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SHORT
H I N T S
UPON
L E V E L L I N



EXTRACTED FROM
Dr. VINCENT'S DISCOURSE,
ADDRESSED TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

L O N D O N :

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

IT will probably occur to the Reader, upon perusal of the following pages, that when poverty is stated as an evil of necessity, the remedy of the evil ought to be found, not in the will of man, but in the ordinance of law. The Author is aware of the objection, and begs leave to obviate it, by remarking, that the moral part of the argument was his sole concern; it was for this reason that he has considered even the poor laws not as a legal injunction, but as an institution derived from the disposition of the people.

There is no political cure for poverty but the encouragement of industry. This is a point thoroughly understood by the Legislature, and provided for by the law. In this view, every drawback and bounty, every protecting duty, every regulation of the corn trade, and every assistance given to the fisheries, ought to be regarded as *political charity*, tending to promote industry and to find employment for the people. The principles on which this system is founded, may be traced in the following pages; the system itself is left to be developed by those, whose business is political research.

A plain argument may produce its effect by due attention to arrangement and perspicuity; and if, among the numerous publications of the present day, directed to the same object, these Hints shall, in any degree contribute to promote peace, subordination, brotherly love, and Christian charity, no apology is requisite for obtruding on the Public the sentiments of an individual.

S H O R T
H I N T S
U P O N
L E V E L L I N G.

ALL History and all experience prove, that wherever Society exists there must exist a class of poor. Those who deny the necessary existence of such a class, who assert that the gifts of Nature and the bounties of Providence are common to all, intend no good to the poor themselves, but mean to excite discontent and tumult, and use the poor as an instrument in an attack meditated upon the rich. Now whatever produces convulsion in a State, tends not to diminish, but to increase the number of the poor.

But if the poor consider poverty as an evil, it will be both a moral and a social duty to teach the poor themselves, that it is an evil they suffer—not from the nature of the Government they live under—not from any system of oppression planned by their superiors—not from want of good laws or regulations, but from the constitution of society; and that however it is the object and the interest of every good government to alleviate poverty, all attempts to eradicate it, tend finally to the dissolution of society, and not to the removal of the evil.

And if the evil is without remedy, some philosophers, perhaps, may be rash enough to assert that society ought to be dissolved. But to this we cannot assent, because a state of nature, for one evil it removes, induces a thousand more noxious, and more destructive; it does not better the condition of the poor, but destroys all the other classes in the community; it does not relieve the poor from oppression, but deprives them of protection and support.

There is in fact no such thing as a state of nature, nor ever was. The passions of man, his wants, desires, hopes, and fears, all reclaim against it; savage life is only one step indeed removed from it, and that state which approaches towards it, is miserable exactly in proportion to its approach. The very beggar in society, if he has no property, has a life to lose, and *that* is protected; but if society is dissolved, there is no law but force. A state of nature is a state of war*.

It is in vain to argue this, because it is what no rational man will disallow; but if it is once granted that society is necessary for man, we must take it with all the evils that attend it; and if those evils are of *necessity*, they ought to occasion no more repining at the course of the moral and political world, than storms and tempests, disease and pestilence, cause in the ordinary course of nature.

It is not my intention to pronounce, that poverty is not an evil; for though it is a good when compared with the miseries of savage life, it is an evil at least by comparison, when put in competition with the blessings those enjoy who are possessed of rank, dignity, and fortune.

I. Granting, however, that it is an evil, let us next consider the means of alleviating it, and this has employed the minds of the wisest and best men in all ages. Philosophy and Religion exhort us to restrain our wants within the limits of our circumstances; and in truth, wherever this can be effected, it produces a real happiness which even the rich seldom enjoy. But as the great body of mankind is not actuated by

* The nations which approach nearest to a state of nature, are the American Indians and New Zealanders, and of both it may be said, their hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them. They not only slay their enemies, but eat them; and history informs us this always was the case in similar circumstances.

motives of this sort, and few in any rank are capable of refinement so exalted, we must come to the practice of mankind instead of sentiment, and examine the plans which have been proposed to remedy the evil.

1. One of the most specious schemes produced for this purpose, is an equal division of land; and there is nothing that at first sight appears so pleasing to the people, so just, and so rational. It is, however, in fact delusive to the highest degree; for at the same time it excites envy, malevolence, and all the worst passions of the human breast, it is a robbery of the rich, and no real relief to the poor.

