

tamper with the great arrangements of nature, by placing the rights and the securities of property on a footing different from that of nature—when, as in the case of the English poor-laws, it does so, under the pretence and doubtless too with the honest design of establishing between the rich and the poor a nearer equality of enjoyment; we know not in what way violated nature could have inflicted on the enterprise a more signal and instructive chastisement, than when the whole territory of this plausible but presumptuous experiment is made to droop and to wither under it as if struck by a judgment from heaven—till at length that earth out of which the rich draw all their wealth and the poor all their subsistence, refuses to nourish the children who have abandoned her; and both parties are involved in the wreck of one common and overwhelming visitation.

15. But we read the same lesson in all the laws and movements of political economy. The superior wisdom of nature is demonstrated in the mischief which is done by any aberration therefrom—when her processes are disturbed or intermeddled with by the wisdom of man. The philosophy of free trade is grounded on the principle, that society is most enriched or best served, when commerce is left to its own spontaneous evolutions; and is neither fostered by the artificial encouragements, nor fettered by the artificial restraints of human policy. The greatest economic good is rendered to the community, by each man being left to consult and to labour for his own particular good—or, in other words, a more prosperous result is obtained by the spontaneous play and busy competition of