poor may be continually employed in the Manufactory of Linnen Cloth.

The Advantages whereof are evident; For,

I. This Manufactory is an Employment for the weakest people, not capable of stronger Work, *viz.* Women and Children, and decrepit or aged people, now the most chargeable; as likewise for Beggars and Vagrants, who live idly, and by the sweat of other mens Labours, and can no way so effectually be brought to Industry and Order, as when reduced into to narrow a Compass or Confinement under fitly qualified Rulers, Officers, and Regular Government.

II. These Working-Alm-Houses may raise and supply the Nation yearly with a sufficient Stock of Linnen Cloth (the finest sort excepted) if true measures be taken, and the Design effectually prosecuted; As for example, 1352000 pounds worth of Cloth may yearly be spun in them only, besides what is made in private Families---Thus demonstrated;

1. 'Tis well known by experience, that three quarters of a Pound of Thread worth 12 d. *per* Pound spinning, will make one Ell of Cloth worth 2 s. *per* Ell; which Three quarters of a Pound two Spinners may spin in one day; Hence it follows,

2. That 2000 Spinners will spin Thread enough in one day to make 1000 Ells of Cloth, worth 100 l. And working but 260 days in the year, may spin 26000 Pounds worth of Linnen Cloth in a year.

3. Suppose then there be as many publick Work-houses, as there are Counties, which are 52, and in every Work-house, one with another, 2000 Spinners (though in some more, some less) then according to the reasonable measures, there will be the forementioned Sum of 1352000 l. worth of Cloth spun in one year; which is what we undertook to demonstrate.

This or some such prodigious Sum of Money might yearly be raised to the Nation, whereby a Treble Benefit would ensue, First, we might save so much Money now yearly sent out of the Nation for Linnen, which, as computed by very worthy Intelligent persons, has of late cost us more than a Million *per Annum*. Secondly, By employing those hands, which for the greatest part are idle, it being reasonably supposed that there are at least 100000 Beggars or others who want a lawful Employment. Besides, almost all both Men, Women and Children that can but pull Tire or Tow from the Distaff, or such easie work, may be speedily employed and removed from being chargeable; so that there will be no fear of any Parish in the Kingdom being oppressed, or indeed charged, save only in case of extream Age, or Children in their Infancy, neither of which continues long. And Thirdly, Much land throughout *England* will be greatly improved by sowing Hemp, Flax, &c.

Obj. It may be objected, *That if the House be stockt with so many weak, ancient people and Children, this will cross the great Design, because they will not be capable to spin their quantity of Cloth, nor so fine.*

Answ. As to Fineness, it matters not, if but one in five be employed in it to an exquisite degree; for there is enough occasion for courser, for Sacking, Sails, Ticking, Common Table-Linnen, Sheets, &c. And as to Quantity, it may not be the less, because the most laborious thing in Spinning is turning of the Wheel.

Now for the better effecting a Design so profitable and honourable to the Kingdom, I have improved my small Genius to the utmost, notwithstanding I above all Projectors, have been most discouraged: And I know whoever will attempt any thing for publick Benefit, may expect these Three things. (The first is Necessary, the second Customary, and the third Diabolical) *viz.*, To be the Object of wise mens Censure, other mens Laughter, and if advantagious to himself, Envy implacable displeasure; of which last, I have had share to the highest degree that Revenge could express; and this too from a pretended loving Brother, a person of an honest Profession, and of as debauched a Conscience; yet I say, notwithstanding such discouragements, I have spent some time for Publick Advantage, *viz.* To find out an Expedient both for Ease and quick Dispatch, so as that the weak may do as much as the strong, and the strong much more than before.

As thus; One man may turn 50 Spinning Wheels, which shall serve 100 persons to Spin with at once; so that the Spinners shall have nothing to do but employ both hands to draw Tire from the Distaff. The Demonstration of the Infallibility of this Invention may be easily made when commanded.

As also, An Engine by which 50 men may, without striking a stroke, beat as much Hemp in one day, as 100 shall do in two days.

Besides the Advantage of this Spinning Engine in Ease, Its expedition will also be considerable; For if (as we doubt not) by this help Spinners can earn 9 d. *per* day, as easie as 6 d. *per* day without: By that means computing only 1000 Spinners in each of the 52 Work-houses, in one years time will be gained the Sum of 163968 Pounds and upwards, as by Calculation appears; and the Invention for Hemp-beating (which is the hardest work of all) will likewise in its kind be very considerably advantagious.

Obj. 2. But some will be ready to object, and tell us, That we talk of brave things, if words would do the Work; but where's the Money for the Building of such great Hospitals? and providing all Tools and Materials will cost many Thousand Pounds.

I confess here's the Knot, which seems knit by Magick Art; but if it can be untied without cutting or breaking the Thread, then I hope our Proposals will not be rejected.