This experiment has been tried in more instances than one, but has constantly failed in the execution, or event; nor can it ever answer, till you can make every portion of land equal in value, as well as extent, and every possessor equal talents, industry, and virtue.

If we can suppose a whole people entering upon a new discovered country without inhabitants, it is the only instance we can find, in which such an allotment could take place consistently with justice; and this instance has not yet occurred in the history of mankind.

2. A second instance, which has occurred too frequently is, where a conquering nation has divided the lands of the conquered; the injustice here is to the conquered only among the conquerors, all is equal, fair, and just. In this situation were the Israelites, when they divided the land of Canaan. But if we suppose that after this division was once made, it continued to prevent, or served to eradicate poverty, we have read our Bible very imperfectly; for Moses declared in express words, that the poor should never cease out of the land.

3. A third instance is, where, in a country long established and where all the inequalities of property have already taken place, an attempt has been made to appoint a new division, to strip the rich, and give an equal portion to every individual of the community.

This attempt has been made in several countries, but except in one instance was never carried into execution; in this instance indeed the event corresponded to the design of the legislator who effected it; but the design itself was faulty.

and the plan of government it produces a model for any other nation upon earth. It is a nation of warriors without commerce, or manufacture, and you will find it could not exist without slaves to till the ground for yourselves a military class of citizens consisting of slaves *, and those slaves † seven times as many as the masters, and you may then form a republic a state which history holds up to us as a model of the pride of Greece, and the admiration of Rome.

In this case the equality of the frugal habits, and the necessity a class of slaves; and if there were not at this day in any nation of Europe, there would be the consequence, there is no rashness in supposing something worse would follow than possible.

The poor perhaps of our own country are discontented to the immoderate wealth of some in a manner in which that wealth is too unequal. They naturally conceive that a more equal division of land would be more consistent with justice, and more agreeable to relieving their own wants; but it has never been tried, either by a new division of land, or by a more equal amount would not be relief, but disappointment.

For if we were to estimate the inhabitants of Great Britain at ten ‡ millions, and divide the land equally among them, it amounts by a very easy computation to

* The Helots of Lacedæmon were not, properly speaking, individuals, but of the public, though doubtless numbered. But the just idea of Helotism is, a nation of warriors. The Penestæ of Thessaly were in the same situation.

† I take this estimate from the number of Helots in the Lacedæmonian army at the battle of Platæa. There the disproportion was far greater.

‡ I rate the number of inhabitants at ten millions, or at between thirty and forty millions.

The number of inhabitants will be thought too small, but will be equally valid whether you give every man an acre, or think, however, that I rate the inhabitants too low. That our political arithmeticians calculated the population at ten or twelve millions, which upon the gold coinage of the year 1700, and forty, we have some reason to doubt their calculation.

Sir William Petty estimates twenty-eight or thirty millions.

Dr. Davenant reckons five millions and a half of inhabitants, and gives seven acres and a half a man.

Major Grant allows four acres a man.

See Chambers's Dict. art. Acre, and Pol. Arithm.

William Petty
Davenant
and giving
Major Grant
see Chambers
see Chambers
Major Grant
and giving
Dr. Davenant

man; suppose then every individual possessed of such an estate, how is he to cultivate it? If he has been an artisan, he is ignorant of the means: if he has been an husbandman before, he knows it will not support the oxen for his plough: he cannot hire assistants, for all are masters; he cannot hire or borrow cattle, for all are as unable to maintain them as himself. He must dig and sow and reap with his own hands; he must submit to the primeval curse of Adam; all the remedies of this curse, which the experience of six thousand years has discovered, must be thrown away, and he must sit down just where Adam began. In the mean time if all are husbandmen, where is the manufacturer to clothe him? where is the mariner to export his produce, or bring him the produce of other countries?

But let us try this question again, by dividing all the money and moveable property of the nation; and suppose the share of each individual to amount to twenty pounds or forty, or any indefinite sum, how are the poor to be bettered by this? Why they would live till the sum was expended without labour. That is happiness in truth; but when it *was* expended, they must return to labour again, and where are they to find an employer? All would be masters without servants, or servants without masters, and the system would be complete if they could have a nation of Kings, and an army of Generals. But let us suppose that the industrious man has improved his talents, while the profligate has squandered his share; what is the consequence? but that the frugal and provident must submit to a new division, and the idle and abandoned plunder him over again.

