

But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that a poor-law has become inevitable in Scotland. Though unable to recognise that right on the part of the poor for which Paley contends, there exists a right to legislate in their behalf on the part of the State which we cannot avoid recognising. The State has as decidedly a right to impose a tax in order that a portion of its subjects may not be destroyed by starvation, as it has a right to impose a tax in order that a portion of its subjects may not be destroyed by an invading enemy ; and there are cases in which the enactment of a poor-law may be imperatively a duty. In such a state of things as that drawn by Goldsmith in his allegory of Asem the Man-hater, for instance, where, in a country whose inhabitants were devoid of all pity, the diseased and the aged were suffered to perish by the way-side, a poor-law would have been the State's only alternative. It would have been as much its duty to interpose a tax between its perishing people and destruction in a case of this kind, as it would be its duty to levy a tax for carrying on a war of defence against a merciless enemy, who was ravaging its territories with fire and sword. There is another principle on which a State may well interfere. During the great plague of Marseilles, the living, sunk in the indifference of despair, would no longer bury their dead, and fifteen hundred bodies lay rotting in the sun outside the city gate, adding, by their poisonous effluvium, at once to the horrors and the intensity of the contagion. The magistracy interfered, and compelled their interment ; and who can doubt that the magistracy did right in the case ? Now it seems unquestionable that, among our neglected poor, diseases originate which, like the effluvium of the dead at Marseilles, spread infection and death through all classes of the community ; and the circumstance derives to the State both a right and a duty in behalf of all its people to remove, through a provision for the poor, the distress and squalor in which