Answ. To this therefore I humbly Answer, That it may be done by a County-Charge, with as much Satisfaction, Pleasure and Advantage, as to part with 5 l. to prevent paying 50 s. *per An.*, which I think no wise people will judge to be an hard Bargain; especially if they consider the other vast profit to the Nation, and that thereby they purchase (in the Country) 50 s. *per Annum* more by improvement of their Lands for Hemp or Flax.---As thus;

Suppose every Parish, one with another, throughout the Nation, relieves as many poor People, Beggars, &c. as doth amount to 12 d. in the Pound, so that every 100 l. *per Annum*, pays 5l. *per Annum* to the poor; Now if every 100 l. *per Annum*, pay 5 l. towards Building such Hospital, then whereas more than half their poor consists of Children, Women, and decrepit weak persons, unfit for any other Employment, but such as may fitly be removed to this Hospital; it follows, more than half their Charge will for the future be abated; yea, many Parishes have scarce any poor to provide for.

Wherefore as for raising Money, we will take our measures thus; In *England* there are commonly accounted 9725 Parishes, and 52 Counties; so that one with another, there are 187 Parishes to each County, and each Parish supposed to be worth 1500 l. *per Annum* (some more, some less) at the Rate of 12 d. *per* Pound, it will amount to the Sum of 14025 l. in each County, which undoubtedly will compleat the House and Materials.

Obj. 3. But this Method will not hold, because one County hath not so many Parishes as another.

Answ. It matters not; Let each County build proportionally to their Money as it will arise at 12 d. *per* Pound, we doubt not but it will be sufficient.

Obj. 4. It may further be Objected as impossible, That the Spinning Engine should turn to account, because as oft as one Spinner has occasion to stop, all the rest must be idle; and again, since every Wheel hath its motion alike, and several Spinners work some faster, some slower, therefore all considered, this Project will make but a Confusion.

Answ. To this I reply; Any one may stop, and the rest work on, and also may vary the motion of each Spinning Instrument, so as the nimblest and the slowest may have their desire: Nor may these Instruments be contemned, since they are as cheap as the other, and so ordered that the Spinners may sit or stand when they please; which doubtless will be a good conveniency.

The Invention of these Engines is wholly mine, and if they prove effectual, I hope I shall not be deprived of receiving some benefit thereof; because I am so free, as in effect to discover it beforehand. However, I submit to what the Pleasure of Authority shall allow; And to the intent these Hospitals may never fail of encouragement, that the Invention may be for ever secured to them, and prohibited to all others, so that the same may be improved only for their benefit, and private persons not take the advantage thereof to the prejudice of this our pious and necessary Design: I doubt not but many will say, Tush! this is easie; any body may invent such things as these.---Thus the Industry of one is gratified with the contempt of others: Howbeit I leave it with all humble submission to the grave Wisdom aforesaid, to consider,

1. Whether these great Hospitals may not become Nurseries for bringing up all poor peoples Children to Industry, and how by a Methodical Government every one may be so encouraged, that one striving to excel the rest, in very short time, the finest Linnen may be made at home upon far better terms than what comes from beyond the Seas; and whether there be not a probability, if the Engines take, that we may come to transport Linnen upon as good terms as other Nations, since Flax and Hemp may here be as plentifully produced as in any other Countrey.

2. Whether this great and profitable Trade may not be managed for the most part by those who at present are a burden; so that those which before were industrious, may follow their former employments, and so no want of People for Husbandry, *&c.*

Obj. 5. But what shall we do for Weavers?

Answ. I propose it to consideration, whether it might not be a more Christian and effectual course to suppress notorious Malefactors (except only in cases of Treason and Murder) to condemn them hither for life or years, where they may be serviceable to turn Wheels, fit Tier to the Distaffs, reel Yarn, swingle or hitchel Hemp or Flax, Weave, *&c.* which an ordinary Ingenuity may learn in few days, rather than to send them out with a Brand to commit fresh Villanies, or transport them, whence they presently return: And this the rather to be heeded, for that Foreign Plantations have now so little occasions for them, that Merchants refuse to take them off the Sheriffes hands, without being paid for their Passage; so that above 80 Convicts in *Newgate* lately obtained a General Pardon on that very score, because they knew not what to do with them: Besides, how many overstockt Trades are there that complain for want of Trade, *&c.* Those may quickly learn to weave, and never fear an employ.

Obj 6. But as to Convicts brought hither, it will be Objected, That they must be kept more secure, lest they escape and do Mischief.

Answ. They may be secured well enough, and those that turn the Wheel, *&c.* may be separated by an Iron Grate from the rest:---And here by the way, the pious wisdom of the City of *London* may find out a means, whereby all those Impudent Night-walkers, and Nurses of Debauchery may be wholly removed, which at present are a destruction both to the Estates, Bodies and Souls of many Hundreds, and cannot be reclaimed by ordinary *Bridewels*, because their Labour there is only a punishment, and turns not to advantage, to keep them there all their days, or at least until they marry, and keep within doors.

