

and by a machinery of its own. The proper function of law is to enforce the rights of justice, or to defend against the violation of them; and never does it make a more flagrant or a more hurtful invasion, beyond the confines of its own legitimate territory—than, when confounding humanity with justice, it would apply the same enforcements to the one virtue as to the other. It should have taken a lesson from the strong and evident distinction which nature hath made between these two virtues, in her construction of our moral system; and should have observed a corresponding distinction in its own treatment of them—resenting the violation of the one; but leaving the other to the free interchanges of good-will on the side of the dispenser, and of gratitude on the side of the recipient. When law, distrustful of the compassion that is in all hearts, enacted a system of compulsory relief, lest, in our neglect of others, the indigent should starve; it did incomparably worse, than if, distrustful of the appetite of hunger, it had enacted for the use of food a certain regimen of times and quantities, lest, neglectful of ourselves, our bodies might have perished. Nature has made a better provision than this for both these interests; but law has done more mischief by interference with the one, than it could ever have done by interference with the other. It could not have quelled the appetite of hunger, which still, in spite of all the law's officiousness, would have remained the great practical impellent to the use of food, for the well-being of our physical economy. But it has done much to quell and to overbear the affection of