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LETTERS

ON THE

Present State of the Jewish Poor

IN THE

METROPOLIS;

WITH

PROPOSITIONS FOR AMELIORATING
THEIR CONDITION,

BY

Improving the Morals of the Youth of both Sexes,

AND

BY RENDERING THEIR LABOUR USEFUL AND
PRODUCTIVE IN A GREATER DEGREE

TO

Themselves and to the Nation.

L. K...

London :

Printed by T. Maiden, Sherbourns Lane,

For W. J. and J. RICHARDSON, Royal Exchange.

1802.

P R E F A C E.

TH E subject of the following sheets cannot fail to arrest the attention of those of every religious persuasion, who feel an interest in such arrangements as shall tend to improve the habits and better the condition of the lower classes of society: and although these Letters were not originally intended for publication, yet now that a Petition lies before the House of Commons for the purposes stated in them, it is thought expedient that the Public should be in possession of those important facts, which, by evincing their necessity, have given rise to the Propositions they contain.

For several centuries past, a certain proportion of the Jewish Nation has found an asylum in England, from whence many generations have sprung, the chief part of whom (the present objects of attention) have been born in England, and mingle with the community at large as subjects of His Majesty. They know no other country, and can only be interested in the prosperity of *this, their native land.*

If peculiar circumstances, connected with the religious ritual of the Jews, have obstructed that progress in those useful mechanical arts which render the labour of man beneficial to the State, the efforts which are now using to remove such obstructions (in the only way in which it is possible to effect the object) it is humbly hoped will obtain the approbation, and secure the good wishes, of every friend to morality, and every lover of his country.

To the patriot and philanthropist it must ever be a desideratum to support those measures which shall convert idleness into industry, and diffuse comfort and happiness, by opening new sources
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of productive labour to a forlorn class of the community, whose sphere of action has hitherto been too narrow to render their exertions either useful to themselves, or beneficial to the country.

The legislative measure which is speedily to be submitted to Parliament has this object only in view; an object which at all times has been a most important desideratum; but which of late years has become more pressing and necessary, in consequence of the increase of population among the Jews who are Natives of this Kingdom.

While the riches of the State are supposed to arise from the extent of its population, this position can only be conceded under circumstances where the arrangements of Government are so wisely ordered as to render the labour of every class of the community as productive as possible, by the removal of every obstruction that can tend in the smallest degree to abridge it.

On these general political grounds the attempt that is now made to render the Poor of the
Jewish

Jewish community equally useful with other classes of society, cannot, surely, fail of success, as far as the good wishes and influence of every friend to the prosperity of the country can extend.

Their situation is at present truly deplorable : and their rapid increase, without those previous arrangements which have become necessary to open new sources of employment for the rising generation, must, to those who have, or will attentively consider the subject, excite no inconsiderable degree of alarm.

The crisis has arrived when some radical cure has become indispensably necessary ; and every individual of the Jewish community is interested, as well as the Public at large, in its completion.

As far as it regards the former, *interest* appears to be intimately connected with *duty*.

The measure which has been proposed, when it receives the sanction of the Legislature, will comprehend a system of jurisprudential ethics of incalculable value in promoting the cause of virtue
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and humanity; since its object is to educate the young (who have heretofore been neglected) to *useful industry*; to restore health to the sick, so as to render them useful to themselves and to the community; and finally, to establish an asylum for old age and infirmity; all which blessings are to be secured to the Jewish community by a moderate assessment under legislative authority.

The number of poor (who according to the present order of things must rapidly increase) will, under the proposed system, gradually diminish, as the means of subsistence are augmented; and while it checks the increase of their burdens, which have been multiplied year after year, by lessening the calls of indigence, a change will be produced in the habits of the Jewish youth of both sexes, which must ultimately increase the wealth and the happiness of the community, arising from the increase of useful labour, and the fair earnings of productive industry.

LETTERS

LETTERS, &c.