Obj. 7. Some may imagine an inconvenience in sending so many people from all parts of the County to one place, and say, *Why were it not better to build many little Work-Houses rather than one great one?*

Answ. I Answer, By no means; for then we shall miss one great and chief Design, *viz.* the maintenance of good Government; by which the whole Family may be instructed in good Manners both towards God and Man; only as some Counties are greater, more populous, *&c.* they may have more or less proportionably.

Obj. 8. There still remains one Objection; and that is, *What shall we do for Hemp and Flax?*

Answ. To which I Answer, That Hemp or Flax (one or the other) may plentifully be had in every County of *England*: Take *Sussex* as an example; any indifferent good Land, Chalky, *&c.* from the foot of the *Downes* to the Sea-side, with double Folding or Dunging, and twice Plowing, will produce Hemp in abundance; yet though their Land be rich enough, dry, *&c.* it will not produce good Flax: But to supply that, many Thousand Acres of the *Wild* of *Sussex*, will produce Crops of Flax, worth some four, some five, some six Pounds an Acre, and that kind for Hemp, as aforesaid, worth as much. Besides, for encouraging the Planting the same at home, it may be convenient to lay an Imposition of Four or Five Shillings in the Pound, or upwards, upon all Hemp, Thread, Cordage, or Linnen Imported from Foreign parts; by means whereof, we may raise it at home cheaper than buy them abroad, and then everybody will Plant Hemp and Flax abundantly, as a thing of course, enriching those that promote it.

But why 4 or 5 Counties should (as some have proposed) enjoy this great Wealth and Advantage of promoting the Linnen Manufactory and Improvement of Lands, and not the rest, I cannot understand; nor for what reason so many people should be drain'd out of all the Nation into four or five Midland Counties, since those Counties next adjoining to the Sea, ought to be kept most populous.

But to what purpose should so much Hemp be planted?

I Answer, Hemp is of greater strength than Flax, therefore of more excellent use for great advantage, as Cables, Ropes, and all kinds of Cordage, Sails, Sacking, *&c.* As also Thread for all Nets for Fishery; for which, and other purposes, we now buy yearly several hundred Thousand Pounds worth from beyond the Seas; so that without controversie, there's as much Hemp to be used as Flax, and consequently the Hemp-Mill may be as useful as the Spinning-Instrument.

Having, we hope, satisfactorily Answered all Material Objections against the main Body of this Design, it remains to consider of the Order and Method of Governing these great Families or Corporations; but the Particulars thereof we leave to the deeper Wisdom and judicious Care of Authority; only in general propose,

1. That for the better encouragement and support of so many poor people labouring in so profitable a Manufactory, each Alms-house be provided with and allowed a publick Granary, for stocking themselves with Corn when it is cheapest, against the time of Dearth; a priviledge we conceive not to be so properly advisable for other Companies or Handicrafts (as some propose and desire) because that would always keep Corn too cheap, and consequently undo the Tenant, or Landlord, or both: For what makes Wheat as often at 4s. a Bushel (under which it is known the Farmer cannot live) as at 2 s. 6 d. but because all people in the Nation that have occasion, must buy of the Land-Occupiers at the same time when it is scarce? But by such general Granaries the hopes of 4 s. *per* Bushel will be banisht the Markets; but in our case painful Husbandry, that ancient Employment may well allow Granaries, both because this Manufactory and Design eases their Charge to the poor, and is of more advantage to the Publick, than some 20 Trades besides; and particularly, because it helps to improve their Lands by Flax and Hemp, that now they need not so much relie upon Corn for raising their Rent: Besides, if other other overstockt Trades want Bread, let them quit their Station, and come to Weaving, and then they may enjoy the benefit of these Granaries, also.

2. That the Maiden-Children brought up in this Corporation, may after they attain to the Age of 15 Years, or other fit time, be permitted to go forth to Service to learn good Huswifry, and the Lads to Husbandry or Trades, if they think fit; nor will there be need of so great caution to prevent the Marriages of the meaner sort, since now the Parishes need not so much fear a Charge, knowing a means how to employ all their Children as fast as they come to be five or six Years old; nor can a young man have better choice for a Wife than here, amongst so many, all bred up industriously under strict Discipline, and in a way to live; And therefore this Method will be so far from causing any depopulation, that it may encrease our Inhabitants; and the more, the better, since we know how to dispose of them in such laudable Employments: Moreover, hereby the distracting cares of poor honest Parents, oft occasioned by a foresight of their incapacity to provide for their Children, will be removed; so that they may pass their time in peace, knowing that a good honest comfortable Employment and Education is provided for their Children, and their Childrens Children; nor may this less remove the Temptations both in Parents and Children, which cause them to be guilty of such Misdemeanors as sometimes bring them to the Gallows; so that the Expedients offered for the accomplishing this Manufactory, will produce a happy change in the whole Nation, *viz.* no more want of Work or Bread for the poor, no more Parishes oppressed, no more Beggars, a great abatement of Felons, Thieves, Cheats, Nurses of Debauchery, *&c.* many Lives preserved, and (which is an hundred thousand times more than all the rest) many Souls saved: Much more might be said in this case, to set forth the excellence of this Design, but I leave it as a work more deserving the skill of the most Learned and Godly Divine, and shall only add,

