

# POOR LAW

1572

1. Where all the parts of this Realm of England and Wales be presently with rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars exceedingly pestered, by means whereof daily happens in the same realm horrible murders, thefts, and other great outrages, to the high displeasure of Almighty God, and to the great annoy of the common weal...
2. Be it also enacted as well for the utter suppressing of the said outrageous enemies to the common weal as for the charitable relieving of the aged and impotent poor people that all and every person and persons being above the age of fourteen years being hereafter set forth by this act of parliament to be rogues, vagabonds, or sturdy beggars, and be at any time taken begging or taken vagrant, wandering, and mis-ordering themselves shall upon their apprehension be brought before one of the Justices of the Peace or Mayor and be presently committed to the common gaol, there to remain without bail or mainprise until the next Sessions of the Peace or General Gaol Delivery, at which Sessions or Gaol Delivery if such person or persons be duly convicted of his or her roguish or vagabond trade of life, either by inquest of office, or by the testimony of two honest and credible witnesses upon their oaths, that then immediately he or she shall be adjudged to be grievously whipped and burnt through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron, manifesting his or her roguish kind of life, and his or her punishment received for the same, which judgment shall also presently be executed, except some honest person will of his charity be contented presently to take such offender into his service for one whole year next following....
5. And for the full expressing what person and persons shall be intended to be rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars it is now declared that all and every such person and persons that be or utter themselves to be proctors or procurators going in or about any country or countries within this realm without sufficient authority, and all other idle persons going about using subtle, crafty, or unlawful games or plays, and some of them feigning themselves to have knowledge in physiognomy, palmistry, or other abused sciences, whereby they bear the people in hand they can tell their destinies, deaths, and fortunes, and such other like fantastical imaginations; and all and every person being whole and mighty in body, and can give no reckoning how he or she does lawfully get his or her living; and all fencers, bear-wards, common players in interludes, and minstrels not belonging to any baron of this realm, all jugglers, peddlers, tinkers, and petty chapmen which shall wander abroad and have not licence of two Justices of the Peace, and all common labourers refusing to work for such reasonable wages as is commonly given in such parts, and all scholars of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge that go about begging, not being authorized under the seal of the said universities, and all shipmen pretending losses by sea, and all persons delivered out of gaols that go by for their fees or do travel to their countries or friends, not having licence from two Justices of the Peace shall be taken, adjudged, and deemed rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars....
11. Provided that this act nor anything contained therein do in any wise extend to any harvest folks that travel into any country of this realm for harvest work neither yet to any that happen to be robbed or spoiled by the way, neither yet to any serving men of honest behaviour that be turned from their masters, or whose master shall be dead....
16. And forasmuch as charity would that poor aged and impotent persons should as necessarily be provided for as the said rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars repressed, and that the said aged, impotent, and poor people should have convenient habitations and abiding places to the end that they nor any of them should hereafter beg or wander about; it is therefore enacted that the Justices of the Peace and all and singular the shires of England and Wales shall make diligent search and enquiry of all aged poor impotent and decayed persons born within their said divisions and limits, or which were there dwelling within three years next before this present Parliament which live by alms and shall make a register book of the names and surnames of all such and shall devise and appoint meet and convenient places for their habitations and

abidings, if the parish within which they shall be found shall not or will not provide for them and shall set down what portion the weekly charge towards the relief and sustentation of the said poor people will amount unto and, that done, they the said Justices shall by their good discretions tax and assess all and every the said inhabitants to such weekly charge as they and every of them shall weekly contribute towards the relief of the said poor people....

17. And be it further enacted that the mayor of the City of London and the mayors, sheriffs, bailiffs, and the constables within all the said shires of England and Wales shall once a month make a view and search of all the aged impotent and lame persons within the precinct of their jurisdictions, and all such persons as they shall find not being born within that division, then they shall presently see the same poor people (except leprous people and bed-rid people) to be conveyed on horseback, in cart or otherwise, to the next constable, and so from constable to constable the directest way, till the said person be brought to the place where he or she was born or most conversant by the space of three years next before, and there to be put in the abiding place....
18. And be it enacted that if any of the said poor people refuse to be bestowed to any of the said abiding places, but covet still to hold on their trade of begging, or do depart and beg, then the said person so offending to be accounted a rogue or vagabond....
22. And it is also further enacted that if any of the said aged and impotent persons, not being so diseased lame or impotent but that they may work in some manner of work, shall be by the overseer of their said abiding place appointed to work, if they refuse, then in form aforesaid to be whipped and stocked for their first refusal, and for their second refusal to be punished as in case of vagabonds....
23. Provided always that three Justices of Peace shall place and settle to work the rogues and vagabonds that shall be disposed to work to get their livings and to live and to be sustained only upon their labour and travail.
24. Be it also further enacted that if any beggar's child being above the age of five years and under fourteen years shall be liked of by any subject of honest calling who shall be willing to take the said child into service, the said subject shall have the said child bound with him....