DEAR SIR,

THE kind reception I experienced, and the candor with which you attended to the observations I had the pleasure of laying before you at your house some little time since, encourages me to request your consideration of some circumstances that strike me as essential for mature deliberation, in the forming any plan to ameliorate the state of the Jewish Poor.

From what I have seen of you on the above occasion added to your already established character, I am fully sensible that an apology for troubling you on so philanthropic a subject, would not only be unnecessary, but also very improper; I shall therefore proceed without farther preface.

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The Jewish nation has for ages past been the marked victim of superstitious and malicious prejudice. The reformation, however, which Europe has undergone in politics as well as religion during the two last centuries, has at length mollified religious rancour, and polished the manners of mankind; so that what originated in a spirit of mere toleration, is now from custom, considered as justice and matter of course. The Jew need not at present fear being expelled his residence in a general banishment of his nation, nor dread having his teeth drawn for attempting to withhold his property from the gripe of extortion;* throughout Europe (with a few exceptions) he may now rest in quiet, and pursue honest means of procuring a subsistence, and even of acquiring property in perfect safety.

But, however happy the state of the Jews may be in this country at this time, contrasted with those of Richard the First, John, and Edward the First, they are far from being looked on in a favourable or even a just light. Religious fury has indeed ceased, but political and national prejudices

* See *Anglia Judaica*, by Tovey.

prejudices still exist in no small degree ; and, notwithstanding the many very respectable names to be found among them, the word Jew is still deemed as an opprobrious epithet, invidiously made to imply usury or knavery, and is often too successfully employed in that sense.

Let us investigate whether there exists any cause for this prejudice, now that superstitious rancour is out of the question ; and if there be, let us examine its nature, and consider the means of its removal.

It is not (I assert it, I hope, impartially) that the Jew deserves this stigma from any natural inherent propensity he possesses to evil courses ; no, he is born a man, equal with every other, and his education no way creates such a disposition : with no other knowledge than that of the Pentateuch, or at most the Talmud and Rabbinical writings, he sets out in life ; and becomes positively the most faithful husband and tenderest father to be met with. Isolated in consequence of the Mosaic restrictions, which prevent him from intimate commixture with any but his own nation, he is

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habitually

habitually strict to the tenets of his religion. Ever having been the object of scorn or oppression, he can scarce rouse himself to the exertion of that spirit he naturally possesses; but the miseries of his brethren being incessantly before his eyes, he is extremely charitable, and proverbially commiserating.

This is in truth the character of the Jew; but circumstances have placed him heretofore in situations where absolute necessity has enforced his degenerating. The difficulty of procuring a livelihood in countries where he was denied the privilege of exercising any trade or manufacture, had driven him to the shift of money transactions. Now exchange and discounting business being almost the only one he was allowed to transact, it is no wonder that the already existing prejudices indiscriminately united the ideas of a Jew and a Usurer. As to the poorer part, it is a greater wonder how they could procure an honest pittance at all, than (oppressed as they were) that they should practise any petty knavery to get bread.

You

You will readily perceive, dear Sir, that these facts are principally applicable to the state of the Jews when in this country previous to their banishment by Edward the First, and for some time afterwards in other countries, where they lived combating the difficulties which prevented their advancement in society, as well from the restraints of their religion, as from the malignant effects of priestly hatred and mercantile jealousy.

It is in this happy island, where liberty sheds her mild irradiating influence, that they have flourished since their re-admission to the benefits of its equitable and tolerant government; and although much of the before-mentioned prejudice is *even here* still prevalent, yet, as it is daily discovered to be misapplied, and as liberality of sentiment becomes more universal, it may reasonably be expected to be soon compleatly annihilated.

It is the constrained and deplorable state of their poor alone, that gives a shadow of a ground for its continuance; and when a plan shall be effectuated to ameliorate their condition and employments,

ployments, it will, I trust, utterly extinguish all invidious prepossession.

The Jewish nation in England is now a body of some magnitude; and although the laws of the realm are certainly sufficient for its management in common with every other class of subjects, yet it may probably require some peculiar regulations as to its internal and intrinsic government, on some points of which I shall hint as I proceed, without presuming too much on any expedient that may strike me as eligible; and it is with much diffidence that I enter on this part of the subject, but trust to your candor in considering it merely as a matter of investigation.