We may illustrate this by a familiar instance, which the poor will feel as forcibly as the rich; for if it should ever become illegal for one man to be richer than another, the savings of the poor are as liable to plunder, as the hoards of the rich. If a labourer has saved twenty shillings at the end of the year, four vagabonds shall tell him, that he has no right to be richer than themselves; that they have nothing, and therefore he must surrender four parts of his gain to them, and console himself with the fifth.

I wish to speak a language which the meanest individual may understand; I wish to teach the poor that every plan of this sort is delusive, that even their own interest is concerned in the well-being of their superiors, and that whatever tends to dissolve the tie, instead of relieving their wants, would add tenfold to their misery.

One consideration has been
place, and that is the *injustice* of
to the poor.

In the first place, then, there are
for acquiring wealth in our own
in others; and if wealth has be
dustry, by superior talents or ab
health in a foreign country, b
what viler species of robbery can
the possessor of the fruit of his
his original condition?

Injustice of this kind must p
the lower orders, to every exer
or abilities in the higher. We
reap, we seek knowledge in hope
away that hope, and you banish
world, and reduce the earth to b

It may be said, however, that v
by unjust, fraudulent, or disho
undoubtedly is true. But again
provides a remedy in every well-
against dishonourable means, w
mankind. Laws cannot be f a
acquisition of wealth, without e
on the security of legal property
perty is the first incitement to c
object of society.

4. But there is another plan
riches, and lessening the inequali
by abolishing the right of pri
property into equal shares upon
In this, the poor have little co
division would devolve on them,
them actuated from mere envy wi
those above them, we can find
have in contributing to promote f

But in the design itself, if there
the greatest injustice, and the mo
laws call upon us all to be ind
that property which is the
but if fresh laws shall afterwar
possession of our property, law is
itself, but contradictory; for on

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industry, and on the other represses it. The first grand spur to industry is the security of property; the second is liberty of using it at the will of the possessor: if either of these be checked, industry is nipped in the bud; and in our own country, if industry were once discouraged, the poor, instead of finding bread, would be annihilated.

It is a political question, How far a rich nobility, a wealthy gentry, a substantial yeomanry, contribute to the support of liberty, and the well being of the community? Dismissing this therefore as a consideration foreign to our purpose, let us consider the wealth of individuals as the produce of industry, or the means of promoting it. I say then, that extensive commerce implies extensive capitals; that capitals are employed in the commerce of our own country equal to the property of Princes; that if the merchant was compelled to divide his substance by any law whatever, exclusive of the check it would be on his own industry, it would destroy the possibility of conducting any extensive commerce; and that if the merchant is driven from his profession, the manufacturer must fail, the loom must stand still, and the ploughshare rust in the furrow.

To remove delusions of this kind from the minds of the people, is not merely a moral, but a civil and a social duty; for whatever tends to dissolve the bands or disturb the order of society, is the source of envy, malevolence, jealousy, hatred, and all the foulest passions of the human heart. Whatever tends to hold men together by ties of common interest, produces mutual affection, good-will, and charity, makes us better men, better citizens and Christians; and serves to promote the object of all society,—that is, PEACE.

II. All remedies of this kind therefore which have been proposed are nugatory and delusive; but let us now consider those which Society itself holds forth which are usually esteemed salutary and practicable, which are in some sense efficacious, because, though they do not eradicate the evil, they assuage the pain, and moderate the effects.

The poor perhaps would think it mockery, after what has been said, if they were told that the most certain relief was to be found in patience and content; and yet the poet and the moralist paint content in the cottage, an anxiety as the constant attendant on the palace and the throne.

thron

throne. But the truth is, that content is not to be found to the one than the other ; men in high stations as in low, and the greatest chance for happiness, when best employed.

But if content is not to be found in idleness, industry in some degree is necessary. All that labour earnestly, endeavour to improve their situation. If we trace up the consequences of industry to the life, it relieves the great from that languor and indolence which riches produce ; and if we examine it among the poor, it is the source of order, decency, and sobriety, which, if they are not virtuous, are necessary to render men useful to each other, and to the public.

But if industry is proposed to man as a means of pleasure and a blessing—if every form of it is to be encouraged and promoted, let us reflect that the human Constitution goes beyond all that can be taken to perfect this design.

For whatever security other Governments may have, if there is a country in the world more free and secure than in another, it is our own. The constitution of England is an additional spur, which, though it acts more slowly, is, perhaps, the first cause of that greatness which has raised our commerce above that of all other nations that surround us. The road to honour is open to all, there is no legal obstruction to any man from obtaining the most honourable offices, for, though the prize can fall to few, it is not confined to any one, and hence arises an emulation through which men rise in steps to rank, which invigorates and improves the whole community.

