written by Embleton

THE POOR LAW CATECHISM

Question. What is your Name?

Answer. They call me Pauper.

Q. Who gave you that Name?

A. The Board of Guardians; to whom I applied in the time of trouble and distress, when I first became a child of want, a Member of the Workhouse, and an inheritor of all the insults that poverty is heir to.

Q. What did the Board of Guardians do for you?

A. They did promise and vow two things: firstly, that I should be treated like a convicted felon, being deprived of liberty and fed on prison fare; and lastly, that I should be an object of oppression all the days of my life.

Q. Rehearse the Articles of thy Belief?

A. I believe in the cruelty of Lord Harry Brougham, the author and fosterer of the present Poor Laws. I also believe that these Laws have caused the death of tens of thousands by cruelty, starvation, and neglect.

Q. How many Commandments have you, and such as you are to keep?

A. Ten.

Q. Which be they?

A. The same which the Poor Law Commissioners spake in Somerset House, saying—We are thy Lords and Masters, who cause the to be confined in Bastiles, and separated thee from the wife of thy bosom and the children of thy love:

1. Thou shalt obey no laws but ours.

2. Thou shalt not make for thyself any substitute for skilly, nor the likeness of tea, nor any other kind of food or drink, except as is allowed in the workhouse; for we are jealous men, punishing with severity any transgression against our laws; and shouldst thou disobey in this, we shall teach you a lesson that shall last thee all the days of thy life.

3. Thou shalt labour hard, and for nothing; none of thy earnings shall be thine own, therefore we say thou shalt labour in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, Six days thou shalt work hard, and have little to eat; but the seventh day is the sabbath, in which we cannot make you work, and so we give you liberty for an hour or two, to save the parish the expence of your Sunday dinner.

5 Honour the Poor Laws, the Commissioners, the Guardians, and the Beadles: thou shalt take no offence at what they say or do, else thy days shall be made more miserable in the Workhouse wherein thou livest.

6 Thou shalt commit murder, by deserting thy starving children, for we will give thee no assistance to get them food.

7. Thou shalt learn to forget all the dear ties of nature for we will separate thee from the wife of thy bosom, and the children of thy love.

8. Thou shalt rob thyself of the society and enjoyment of her whom thou hast sworn to protect while life shall last.

9. Thou shalt bear false witness whenever a pauper dies; and should the Coroner or Jury ask you how you live, tell them you live like Lords, and are as happy as Princes.

10. Thou shalt covet the labourer's food, his clothing, his friends, and all the comforts which thou once had, yet shalt thou long in vain, for remember, O Pauper! that the motto of every workhouse is "He who enters here, leaves all hope and comfort behind."

LINES

ON THE DEATH OF AN OLD PAUPER,

WHO WAS

Sentenced to Imprisonment for not Working at the Union Pump.

Oh! Englishmen, come drop a tear or two,
While I relate a thrilling tale of woe;
Of one, who age demanded all the care,
And love, that aged pilgrims ought to share.
This poor old man whose limbs refused to bear,
The weight of more than eighty years of care,
Was brought before a parson, worse than Turk,
And sent to gaol because he could not work.
(Weep, Sons of Britain! mourn your sire's disgrace
Weep, English mothers! hug your rising race,
And pray to him who gave your children breath,
They may not live to die this old man's death.)
In a dark dungeon, he was close confined,
No friend to comfort or to soothe his mind;
No child to cheer his lonesome dying bed,
But soon he rested with the silent dead.
O, ye who roll in chariots proud and gay;
Ye legal murderers there will come a day
When you shall leave your riches all behind,
A dwelling with the ever lost to find;
And your great Master, He whose name is good,
Will hold you guilty of your brother's blood.

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