If I understand right, there exists somewhat of an agreement (but how or when I know not) on the part of the Jews to maintain their own poor; but whether there be such an agreement or not, the peculiarity of their religious rites and diet, which effectually shuts them out of Christian workhouses and hospitals, obliges them to provide for them among themselves. Until these last fifty years this was no great evil; their number
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being small, and the rich always within reach of the poor, whose wants were thus (although in a desultory way) relieved by the vestries, and the opulent individuals. The case is however, very different at present; they have greatly multiplied; both by propagation and importation; but property has not kept pace with this increase; the opulent are but few; and the middling class, although not so few, possess but little: the bulk of the nation, which comprehends a very numerous poor, it is that demands my utmost consideration.

Many and incessant are the applications for assistance from this class, on those who can any way afford to give it; but all that can be procured is never adequate to the present want, much less can it ward off the future: nor is there any prospect for the families bettering their state, since they have no regular trade whereby to earn a maintenance. The few means they follow, such as dealing in old clothes, &c. are daily becoming less productive, and at present they know no other.

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The infirm, the lame, the blind, and the helpless aged, are completely wretched; since the synagogue funds can afford them but a very scanty pittance, and they cannot take shelter in a Christian parish workhouse. The sick, indeed, are not quite destitute of medical aid, being looked to by the synagogues' appointments, or dispensaries; but what avails medicine, where nurses, bedding, and even food, are wanting?

The synagogue administration, with respect to the poor's aid, is (at least in the metropolis) very inadequate as to funds, and ill-directed as to manner; nor is either evil easily remedied.

The class denominated German Jews (to whom I at present confine myself) constitute the greatest body, and have comparatively the fewest rich, and the largest number of poor among them. They are divided into three congregations in the city, and a fourth, lately arisen, in the Strand; that in Fenchurch-street comprising a small number of opulent members, with very few poor; the one in Leadenhall-street, with very few rich, and mostly middling persons and poor; while the

Great Synagogue in Duke's Place has the most of all classes; but its poor are not only very numerous, but altogether unlimited, as all strangers are customarily considered as attached to this congregation.

The funds in all these synagogues are raised by the rent every person pays for his seat in that which he frequents, together with the offerings made on festivals and particular occasions; and as they have no direct means of enforcing payment, a great deal of this income is very uncertain.

These synagogues are, generally speaking, independent of each other, and of course involve distinct interests. All their reliefs to the poor are dispensed in money, at the discretion of the overseers, under some limitation, excepting some stated and trifling stipends, fixed by the vestries to a specific list; and a distribution of passover cakes during the week of that festival: they likewise defray the charges of burials.

It is very evident that this relief is far short of being even temporarily effectual, both from its
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inadequateness to the extent required, and from the vague manner of its dispensation; but the worst circumstance is, that the distresses must inevitably always recur, as these poor have scarce any method of procuring a maintenance. Every possible evil must hence ensue, and every mean-ness and vice that can debase the human character become the consequence of the degradation of mind induced by desponding poverty.

This inability to work for a livelihood, is not occasioned by a want of industry in the poor; it is the combined effect of some transient local and some permanent religious causes. The Jews, since their dispersion from Judea, have never been suffered to hold lands *, at least to any extent, or in much security: thus the lower classes have never been employed as labourers in husbandry on the estates of their brethren; nor could they expect work from masters of other persuasions, on account of the interruption of their Sabbaths and festivals: nor, indeed, was their genius at all bent that way. The persecutions they have

* In the present more enlightened times this restriction no longer exists in England.

have suffered in some countries, and the very strait sufferance with which they were tolerated in others, have, till very lately, so abridged their capabilities, and so contractedly limited their liberty of exercising trades or manufactures, that only such as had some property to traffic with, or employ in money transactions, could at all be said to do any business. From this confined sphere, however, they have lately began to emerge, and can boast of many respectable merchants, brokers, &c. although the effects of these former restrictions are still evident in the state of their poor.