In order to that last mentioned incomparable end, and for the better Education and Instruction of this great Family, That there may be placed in each House an Able, Honest, Godly Minister, of a good, peaceable, kind disposition and exemplary Conversation; that so no means may be wanting for promoting Gods Glory and their Edification: To which purpose, on Holidays and other spare times, all or the most docible part of the People train'd up here, may likewise be taught to read, *&c.*

So may our most Great Prince, and Worthy Senators become further Instruments for the Nations Prosperity, and the Salvation of many Souls: Thus may the Blessing of Heaven crown all their Honourable Enterprizes and Prudent Counsels with most prosperous Success, which that it may be so, is the hearty Desire of

Your most Humble, Obedient and Faithful

Subject and Servant,

R. H.

FINIS.

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POSTSCRIPT

Having received the princely Approbation of that most Judicious and publick spirited Promoter of *Englands* Weal and Prosperity, and all such Ingenuites as tend to general Good, and whole Noble Actions have given matchless proofs of his great zeal thereunto, *viz.* His Illustrious Highness Prince *Rupert* who having condescended to peruse the preceeding Proposals, was pleas'd to Honour me with his Approvement, Advice, and Encouragement therein; Judging it necessary, that I should first offer the same to His Majesties Consideration; and in order thereunto, did Introduce me to His Royal Presence, who was Graciously pleas'd to order me to deliver it to one of His Secretaries of State, to the intent he might peruse it, and bring in his Report thereof; whereupon I carried it to Mr. Secretary *Coventry*, who gave his Approbation

thereof to His Majesty at the Council Table, where it pass'd without any obstruction:

Which gave me the greater Encouragement to put the said Proposals in Print, for the deliberate Perusal, and grave Consideration of both Houses of Parliament; who, I humbly conceive, are as greatly concern'd to encourage all such humble Endeavours, tending to such General Wealth and Honour of the whole Nation.

And for as much as I have the opportunity, by reason of the Adjournments of Parliament since *Whitsuntide* last, immediately after which, my Proposals came out of the Press, I thought it might not be superfluous to add a few Lines for the Answering some further Objections, but first shall add a few Words to the Answer already given to the second.

Obj. pag. 5. where I say, *That the laying out of 5 l. for the Building of Working Alms-Houses, will purchase 50 s. per Annum for ever;* Whereas I now find,

That it will purchase 20 l. *per Annum* in most Parishes; as may thus appear.

Suppose every Farm worth 100 l. *per Ann.* Plant but Eight Acres of Flax or Hemp, and that worth 7, 6, or 5 l. *per Acre*, which last sum is the least that may be expected from good Land to be worth, as it stands on the Ground; wherefore to avoid mistakes, we will take our measures from 5 l. *per Acre.* 05-00-00

For Rent we will Deduct 20 s. for Seed. 20 s. and for Plowing, Sowing, and Harrowing 10 s. In all--- 02.10.00

Which Deducted out of 5 l. there remains clear Profit for one Acre of Land--- 02.10.00

So that eight Acres, at the least value must yield clear Profit, all Charges Deducted--- 20.00.00

To which add 2 l. 10 s. which will be saved out of the Poors Book, and it makes--- 22.10.00

So that a farm which was worth 100 l. *per Ann.* will by this Expedient, be worth Six score and Two pounds and Ten Shillings *per Ann.*; and to be Sold, will yield 450 l. more than before.

Which is a plain Demonstration, that the laying out of 5 l. towards the building and furnishing these Hospitals, will purchase above 20l. *per Ann.* or bring in 450 l. And this is the lowest Calculation that may be made of the Profits and Advantages that may arise by Planting of Hemp, and Flax, if well Husbanded.

And most true it is, there's no one Manufactory in *England* so generally profitable as this may be made, especially to be raised from Land, with so little hurt done to the same, as may be Demonstrated thus;

Suppose the Crop of one Acre, as it stands on the Ground to be worth 7 l. (which is a very moderate supposition.) This Seven Pounds worth being well Drest fit for Spinners, may be worth 14 l. This Fourteen Pounds worth being well Spun and made into good Cloth, may be worth from 40 l. to 60 l. Yea I have been inform'd beyond the Seas, that the Cloth which might be made of one Acre of Flax well Drest and well Spun, might be worth more than a 100 l.

