

few instances, like those which are so quietly and manageably, but withal effectually, met in the country parishes of Scotland, would still occur in every little community, however virtuous or well regulated. And in regard to these, there is another law of the mental constitution, by which nature hath made special provision for them—even the beautiful law of compassion, in virtue of which the sight of another in agony, (and most of all perhaps in the agony of pining hunger,) would, if unrelieved, create a sensation of discomfort in the heart of the observer, scarcely inferior to what he should have felt had the suffering and the agony been his own.

6. But in England, the state, regardless of all the indices which nature had planted in the human constitution, hath taken the regulation of this matter into its own hands. By its law of pauperism, it hath, in the first instance, ordained for the poor a legal property in the soil; and thereby, running counter to the strong possessory affection, it hath done violence to the natural and original distribution of the land, and loosened the secure hold of each separate owner on the portion which belongs to him. And in the second instance, distrustful of the efficacy of compassion, it, by way of helping forward its languid energies, hath applied the strong hand of power to it. Now it so happens, that nothing more effectually stifles compassion, or puts it to flight, than to be thus