But, notwithstanding the more liberal policy that has prevailed in their favor, and particularly from the freedom of the British constitution affording great latitude to their exertions, there still exist some insurmountable obstacles in the ceremonial restrictions of their religion, which prevent their embracing this liberty to the necessary extent.

There is no circumstance in life more distressing to a Jewish father (of whatever rank he may be in society)

society) than how to put his son forward in life in some honest industrious occupation. The restraints and observances of the Mosaic ritual are such an insuperable difficulty to the initiation of a Jewish lad into any craft or trade, as makes it almost impossible for him to be bound apprentice to a master who is not of the same persuasion; being interdicted from partaking of his food, from working part of every Friday, and the whole of every Saturday, throughout the year, besides the festivals; a loss of time which no master can afford: and although a handsome premium has, in a few instances, induced Christian masters to submit to these inconveniencies; still the different manners and sentiments neither do or can readily assimilate. At all events, it is clear how deplorably this affects the poor, who, from this cause, are totally deprived of the possibility of acquiring a trade, or of being employed at day-work more than four days and a half in the week, unless extra on Sundays.

Great as is the mischief resulting from this adherence to the ceremonial law, nothing is further removed from my thoughts than the most

distant idea of wishing its removal. Peculiarly circumstanced as the Jews are, and have ever been, on the face of God's earth, their preservation and indelible identity as a distinct nation, is a phenomenon too wonderful not to impress the minds of all mankind with a conviction of a providential interference; and who will be hardy enough to imagine that he can, by any political regulation, destroy the singularity of the Jews, and assimilate them with the inhabitants of any country, by encouraging the disregard of their religious customs! I know that something like this has been thought of; nay, I may say, proposed by both Jews and Christians; but from very opposite motives, and different prospects.

I do not mean to enter into a polemical disquisition, but trust I am correct in saying, that the vulgar, whose minds are not sufficiently informed to be able to reason abstractedly, can never be brought to act conformable to the established rules of rectitude, unless bound by religion, which they can only be made sensible of by an habitual observance of its forms, however superstitious

superstitious these may appear to a more enlightened mind.

All religions infallibly tend to one great object, *viz.* giving man a proper sense of his station with respect to his Creator and his fellow creatures; they all lead him the way to salvation, no matter by what road; they all enjoin the principle of adoration to God! and love towards men. Under whatever sect, therefore, a man chances to be born, he ought always to adhere to its form of worship; nor can he attain a better ultimatum by changing it, seeing that the final object of all is the same.

This appears to me a rational view of the matter; and looking upon enthusiasm as a passion productive both of good and evil, I put that out of the question, and consider the man who apostates from motives of worldly interest, as a scoundrel whom no tie will restrain. Of no less dangerous tendency is he, who without education or intellect, and not understanding the essence of religion, is regardless of the forms and ceremonies enjoined by that of whose church he

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is a member, and *which are the only means he has* of evincing it. Such a man is only withheld by the strong hand of the country's laws, from committing the most enormous crimes; and we have no security against the evils of loose and immoral conduct, nor against the knavery and petty depredations, which his callous conscience does not check him from committing.

These reflections make it, therefore, a serious consideration how the poor Jew, beset as he is with the great difficulty of procuring a livelihood, and contaminated by the encreasing profligacy of the times, can be prevented abrogating the restrictive ceremonies of his religion, and *thus live at large without any*; a state he becomes daily more exposed to, unless some effectual mode be adopted to facilitate his means of maintenance; and which is not less wanted for the relief of the orthodox Jew, whose virtuous and conscientious adherence to the tenets of his faith, makes him steadily encounter every hardship.

After what has been here investigated, the following conclusions naturally follow as the result, viz,

Firstly,

Firstly, That the Jews are a good and industrious people, notwithstanding a contrary imputation, resulting from the combination of adventitious circumstances.

Secondly, That their poor are numerous for want of handicraft trades.

Thirdly, That the relief as at present allotted for this poor, is very inadequate, and requires amendment.