Let us not forget, that we have idle hands enough in our Nation to perfect this most profitable Improvement; and also, that little more than half the Money which in one year goes out of the Nation for Linnen, will pay for accomplishing the

same: Nay, if the thing were rightly considered, it might be easily Demonstrated, That the Money which goes out of the Nation for Linnen in one year, will pay for making of all the Cloth that may be made in 20 years; although in every year of that twenty, there be as much made, as now we buy a Year of other Nations: As thus;

Money being kept at home within the Body of the Nation, is (as it hath no less aptly, than frequently been resembled) like the Blood in its Circulation in the Body of Man, which is not the less for its perpetual Motion; but the whole Body thereby the better supplied, strengthened, and nourished in every Part. So it is with our Money; For, suppose Twelve hundred Thousand pounds goes out of the Nation in one year (which, some say, is much more) This never returns again; But if the same sum be paid for making so much Cloth at home, there's not one Groat the less at the years end; So that the very Money which pays for one years work, may pay for two years, and consequently for 20 years, and yet pass through all necessary Trades, and as well to the land Occupiers, as any.

The 9th Obj. But possibly, your Engins for Expedition may fail, which if so, then notwithstanding, the Spinners, &c. may earn their own Food, yet there will be nothing towards the maintainance of good Government, which is the great thing you aimed at, whereby all persons who are brought into the Hospital, may be well Educated, and effectually Instructed in a Methodical way for expedition and advantage; Administering incouraging Rewards to the Ingenuous and Industrious, and Correction to those that deserve it, without which 'tis almost impossible to perfect your good design.

Ans. 'Tis very true: But first, I am confirm'd in my Judgement, that the riddance these Engins will make, cannot be less than what I have already proposed in *pag. the 5th.*

Secondly, Suppose the worst, *viz.* that the Engins fail; What then; If every 100 l. *per Ann.* in each County contribute 3d. *per Week*, which would undoubtedly be sufficient to maintain good Government amongst them? Nay, what, If for the better Incouragement, and more Comfortable maintainance of all the whole Family, six pence *per Week* be paid, it would amount but to 26 s. *per Ann.*, to be allow'd out of the Profits which each 100 l. *per Ann.* will reap thereby; which according to our lowest Calculation, is not less than 22 l. 10 s. a year; And I hope the great wisdom of the Nation will not think it too much to part with 5 l. for the Building these Hospitals, and after they are built, to allow 26 s. *per Ann.* for the maintainance of good Government, *&c.* since by so doing, the whole Nation is enrich'd thereby: The truth is, these Hospitals and Government is so Essential, that the thing cannot be brought to pass without them; for whatever we may promise our selves; yet the Work is otherwise as unlikely to be effected, as a great Multitude of unhappy Scholars to learn their Books, where there is neither Master nor Tutor, to Rule, Teach, or Govern.

And who knows, but in very few Ages, each Hospital may have a plentiful Revenue bestow'd thereon: For what can be a fitter object for the Charity of such well disposed People, who out of their Abundance, may please to leave a Legacy behind them for Pious and Charitable uses, seeing here it will ever be employ'd to the comfort of distressed Widows; the Maintainance and good Education of Fatherless Children; The Feeding the Hungry, Cloathing the Naked, *&c.* yea, the Posterity of the Donor, (according to the Revolutions of humane things) and the Posterity of his Relations, may reap such benefit by these deeds of Charity, as that they may be ever preserved from Extremity.

Or, why should we think it too much out of 100 l. *per Ann.* to cast 5 l. a year into the Treasury of this House, to be scatter'd amongst the Poor; since it is but a fourth part of what we gain by them: By this means, I am confident the Poor of each Parish would be so few, that there would be scarce enow to eat the spare Meat that comes from other mens Tables: Howbeit, it were good, that a Law were made, that every person that gives any Almes to any idle Beggars, or wandring People, (the Poor of their own Parish only excepted) should forfeit 5 l. to the Treasurer of the Hospital of that County in which they dwell, which would be no violation of the Precepts of Charity, but an effectual expedient to restrain all Beggars and idle people for the future.

If we believe (as I hope we all do) that the happiness of a Nation hath its dependance on the good Will and Pleasure of God Almighty, and that the more we please him, the greater Blessings we may receive from him. Let it be considered, How acceptable an Offering it would be to the most High, when by so pious an Act of Our Gracious King and Parliament, together with the free Will Offerings of all able godly disposed people, so many Thousands, yea Thousands of Thousands, in process of time, may be restrained, and prevented from living in that broad way of Idleness and Lewdness, in which is all manner of Debauchery. And now by this Reformation, from Generation to Generation, may become attentive hearers of his Holy Word, which is the most Infallible Directory to bring them to Heaven.

Obj: You talk of great Profits made of Flax in other Countries: But some are of the Opinion, That to raise the Linnen Manufactory here to that degree, is utterly Impracticable; as well, because our Domestick Flax is not so good as that which comes from beyond the Seas; as also, because our people cannot work it so well.

Answ. This Objection, (which some are pleas'd to think very considerable) consists of two Branches: The first is an Exception to the goodness of our Flax; The second, to the Skill and Dexterity of our People.