Perhaps we may be told this is the reason why the English are so happy, for it is impossible that all should succeed in their ambition when we present these hopes to their eyes. But in the outset, and make them more contented. But to this we may answer, that the

* The principal popular governments in Europe are in Holland and Switzerland.

In Venice, the barrier between the nobility and the people is insurmountable.

In Holland every city is a republic, but the nobility is a barrier between the nobility and the people.

In Switzerland the peasant can never be a senator.

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for every hope which can be proposed to render men industrious, makes them happy, not only in the end they pursue, but in the pursuit itself. Industry may not attain its object; but in this country, at least, it will never fail of obtaining bread and maintenance, and rarely miss of competence and comfort.

If however it *should* fail, the law has provided a remedy for the failure. The Poor Laws are the act of the community, and if alms are the charity of individuals, the Poor Laws comprehend the charity of the nation. If it *should* be thought, that there is no charity in giving what the law compels us to give, I answer, that we make our own laws in this country, and that if a tax for the poor were now to be laid on for the first time, the representative body would not, nay could not raise it without the consent of the people.

Let us view the Poor Laws in another light, and we shall find that they are a remedy against despair*; and perhaps it will be acknowledged, that in this respect they evince the wisdom, as well as the benevolence of the nation. The poor in any country are seldom dangerous unless they are desperate; but if *industry* has failed, there can be no despair while there is a certainty of support. And if *profligacy* has induced distress, it is better that even the profligate should find a refuge, than have a plea for resorting to fraud, violence, or rapine.

Heavy as this burthen is upon the people, it is still the lowest and the last resource of the unhappy; low, however, as it is, those who complain of it most, are not those who have had recourse to it from unavoidable distress, but those who from sloth, idleness, and profligacy, have no other refuge left; and if it were possible to exclude the latter, the former might be maintained in comfort, and the nation be delivered of half its burthen at the same time.

Having thus considered these taxes as the charity of the nation, we come naturally to consider the charity of individuals, and on this head the poor have less right to complain in this country than in any other throughout the world.

For here what we ought to admire most, is not the liberal hand that gives, but the liberal spirit which dictates, and the deliberate wisdom which directs. The prodigal may give

* "The enormities also which extreme wretchedness induces the lowest order of society to commit, are in a manner remedied in England by the immense relief of its poor-rates." Review of Mr. Necker's Administration, page 250.

from thoughtlessness, the ostentation
from very hatred of his heir; we
the poor, and yet if we have not ch
worth.

But I maintain that the libe
at the present hour is all directed
every instance *designed* * to reliev
promote industry; and whatever pro
the sum of happiness in the world.

From blindness, decrepitude, i
true, no advantage can be derived
therefore, we contribute to suppo
calamities, we mean only to allev
without proposing any benefit to o
other instance when we relieve the p
encourage industry, and place them
We neither pretend to feed or clothe
for these, we tell them, it is their d
duty enjoined them by God, by th
rank as Men and Citizens: if any
should he eat (*this is a maxim not o
ture, Morality, and Society*); but i
which either the narrowness of me
of the careless has neglected to pro
fity of the rich has almost taken
itself.

The superior orders of this Coun
the Streets of this Metropolis, and
having nothing to complain of, c
“and that,” they might say, “is n
“indinance of Man, but by the will

But to the sick, to the lame, to
say, “There is a house to receive yo
“and restore you to your family and
“eases the effects of vice, still you
“is relief held out to you. Go, be

“And you, wretched prostitutes,
“yourselves, and now support a w
“traying others, if you can yet
“open to receive you; there is for

* *Designed* I say, and I hope executed; f
tion is paid to economy, each subscriber can do
than by expending the same sum on the same

TO
Designd . . .
is paid to . . .
by expens . . .
by expens . . .

“ in this life, which you thought was lost ; there are means
“ of restoring you to the world, if you will accept them.

“ Where is the malefactor just delivered from imprison-
“ ment and bonds, who is now reduced by despair to return
“ to fraud, robbery, or rapine ? If he will labour, there is
“ labour for him ; if he will not, misery and destruction are
“ only the just measure of his iniquity. Where is the youth
“ brought up in profligacy, perverted by ill example, or
“ abandoned to a life of fordid sloth, who is not now received,
“ clothed, protected, and provided with the means of life
“ and occupation ? Is there any calamity, any species of
“ distress, which is not anticipated by the liberality of the
“ benevolent ?”