Fourthly, That any plan for the amelioration of the state and manners of this poor, must be managed without the smallest infringement of their ceremonial law.

The admitting these as data, will furnish a ground-work; whereon any system to assist the Jewish poor will find a sure base; and however requisite it may have been to intrude on you with a detailed description of their state, I shall not expatiate, and take up too much of your time in the consideration of the means proper for this purpose: I have too high a respect for your talents,

lents, to do more than solicit your opinion and advice. I may, with due deference, make enquiries, or suggest plans, but leave your better judgment to answer and direct.

The first of the above four propositions requires only your acquiescence, and I hope that what has been so explicitly stated, has proved its truth: the remaining three, although really distinct, must be considered together as so many parts composing one whole, viz. *That it is highly necessary to endeavour bettering the condition of the Jewish Poor, by relieving the helpless, instructing the children, and diffusing among them the knowledge of handicraft trades, without any infringement of their established religious customs.*

The most feasible means by which this great work could be effected, appears to be the establishing a House of Industry, which should take in the helpless poor and children, and have an attached hospital for sick; the whole arranged on a strict Judaic plan with respect to prayers, education, and diet; and which at the same time should comprehend a method of assisting the out-poor

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with occasional relief, somewhat similar to that adopted at Shrewsbury.

An undertaking like this will require a pretty considerable sum for building and establishing expences, and involve no small annual expenditure. Now, although I conceive a sufficient sum might readily be raised for the former, I must confess myself much at a loss whence to procure the latter.

From what has been stated in the first part of this letter, it is very evident that no great sum can be expected as an annual voluntary contribution; at least it will require some time before the public benevolence can be made to leave the usual channels, and flow into another course, however preferable. Besides, I do not think that the support of an institution of such consequence, *can or ought to rest on such an uncertain footing as occasional elemosynary subscriptions.* The plan is for the effectual relief and maintenance of poor, which is an *absolute duty*, not an act of generosity and liberality. The legislature, admitting this as a principle, has provided and appropriated certain rates

rates to be levied for this purpose. Now, when I reflect on the sum thus annually paid by Jewish house-keepers, without any part thereof being ever bestowed on their own poor, I cannot help remarking, that this would be more than sufficient to effect all that is required for their own paupers; and therefore think that an application made to parliament, petitioning for a part at least to be put into the hands of a Board, to be formed for the maintenance and regulation of the Jewish Poor, might be attended with success, at least it would be but right and reasonable. It is evident, that an undertaking like what is here proposed, requires the establishment of regular measures; to conduct which, it would be expedient to incorporate several respectable gentlemen from each synagogue, who should constitute a Board for the Management of the Concerns of all the Jewish Poor in the Metropolis. This Board should be invested with powers to put the existing laws in force with respect to idle and disorderly persons, to inquire into the circumstances of the poor, and render occasional relief. They should also have the sole superintendance of the House of Industry, and the appropriation

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of

of its funds. The different synagogues should be obliged to unite their incomes under the management of this Board, after paying their individual specific expences: and if a clause could be obtained for that purpose, the Board should be empowered to recall a certain portion of the poor's rate paid by Jews to the parishes wherein they respectively reside, or have an authority to assess all Jews a certain rate for the maintenance of their poor.

It is unnecessary to enter into the minutiae of this plan at present, it is enough to strike the outline: you, Sir, are a better judge of its propriety, and the probability of its success in a parliamentary view. With respect to its reception amongst the Judaic congregations, I am sensible that so great an innovation in the synagogue system will meet with many difficulties, and possibly much resistance, particularly from the divided and clashing interests among them; but as it comprehends an efficient system, that shall prove a radical remedy to the existing evils, and must positively unite and comprize them all, it will put an end to all petty discord, and give to the
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whole mass a due vigour; and I am persuaded, that if the scheme was fairly laid down, and its consequences fully made out, it would be embraced with avidity by the best informed and most important part of the nation. There can also be no doubt, that if it met with its due encouragement from the Legislature, or was in the first instance sanctioned and supported by men of consequence in the kingdom, very little would be wanted to compleat it in the fullest manner.