As for the first; *Whether ours be as good as Outlandish Flax?* It must be considered, and cannot be denied, but, that the far greatest part of the Flax which we Import from beyond the Seas, is *East-Country Flax*, I say, the far *greatest* part, ten to one in proportion; Now I am credibly informed by several well experienced Flax-Men (who have dealt in both Sorts) That *English Flax is full as good*, to all intents, as this *East-Country Flax*, and do not doubt, but it will appear so upon Examination; So that the Objection, as in Comparison with such *East-Country Flax*, vanishes; of which yet, (although we have but little Cloth made in *England*) there is, (as I am inform'd) several Hundred Thousand Pounds worth yearly Imported.

But then, as to *Dutch Flax*, indeed the Case is somewhat more difficult: It being a common opinion, that their Flax, in its nature, is better for making of Fine Cloth, than ours generally is: But even this is denied by persons of great Judgement and Experience, who affirm, that much Land in *England* may produce as kind Flax, to the full: Besides, the *Dutch Flax* Imported, is but little, and comparatively Inconsiderable; as is indeed the Use and Consumption of very Fine Cloth, in respect of the vast quantities of Course and Ordinary Cloth; so that, if the Trade be Encouraged, we need not fear, but we may find ground enough in *England*, fit to produce as excellent Flax as any now brought from *Holland*, I mean, *so much* as we have occasion for; And consequently, may make as good Linnen; *If we do not spoil it in working*: Which is the second Charge of the Objection.

To which I Answer, That I have credibly been inform'd by some persons, that they have, and can now already make as good Cloth here, as that which we commonly Buy for 5, 6, 7, or 8 s. *per* Ell: And why should not our people, when they find the Manufactory Incouraged, and especially by the Emulation and desires to out-vie each other in good Work-manship in these publick Working Alms-Houses; Why, I say, May we not arrive at as great Perfection in the Mystery as any people in the World? The *English* once had the Reputation of the only excellent Artificers for Wollen Cloth; other Nations knew nothing, or very little of it; yet now we find, by unhappy experience, they equal, if not exceed us therein: Why may we not retaliate, and out-strip them in another Mystery? Or, Why should we more scandal our selves with suggestions of Dullness and Indocility, than our Neighbours.

But to give more full satisfaction, That this Manufactory, especially that part which is most advantagious to the Nation, as being most Consumptive of our Hemp and Flax, and most promoting Trade and Employment for the Poor; which indeed is common and ordinary Cloth, of which there is a Thousand Ells to one Transported into all His Majesties Plantations.

That this I say is suddainly to be perfected, I cannot but give a signal Instance, from the laudable practice and experience of that worthy Gentleman, Mr. *Tho. Firmin*, Citizen of *London*, who at this time Implies in his House (built for that

purpose) several Flax-men, *Weavers*, &c. And also above 600 Spinners abroad. This Judicious person shew'd me more than 500 l. worth of very good substantial Cloth, of his own working. And in truth, I have convers'd with many; but never found any man so able and free to resolve all doubts in this case; who told me for a Truth, that a Child of 5 or 6 years old, that had its Health, and a moderate Apprehension, might be taught in 6 Weeks to earn its living in Spinning; Which, if so, as from the Veracity and Experience of the Relator, I have no reason to doubt. It is most plain, that the most profitable part of this Manufactory may be both easily and speedily accomplish'd, and perfected, to the happy Reformation of many Thousands, who now live by Begging, &c. giving scarce any thing for whatever they Eat, Drink, or Wear.

Besides, let it be considered, How greatly this Manufactory will quicken and revive our decayed Markets and dying Trade, especially, that of Husbandry; which may easily be demonstred, thus;

As the Case now stands, every Family in the Nation either directly or indirectly, send their Money every year to the *Drapers* for Linnen, the *Drapers* they pay it to the Merchants, and away it goes every year beyond Sea, and never returns; whereby our Wealth is made a Prey to other Nations, whose Poor are employ'd and maintain'd thereby, whilst in the mean time our Nation is in a Consumption, our Poor live by Begging, Poverty increases, and our Lands lye unimproved, for want of this Manufactory.

But now under this Reformation, every Family that sends their Money to the *Drapers*, the *Draper* sends it to the Masters of these *Hospitals*, and they scatter it amongst all the Trades in the Nation; especially to the Farmers, and Tillers of Land, ready Money for Hemp and Flax; ready Money for Corn and Fat Cattle of all sorts; and the like for Butter and Cheese, or any thing they have to spare: And all this, or the greatest part, from those who before lay a Begging at their Doors, or were maintained by Contribution; and now, the more people Increase, the better it will be for the whole Nation: And doubtless, if an Imposition sufficient were laid on Foreign Linnen, Hemp and Flax, and Incouragement due to ingenious and industrious people given, (as in this Case, the Nation might well afford) then to be sure, our *Hospitals* would be suddenly stock'd with curious Artists, by which our new Manufactory would speedily be brought to perfection.

'Tis worth consideration also, how great an Ornament, besides the great Wealth these *Hospitals* would be to His Majesties Kingdom, and how much they would add to the Trade, Wealth, and greatness of those Towns near which they are erected.