Such is the language which the Rich in this Country
might hold to the Poor.

And the Poor themselves may learn, that if the ties which
bind all orders together in this country were once dissolved,
whatever calamities the wealthy might be involved in, would
fall with double weight upon themselves, when there would
be no resource to look to—no friend, no protector, no bene-
factor,

THE END.

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shd. if you will accept them
not delivered from intention
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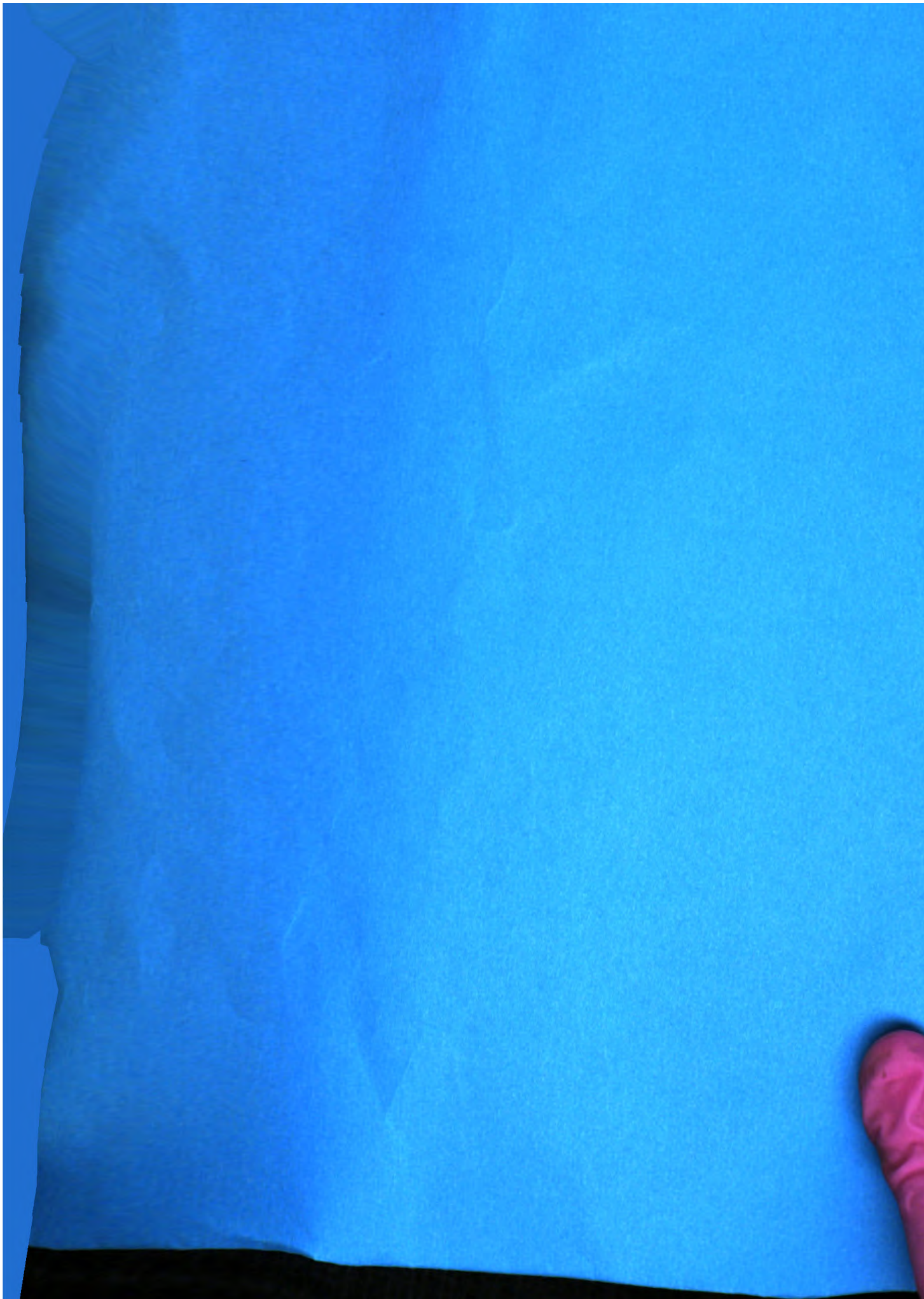
E N D



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ter. If he will labor, there is
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E. N. D.



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 themselves, which they would
 o stand, no protection no bank.

E N D.