A system like this, if carried into execution, would be an exemplary proof of the justness of the plan for consolidating the metropolitan parishes into one Board for the affairs of the Poor, as proposed in your excellent work on Police.

The attempt to inroach on the parish incomes, by the proposed appropriation of a part, in the way above mentioned, will, most probably, create much opposition from those particularly, wherein the majority of the Jews reside, which may oblige us to await the period when the reform you suggest shall take place, and open a door for the admission of such a claim.

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The difficulties this opposition may occasion, together with those that must naturally be expected to present themselves in all attempts to subvert a long established although mistaken system, makes it a matter of importance to view the subject in different lights; hence it may be right to consider, how far it may be proper to attempt the plan on a less comprehensive scale, and progressively to enlarge it till the whole be accomplished.

In this view we might consider the establishment of a House of Industry for children only, with an attached hospital for sick in general; the children to work and be educated till of age for apprenticeship, when some trades should be selected to be carried on and taught in the house, after the manner of the Philanthropic Reform.

The erecting an hospital for sick, with a part set aside for the reception of the aged and helpless poor, is another scheme that may deserve notice.

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But two powerful objections present themselves to those plans. First, the poor will neither be effectually relieved, nor their manners ameliorated. Secondly, whence are the funds to be procured, if the methods before proposed must be abandoned? Besides, every thing short of the complete comprehension of the whole subject, appears to me futile, and eventually useless.

I have now, dear Sir, laid open to you all that this very important subject demands: I have traced the causes of the evil, and have chalked out the methods, or rather the principles, upon which any efficient steps can be undertaken to remedy it. On a former occasion, I expressed to you, that I had not imparted these animadversions to any one excepting yourself, from a conviction, that although the facts might be assented to, the remedy would be deemed visionary and impracticable: under the same circumstances I have now taken the liberty to address you more at large, and solicit your consideration of the matter as elucidated by the best light I could throw upon it; confident that no one possesses more philanthropy to make him willing, and wisdom to make him capable to

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assist my endeavours than yourself; confident also, that, when enlightened by your information, and sanctioned by your approbation, I shall call the attention of some principal men among the Jewish nation to the subject, and lay this letter and your reply before them, some plan will be warmly entered into, and ably supported, to the accomplishment of the proposed end.

In the hopes of a ready attention, and excuse for requisite length of this letter, I remain,

With due respect,

Your admirer and humble servant,

Bury-Street, St. Mary Axe,
March 24, 1801.

JOSHUA VANOVEN.

To Patrick Colquhoun, Esq.

SIR,

I HAVE considered with great attention the plan you have formed for the purpose of improving the condition of the *infant poor*, and the *aged and infirm*, of the Jewish Nation resident in the Metropolis, and will cheerfully lend every assistance in my power in giving effect to so good a work. I am abundantly sensible that it is the only plan by which the knowledge of diversified and useful handicraft employments can be introduced among the Jewish youth, and effectual provision made for the aged and infirm. I may add also, that in no other way can the poor be virtuously educated.

The laudable endeavours now manifested by the worthy and respectable part of the Jewish Nation in London with a view to this object, cannot be sufficiently applauded; and I entertain no doubt of their experiencing an ample recompense in the salutary effects which the execution of the proposed excellent plan must unquestionably produce.

But it is not the Jewish Nation alone who ought to exult in the effect of the measures which are in contemplation. Every member of the community

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munity is more or less interested in whatever shall tend to promote the cause of humanity and good morals, and increase the national stock of industry.

There appears to me to be no error in the principle of the plan which has been laid before me, nor is there any thing in the laws or constitution of the country that can be opposed to its completion, more especially since, if well administered, it promises to be productive of the greatest benefits, not only to the Jewish people, but to society at large.

On the part of the Legislature I should hope you would experience every facility, more especially as your views are limited to the single object of regulating the œconomy of the Jewish Nation, with an intention to make its lower classes better men and better subjects, without asking any new privileges.

