

bar of mercy; and, for their express benefit, hath given to most men an ear for pity, to many a hand open as day for melting charity. But it is not to any rare, or romantic generosity, that she hath confided the relief of their wants. She hath made compassion one of the strongest, and, in spite of all the depravations to which humanity is exposed, one of the steadiest of our universal instincts. It were an intolerable spectacle even to the inmates of a felon's cell, did they behold one of their fellows in the agonies of hunger; and rather than endure it, would they share their own scanty meal with them.\* It were still more intolerable to the householders of any neighbourhood—insomuch that, where law had not attempted to supersede nature, every instance of distress or destitution would, whether in town or country, give rise to an internal operation of charity throughout every little vicinity of the land. The mischief which law hath done, by trying to mend the better mechanism which nature had instituted, is itself a most impressive testimony to the wisdom of nature. The perfection of her arrangements, is never more strikingly exhi-

\* The certainty of this operation is beautifully exemplified in a passage of Mr. Buxton's interesting book on prisons—from which it appears that there is no allowance of food to the debtors, and a very inferior allowance of food to the criminals, who are confined in the gaol at Bristol. The former live on their own means or the casual charity of the benevolent. Instances have occurred when both of these resources failed them—and starvation would have ensued, had not the criminals, rather than endure the neighbourhood of such a suffering, shared their own scanty pittance along with them—thus affording an *argumentum a fortiore* for a like strength of compassion throughout the land—seeing that it had survived the depraving process which leads to the malefactor's cell.