

perty in which we find ourselves actually landed, is the result of a natural process, under which all that a man earns by his industry is acknowledged to be his own—or, when the original mode of acquisition is lost sight of, all that a man retains by long and undisturbed possession is felt and acknowledged to be his own also. Legislation ought to do no more than barely recognise these principles, and defend its subjects against the violation of them. And when it attempts more than this—when it offers to 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