The Legislature is too enlightened, and too much divested of prejudice, not to see the policy of a measure in itself so free from objections. But it is not the Parliament alone that will sanction it with approbation; every liberal-minded person in the kingdom will rejoice in an event calculated to produce so much good.

Justice

Justice to the rising generation of the Jews, as well as humanity to the poor, call loudly for the speedy adoption of a plan which comprehends in its general structure, *An asylum for the infant and aged poor; an hospital for the sick; and a house of industry, and a school for mechanical employments, for the youth of both sexes.* Its advantages are obvious at first view; the disadvantages I am not able to see; although I am aware that, in accomplishing an object of this nature, there are difficulties which must be encountered; but they are not insurmountable; and the raising of funds for its support will not (I should hope) prove so difficult as you suppose.

A design of this nature is worthy of the philanthropy and munificence of those respectable individuals among the Jews who have heretofore distinguished themselves by acts of benevolence; and I have no doubt but their laudable example will bring forward every man of opulence in the Jewish community.

I am, with great esteem,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

P. COLQUHOUN.

James's-Street,
March 25, 1801.

Mr. Joshua Vanoven.

DEAR SIR,

THE philanthropy and perspicuity which pervades the reply you favoured me with, does you no less honor than the promptitude with which it was dictated and sent; it evinces strong proofs of the heart-felt interest you take in promoting benevolent measures for the amelioration of the condition of a class of deserving poor.

I am highly flattered by the unqualified approbation you have given to the proposed plan; but am much more gratified by finding that, through the means of this sanction, a due attention to the subject was more readily excited, and trust also its success will be greatly facilitated.

According to the determination mentioned at the conclusion of my last letter, I laid the papers before some gentlemen of respectability among the Jewish Nation, who immediately became impressed with a strong sense of the important necessity of the measure. They had long re-
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marked the evils pointed out, but had never seen any plan devised as a remedy. The scheme laid down as resulting from the investigations in these papers, appeared, *prima facie*, to be fairly calculated for answering the required purpose; and more particularly as it had the sanction of your approbation, some steps were resolved to be taken for its attainment,

At no period could an attempt for this purpose have been so well proposed as at the present. The Jews have now among them a man who is an honor to his species in general, and to his nation in particular, who unites in himself the rare qualities of integrity, generosity, and active-benevolence; whose liberality is unbounded though discriminative, and who has deservedly acquired the love and admiration of all who have the pleasure to know him.* No exertion was necessary to interest a character like this in so philanthropic an undertaking; the bare recital was sufficient; and he has entered into it with the alacrity and warmth which characterises all his proceedings. Through his endeavours the papers have been submitted to the consideration of some gentlemen

* A. G——d, Esq.

gentlemen of the first consequence in the State, both with respect to rank and talents, by whom the plan has been highly approved, and from whose mature reflection and judgment some alterations were suggested and adopted.

I feel it a duty, dear Sir, to state to you concisely the principal of these amendments, together with their reasons.

Although the justice of the principle is allowed, that, as the Jews pay to the general poor's rate, they ought to partake of the benefits which these rates dispense, yet it is deemed expedient to relinquish the proposed application to Parliament, for granting a moiety of the sum thus paid by Jewish housekeepers, to revert to the board of directors for the relief of their own poor, for the following reasons. 1stly, That although it is a hardship for the Jewish Nation not to be able to receive a benefit from this fund, toward which they pay in common with every other class of inhabitants, yet as this arises only from their peculiar circumstances and religious restrictions, no fault is attached to the established system, which allows

allows their right of demanding relief equal with all other parishioners. 2dly, That it would most probably meet with very powerful, and, possibly, successful opposition, from those parishes where in the Jews principally reside, which would, from such a regulation, experience a considerable defalcation in their revenues. 3dly, If even this opposition should fail, and the clause be admitted by the Legislature, yet the measure does not appear (with respect to the Jews) to be either expedient or political, since the several parishes will (from this diminution of their income) be obliged to make up the sums they require, by a re-assessment on the inhabitants at large; a measure, in the present high state of the rates, extremely unpopular, if not oppressive; and ultimately productive of increased expence to the Jewish inhabitant as well as others: besides its producing a revival of prejudices and hatred against the Jews, which is now happily fast diminishing.

