

more strikingly, to prove the adaptation of our moral constitution to the exigencies of human society. The law of pauperism hath assimilated beneficence to justice, by enacting the former, in the very way that it does the latter; and enforcing what it has thus enacted by penalties. Beneficence loses altogether its proper and original character—when, instead of moving on the impulse of a spontaneous kindness that operates from within, it moves on the impulse of a legal obligation from without. Should law specify the yearly sum that must pass from my hands to the destitute around me—then, it is not beneficence which has to do with the matter. What I have to surrender, law hath already ordained to be the property of another; and I, in giving it up, am doing an act of justice and not an act of liberality. To exercise the virtue of beneficence, I must go beyond the sum that is specified by law; and thus law, in her attempts to seize upon beneficence, and to bring her under rule, hath only forced her to retire within a narrower territory, on which alone it is that she can put forth the free and native characteristics which belong to her. Law, in fact, cannot, with any possible ingenuity, obtain an imperative hold on beneficence at all—for her very touch transforms this virtue into another. Should law go forth on the enterprise of arresting beneficence upon her own domain, and there laying upon her its authoritative dictates—it would find that beneficence had eluded its pursuit; and that all which it could possibly do, was to wrest from her that part of the domain of which it had taken occupation, and bring