

and amidst many fluctuations. It is a mystery and a marvel to many an observer, how the seemingly frail and precarious interest of the labouring classes should, after all, have the stamina of such endurance, as to weather the most fearful reverses both of commerce and of the seasons, and that, somehow or other, we find, after an interval of gloomy suffering and still gloomier fears, that the families do emerge again into the same state of sufficiency as before. We know not a fitter study for the philanthropist than the working of that mechanism by which a process so gratifying is caused, or in which he will find greater reason to admire the exquisite skill of those various adaptations that must be referred to the providence of Him who framed society, and suited so wisely to each other the elements of which it is composed.

17. There is nought which appears more variable than the operation of those elements by which the annual supply of the national subsistence is regulated. How unlike in character is one season to another; and between the extremes of dryness and moisture, how exceedingly different may be the amount of that produce on which the sustenance of man essentially depends. Even after that the promise of abundance is well nigh realized, the hurricane of a single day, passing over the yet uncut but ripened corn, or the rain of a few weeks, to drench and macerate the sheaves that lie piled together on the harvest-field, were enough