

SOCIETY

FOR THE

PERMANENT SUPPORT

OF

ORPHAN & DESTITUTE

CHILDREN,

BY MEANS OF

APPRENTICESHIP IN THE COLONIES.

London

PRINTED BY W. SMITH, KING STREET, LONG ACRE.

1831.

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South Australia.**

SOCIETY, &c.



AMIDST the various affecting scenes of misery and degradation, which the state of the poor so commonly presents to our view, there are no cases more calculated to excite our strong compassion than those of Orphan and Destitute children. Their education in the poor house and subsequent apprenticeship in the world, are effected with a very sparing expenditure either of care or of money. This parsimony may doubtless be excused, but it is little calculated to promote the happiness or moral character of the children. The consequences are obvious; if neglected by their masters, or exposed to temptation as too frequently happens, they abscond from their service, become the associates of thieves, begin their career with petty offences, and too often conclude it by some act of violence and guilt, which draws down upon them the exterminating rigour of the law.

Persons who have been led to learn much of the history of convicts, know that this picture is not overcharged. It cannot then be doubted that the friend to social order, that the philanthropist, that every man who

is not insensible to moral feeling, will rejoice at the opportunity of changing the condition of these unfortunate and helpless beings. Any lot would be better than that which they appear to inherit; any change of circumstance or place would ameliorate their condition.

The British Colonies of Upper and Lower Canada, Cape of Good Hope, New South Wales, and Van Dieman's Land, present numerous modes of advantageously employing children, with a prospect altogether in contrast with that which they at present possess. There, ample rewards are held out to industry and exertion; there, they may become prosperous and happy, and attain a respectable station in society. In order to learn, with as much accuracy as possible, what might be the opinion of practical men on this subject, letters have been addressed to various intelligent individuals, long resident in the Colonies, requesting them to state what would be the probable consequence of juvenile emigration, conducted upon the principle of indenture. The answers were most satisfactory. Differing among themselves as to the manner of conducting the emigration, and also as to the amount of emigrants which could be received by the Colonists, on one point they were all agreed; they all represented the introduction of a large number of children from Europe, to be indented in the Colonies, as calculated to produce the greatest advantages, both to the Colonists and to the emigrants. And here it may be right to observe, that the difficulty, often cited, of keeping indented laborers to their bonds in countries where labor is in great demand, is applicable only to adults. No such difficulty is stated to exist with respect to children. The experiment has been repeatedly tried both in South Africa and the Canadas where it has been attended with the greatest success.

The New Colony of South Australia offers peculiar facilities for the employment and protection of Orphan and Destitute Children. The climate is salubrious, and the arrangements made for a constant supply of labor, will surround the children with an industrious population, while the Charter precludes the introduction of convicts. Thus the great difficulty which has ever been felt by the benevolent, in putting into execution the plan of this Society in the colonies already established, here vanishes. The population of the New Colony, consisting entirely of voluntary emigrants, will, it is hoped, be a virtuous community, and thus be desirous of ministering, not only to the outward comforts of the children apprenticed in the Colony, but to their moral culture and improvement.

It is impossible to consider this subject without calling before us the striking contrast, which the same act of apprenticeship presents in England, and in the colonies under the provisions contemplated. Here, the parishes pay to get rid of their children—there, the colonists would pay to receive them. In England, the parish has at least no interest in the life of a child, and the master may too often allow himself to feel, the apprentice fee having been received, that his interest in the child has ceased; in the Colonies, it would be the interest of the masters that the children should live, and remain happy and contented in their situations. Again, looking onward to the expiration of their apprenticeship; here, the prospect is misery, with the temptation to vice; there, full employment, plenty, and encouragement to virtuous conduct.

FUNDS.

The funds on which the Society may depend, as the means of carrying their purpose into execution, are to be derived from three sources;—

First—Fees to be received with the children from Parishes.

Second—Fees to be received from Foundling Hospitals, Orphan Asylums, Societies, and individuals desirous of providing for Destitute Children.

Third—Payment from the Colonists for the services of the children.

Without exactly fixing any of these sums, it may be confidently stated, that the Society might obtain from these sources, ample means to defray the expences attendant on the emigration of the children. In country Parishes it is generally usual to pay the sum of £10. as the fee of apprenticeship; in London, the parishes generally contrive to get rid of their pauper youth for half that sum.* The average may therefore be estimated at £8. for each child.

Under the second head, the annual subscription of £10. might entitle the subscriber to claim annually for one child, the benefit of emigration under the protection of the Society.

Under the last head, the payment of one shilling per week may be expected from the Colonial Master during the average period of four years, by which means the Society

* See the Trial of Esther Hibner, for the Murder of Parish Children, in 1828.

would recover the additional sum of ten or eleven pounds, for every juvenile emigrant. Thus pecuniary means, would not be wanting, for executing the important object of the Society.

COLONIAL AGENT.

The duties of this officer would be various and important, viz.

To furnish the Society with constant and accurate information as to the demand for the services of the children ;—to examine the children on their arrival in company with a surgeon ;—to report on their condition ;—to receive and provide for the children until apprenticed ;—to place them with settlers of good character ;—to see to the performance of the contract ;—and to receive the periodical payments of the settlers.

These important services being considered too wide for the uncontrolled management of an Agent, it is proposed that a Committee in the Colony corresponding with the London Society, should be formed for the protection of the children : the reward of the agent to be a per centage on the sums received from the settlers. By this means it would be to his personal advantage that the masters and apprentices should be equally contented, and that the whole system should work as well as possible ; inasmuch as on its success would depend the amount of emigration, the number of apprentices, and consequently his own remuneration. The object of the Society with regard to the children when landed in the Colony, would be to procure for them the kindest treatment from their masters, and to render their outset in life as favorable as possible.

Children between the ages of nine and fourteen years appear most eligible as emigrants, and it would be unnecessary to extend the period of apprenticeship beyond the age of eighteen years. In case of females marrying before the period of apprenticeship had expired, if the cost of emigration were rendered a simple contract debt, the husband would be liable for that part of the Society's claim which had not been repaid by the master of the apprentice.

At the age of eighteen years, youths of the other sex would be free from their indentures, and able to labor on their own account. In countries where the rate of wages is very high, by habits of industry and sobriety they must soon acquire sufficient property to assume a different character, to become capitalists themselves, and employers of labor in their turn.

These are the inducements held out by the Society for the emigration of Orphan and Destitute Children now dependent on parishes for support:—and the machinery of the society is simple; after the first expenditure it would go on and flourish without continual calls upon the charity of the rich and benevolent. The funds derived from the Colony by the labor of one child would pay for the emigration of a second, the second would pay for the third, and so on continually.

OUTLINE OF RULES, &c.

The Society to be incorporated by an Act of Parliament.

The Society to be governed by a Patron, a President, Vice-presidents, a Treasurer, a Chairman and Committee.

Persons subscribing £1. annually, to be Members of the Society, and to have a right to Vote at all Elections.

Persons making a donation of £10. to have the power to claim for one Child the benefit of Emigration under the protection of the Society.

A General Meeting to be held annually, at which a statement of the accounts shall be delivered, and Officers appointed for the ensuing year.

The Committee to be elected annually by the subscribers.

All subscriptions and donations to pass through the hands of the Treasurer.

Communications from persons desirous to promote the objects of this Society to be addressed to D. ELSTON, Esq. Bridge House, Limehouse.

