The President presented the annual report of the Union Fire Company, which was read and referred to the joint committee on fire companies.

The following communication was received from Joshua Vansant Esq. President of the board of trustees of the poor, read, and referred to the joint Committee on police and jail:

Baltimore, Feb. 4. 1850.

To the President of the First Branch
of the City Council:

Sir:

I received a copy of a resolution, passed by the First Branch of the City Council, on the 29th. ultimo, in the words following, to wit;

Resolved by the First Branch of the City Council, that the trustees of the poor or the president thereof, be respectfully requested to reply to the following queries:

And also a copy of queries referred to, in the above resolution, numbered from 1 to 7 inclusive, as follows:

1. Does any authority exist, under the act incorporating the trustees of the poor, or the supplements thereto, to arrest and confine in the alms-house of Baltimore city and county, idlers, beggars, and dissolute persons, who may infest the streets or other public places in Baltimore city; and if such authority exists, does it apply to children as well as adults?

2. If the authority to arrest the description of persons above designated exists;- on whom does the duty of making such arrests devolve, and by what means can the party so arrested be sent to the almshouse?

3. What disposition other than maintenance is made of children who are sent to the alms house? If bound out by the trustees, what are the stipulations required of those who take such children on service?

4. Are there more applications for children to serve as apprentices &c. than the trustees are able to supply?

5. In binding out children who have parents, do the trustees consult the parents in all cases? If not in every case, on what account do they make exceptions?

6. After the arrest and commitment of adult vagrants to the almshouse, have the trustees the means within their power to prevent their escape?

7. In the event of Baltimore city and county failing to make a joint appropriation for the purpose of constructing permanent buildings and enclosures, is it expedient, and have the trustees the power to sell portions of land, from time to time for that purpose?

The above resolution and queries were submitted to the board of trustees of the poor on the 30th. ult. and in accordance with a resolution of the board, I have the honor to submit the following replies, numbered and applicable, according to the order of the questions.

1. The first act of the General Assembly of Maryland in relation to the poor of Baltimore county, is the act of 1773, chapter 30, intitled "An act for the relief of the poor within the county of Baltimore." Several of the provisions of this act are still in force, they not having been repealed by any subsequent acts or supplements. The 20th. section of said act hath the following words, to wit; "It shall and may be lawful for any one justice of the peace for the said county, and for any person authorised and appointed, by such justice, to apprehend or cause to be apprehended, and committed to said work-house, any rogues, vagrants, vagabonds, beggars, and other idle, dissolute, and disorderly persons, found loitering or residing in the said county, who follow no labour, trade, occupation or business, and have no visible means of subsistence whereby to acquire an honest livelihood". The 9th. section of the act of 1796, chapter 68, entitled "An act to erect Baltimore town, in Baltimore County, into a city, and to incorporate the inhabitants thereof," confers upon the Mayor of the city of Baltimore, all the "jurisdiction and powers of a justice of the peace, except as to the recovery of small debts." Therefore full authority now exists in the mayor, and in the magistrates, for the city of Baltimore, and in such officers or persons as either may appoint or authorise, to arrest beggars, idlers and dissolute persons found loitering or residing in the city; and the power to commit to the almshouse, (or work-house as it is termed in the section above quoted) is vested in such mayor or justices of the peace.

If the 20th. section of the act of 1773 does not clearly confer the authority to arrest children found begging &c., the act of Assembly, December session 1826, Chap. 161. is conclusive upon that subject, which section is as follows:

"Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland, that the justices of the peace for the city and county of Baltimore, the trustees of the poor of Baltimore city and county, the ward managers of the poor in the City of Baltimore