13. Obj. *You talk much of Charity, Let Charity begin at home with good Husbandry; If this course be taken, we shall pay dearer for Linnen, than now we do, and it must needs be best Husbandry to Buy where we may have it Cheapest.*

Answ. If we send our Money beyond-Sea for what we want, then the more we Buy, the less Money we have to pay, which causes Scarcity of Money, and also, want of Trade, whereby to get more; but if we bestow our Money for Commodities made at home, our Money and Trade will continually Increase; and though for a little while we pay somewhat more, yet it is easier to part with 9 d. when Money and Trade are plenty and increasing, than to part with 6 d. when Money and Trade is both wanting; especially, seeing the 9 d. remains at home, and returns again, but the 6 d. is carried into another Nation, and lost irrecoverably.

14. Obj. *In pag. 5. you suggest, That by your Engin, one Spinner may earn 9 d. as easily as 6 d. without it; But how can that be? since every Spinner now, may have a wheel to turn with her foot, and so have both hands at liberty, as well as with your Engins: And again, its a more usual fault to over-twist the thred, than to do it too slack; therefore no need of help to turn the wheel.*

Answ. To this I Answer, First, That the thing we chiefly design, is to employ and maintain such as cannot any other way earn half their living by any other Employ, so that more than half the Spinners would be very young, and of little strength,

and consequently to imploy one foot all the time they Spin, will be very tiresome; nay, the strongest body cannot do it, without easing the same, neither can they imploy both hands so freely, as when they are discharged of that burthen, or incumbrance.

As for Example: Two men of equal strength, skill, and nimbleness in all points, were to run a long Race, and one of them must carry such a weight in his hand, as is more tiresome to him than the motion of his Legs, and oft-times, must ease the Burthen with his foot: May not the other, who hath all his Limbs free, be at the end of the Race and half-way back again as soon, and more easily than this can get to the end of the Race. Possibly some may say, *This Simile is not parallel, and that I make it better on my side than it is.* To which I say, for the Resolution of this Question, Do but inquire of those that Spin, which of the Two is most tiresome, The turning of the Wheel, (either by the Foot or Hand, no matter which) or the other part of the Work. I have almost as often ask'd the Question, as I see any a Spinning (since I invented this Engin) and the Answer has always been, The turning of the Wheel; although they imploy both hand and foot by turnes to do it: Besides, it is burthensome, and also injurious to the body; especially for youth, which are growing, to be from Morning till Evening, always sitting.

Secondly, Although it be true, *That over-twisting the Thred is commonly a fault, rather than slack twisting the same;* yet the Cause of this fault is, that they do not draw the Thred fast enough: But to the better advantage, this will be easily cured, for now all the aforesaid inconveniencies being removed, which render the Work most burthensome; they may for their ease stand or sit, when, and as often as they please, and freely imploy both hands from morning to evening, much more easily than they could one hand before; and the faster they draw the Thred from the Distaff, the more they Spin, with less danger of over-twisting the same; so that I do not know, but those that are some-time used to this easie way, may Spin as much in one day, as now in two.

Furthermore, these Spinning Instruments may in like manner be for Expedition very serviceable for Spinning of Wollen, I mean Serges, Worsted, Camlets, and Stockings, which being well made, are much more to be encouraged than Hair and Silk, these being Foreign Commodities, the other of our own Growth, especially, since it is so, that our home Markets for Wool, and Foreign Markets for our Cloth grow worse and worse, and in the opinion of most, scarce ever to be recovered; which, if so, it must needs be the best Husbandry to promote such Manufactories, as may be for the Consumption of our own Materials.

Obj. If you intend these Hospitals for the Employment of such as have Families of their own to maintain, the business will be confused and Impracticable.

Answ. Possibly so, at least, in some respects and circumstances; but that was never intended, the main design of these Hospitals being only for the relief of all oppressed Parents, families, and Parishes, by taking off their young Children, and single people, who have neither Habitation, nor Parish willing to receive them, there to be comfortably maintain'd, well educated and instructed in all good manners towards God and Man; Nor are any of them to be confin'd to this House longer than untill they can well earn their Livings by other means; unless it be such as are committed as persons deserving perpetual or temporary Confinement, which is far better than to Hang or Transport, except it be for Capital Crimes.

The second Benefit aimed at, is the procuring the most Fine and curious Cloth, as well as quantities sufficient of Courser, for Domestick and Foreign Trade, to be obtained with great expedition: For so it is, That when so many are imploy'd in sight of each other (especially, where encouragement is given, and good Discipline maintain'd) the strife of all, both small and great, will be to excell each other, both in quantity and curiosity of Work.

Obj. This Manufactory being thus encouraged, a considerable part of His Majesties Revenue now arising by Custom for Linnen Cloth will be diminished.

Answ. I humbly Answer, That the same may be easily compensated another way, it being (with all submission) conceived, That it would be happy for this Kingdom, if an Imposition of 12 d. *per* quart more than now is, were to be paid for all *French-Wine* and Brandy; As also 5 s. in the Pound for all Hemp, Flax, and Linnen, that is Imported.

