

The duty of relief is left to 320 local boards. It is wholly impossible for these boards to act at all in concert,—in fact they are, as regards the economies of their position, direct enemies of each other. Not only so, however, but they find, by our legislation, a burden thrown upon them from neighbor States, of foreign pauperism, of which the State undertakes to bear a considerable part. It is impossible to expect such boards to care for any Treasury but that of their own town. That they will care for. But whatever they can draw from the State Treasury, they will draw. And the State Government therefore has been obliged to guard itself against undue drafts of this kind, by sending Commissioners from town to town,—in the hope that by two or three annual visits, they may solve the intricacies of the mass of accounts which go to making up the pauper charges of the Commonwealth.

A single illustration of this wretched result, where town boards are spending other people's money, is in the case of bonded paupers. Complaints are already made by ship owners who have given bonds for the sick expenses of emigrants landing, that the poor boards of Massachusetts make the most exorbitant charges when such people come into their keeping. This is to be regretted; but it is not to be expected, that without any supervision, or inducement to economy, they should do otherwise. I have already shown, in my letter No. 4, how this action has tended to the injury of our packet lines.

The next result which I will mention, is the eagerness of the towns to prevent foreigners from acquiring a "settlement" with them. It is of course desirable to have as large a class dependent on the State Treasury and as small a one dependent on the town treasury as possible.

Here the State, enamored, as it would seem, of its Public Pauper expense, encourages the towns by the great stringency of its laws of "settlement."

It is not too much to say that not one in a hundred of the foreigners now in Massachusetts, or of the children of foreign birth have yet acquired "settlement" here, or that one in five of the adult emigrants arriving here ever will. The law requires citizenship, and a continued residence in one town of ten years, with payment, in that time, of five years' taxes.—Even the children of persons who have not gained this settlement, though they have been born and grown up in the town, do not acquire settlement for themselves.

The result is, a perpetual enlargement of the class of "State Paupers," with all its evil results,—while the whole theory of our pauper system was that towns who have the benefit of a population shall support it, and the State only meant to assume the burden of those who were vagrants, perpetually moving from town to town.