But an institution like what is proposed, cannot possibly be conducted, or continued, without some permanent funds for its support; and experience has too fatally evinced how unstable a basis

elemofynary contribution proves, being too much fubject to the changes of caprice, and too liable to have its refources withheld from oppofition, whim, avarice, and fometimes intereft. As voluntary contribution has its origin in the paffions of men being roused, fo it is apt to be affected by every thing operating on thofe paffions, than which nothing is more uncertain; nay, from a fimple relaxation in exertion to rouse this paffion, an indifference takes place, which palsies the fpirit of fubfcription; and too frequent or continued applications blunt the feelings, and annihilates that fpirit altogether. We have feen hofpitals, depending on this fource, obliged to fhut up their wards, until the approaching diffolution of the charity has excited a commiferating fense of their ftate, and ftimulated fresh efforts; which, after producing a temporary affiftance, have again died away, until fome cafual legacy, or other fortunate circumftance has occurred, to enable them to continue their adminiftration: the prefent declining ftate of feveral once well-supported difpensaries are a woeful proof of this fact.

Deftroductive

Destructive as such a failure in resources proves to charitable institutions, the evil is not to be compared to the consequences of such a cause in an establishment like what is now under consideration: the quick succession of objects in dispensaries or hospitals admits of a gradual diminution of their administration, and the incapacity of relief extends only to the refusal of fresh applicants; but what would be its effects in the proposed instance, where its objects are permanent and for life? To whom are the aged and helpless to look for relief, when perhaps a few more years have rolled over their heads, during which they have been comfortably supported within the walls of the asylum, and they have lost the habit and desire of begging? where are the children to fly who have just been reclaimed from vice, and beginning to acquire habits of industry, which would have made them hereafter useful members of society? when the modes of relief hitherto employed, are obliged to be discontinued.

Nothing therefore remains for the proper and efficient support of this important institution,

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but a permanent supply from the body immediately concerned, by an annual though moderate taxation: a measure very likely to prove unpopular; for it is very natural to expect a repulsive sentiment will arise from its adoption: since nothing like coercion can be agreeable to the human mind, although in a good and charitable cause.

Yet when the great purpose is considered which this plan is to promote; when the great duties humanity is hereby called upon to exercise, and the great political good resulting from the proposed measure, is duly weighed, the excessive evils it remedies, the important benefits it bestows, the number of growing vices it will check, the number of good industrious subjects it will send forth, who would otherwise have proved noxious to society; when all this is put into the scale, how trifling and nugatory does a burthen of a *moderate taxation* appear as an objection!

I say a *moderate tax*, for it cannot, and must not, be a heavy one; those affixed by the necessity of the State are already considerable; and were it not so, no tax for charitable purposes

poses ought to be so large as to excite sentiments militating against these benign ideas of charity, which have been emphatically termed the milk of human kindness. It would prove very unfortunate indeed, if a moderate tax, aided by the contributions of the numerous well-disposed of all persuasions in this country, were not sufficient for its support, at least for much the greatest part of it. But that no alarm on this subject should arise, it will be requisite clearly to define in the bill proposed to be brought into Parliament, not only the maximum of the tax, but the manner how it is to be rated; and I trust that the Committee whose duty it will be to prepare the bill, will give this point its due and proper consideration.

Some other alterations are agreed upon, but they are not of sufficient importance to trouble you with; I shall not therefore trespass longer on your time, but to return you my individual thanks for the countenance and encouragement you have shewn me in the course of this inquiry: the best thanks you can receive, and which will prove most congenial to your feeling, is the great
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good which will result from the successful adoption of those measures you have importantly forwarded.

I remain, with all due respect,

Sir,

Your obliged humble servant.

Dec. 21, 1801.

JOSHUA VANOVEN.

To Patrick Colquhoun, Esq.