'Tis possible some may suppose, that my being thus intent and tedious, is only an itch of Fame; but I can justly assure the World, I am so far from any such contemptible Vanity, That I am rather a beggar for the Poor and Distressed, and for their sakes, would imitate the importunate Widow, in the 18th of St. *Luke's* Gospel, who obtain'd her request meerly for the sake of her Importunity; only this difference there is, Her suit was for Revenge, Mine for an Act of Charity; she made her suit to such a Judge as neither feared God, nor regarded man; but my humble, though earnest suit is, To the Most *Christian King*, a *Defender of the Faith*; as also to the Great Wisdom of a *Christian Nation*, all which strengthens my hopes, that I shall not be more unfortunate than was that importunate Widow.

And why should I doubt it, since it is so, that even an unjust and ungodly Judge will redress the Grievances of the Oppressed, shall not the Best and Most Christian Government exercise its power, for suppressing and reforming intollerable Evils, Oppressions, and Disorders, seeing the Welfare and Prosperity of the whole Nation is as it were Intail'd to such an Act of Justice and Mercy. It is said of Faith, Hope, and Charity, That the greatest of these is Charity; yes, if a Man had all Faith, and all Hope, (both which are most excellent and necessary) yet it availeth nothing, if Charity be wanting. And since 'tis a Maxim, *That the best of Men cannot be Uncharitable*: I cheerfully hope, that my humble Proposals for an Act of Charity, will not be contemn'd by our Greatest Worthies, since now in our view, the Wealth and Prosperity of the Nation, is in pursuit of the same.

I would not flatter my self or others, but do confidently believe, That what with the Decrease of Poor People, The happy Reformation, and total Restriction of Beggars, Vagrants, Nurses of Debauchery, *&c.* The yearly increase of Ten or Twelve Hundred Thousand Pounds, which now will be kept at home, that before went beyond the Seas for Linnen; The great Improvement of Lands; The Exportation of Linnen of our own growth, *&c.* The worth and advantage of the whole cannot amount to less than Two or three Millions Sterling, *per Annum*, to the Nation: and over and above many lives preserved, and (with Gods blessing on the means) many souls saved; which, if so, certainly it will be the best Bargain and happiest that ever the Nation made, all circumstances considered; Because where so much Money is disburs'd as will compass this great Wealth (without which it is almost impossible to be attain'd,) our Posterity will have it for nothing; yea, the present Inhabitants have their Purchase Money still amongst themselves, as it were, *in their own Sacks with their Corn*, seeing we Buy not this profitable Expedient of other Nations; which, if we were obliged to do, to be sure they would make us pay *dearly* for it.

But suppose neither of these Advantages were to be reap'd for our Money, only the Poor provided for, and Reformation of Vagrants accomplish'd, Must we do nothing for Charity? Suppose any Opposers of this Design, were worth 5000 l. or 10000 l. *per Ann.* a piece, Can they be certain, that none of their Posterity may within 200 years come to Poverty? Why then should they be unwilling now to contribute freely, seeing the Method proposed, may secure both Rich and Poor from Extremity? And how dishonourable is it to this Kingdom, that so fruitful a Soil as *England*, which by the Industry of its most unuseful Inhabitants, might so easily become the Garden of Europe, should, by their sloth and obstinacy, lie unimproved? How many Hundred Thousand Beggars, Vagrants, Drones, Nurses of Debauchery, *&c.* who are not only a Dishonour, but a great Disadvantage to the Nation, living in continual sinful Practices against the Laws of God and good Government, depriving themselves of all means of Religious and Civil Education, to the great danger of their own Souls; Ill Example of others; and destruction of their Posterity, being neither serviceable to the Publick, nor capable of raising themselves to any better condition, might by this Method, be wholly reform'd, or prevented?

Wherefore upon these several *weighty* considerations, and for that, besides the *Princely* Encouragement before-mentioned, I have had the Approbation of that great lover of Ingenuity, The Right Honourable, the Lord Viscount *Brouncker*, President of the *Royal Society*, who was pleas'd to peruse my Proposals, and express his Sentiments very

favourably thereupon; As also having received by letter some considerable and pressing Incitements, to proceed from an Eminent publick spirited Divine, the Reverend, Dr. *John Beale*, one of His Majesties Chaplains, and a Member of the said *Royal Society*. I am therefore embolden'd, particularly to entreat the *Christian* consideration of the most *grave and pious Divines*, and all the Honourable and Ingenious Associates of that *August Society* in this matter, and accordingly, to give their Encouragement, Approbation, and Assistance; or otherwise to discover my mistakes, and rectifie any false Measures, which through Inadvertency, or over-zeal, to the design I may have committed, by publishing some more *Feazible Methods* from their better improved Reason, whereby I shall at once be confuted and instructed; and though failing in the means, shall not miss of my desired End, viz. *The Glory of God, the Prosperity of the Nation, and the Happy Reformation of many thousands, who are a dishonour to Both.*

FINIS.