

mankind at large might be successfully coped with, if men made a proper use of their reason, under the guidance of philanthropy and benevolence. In particular classes of men of limited extent, united by special ties and having all their great interests in common, these individual inequalities might, for the most part, be easily met; and, much to the honour of our own times, in a great many cases they are so met. All that is requisite to effect this most desirable result is, that the individuals of the co-operating body shall consent, during their *ordinary or average state*, to make a trifling sacrifice of present means, a mere fractional deduction from some of their present superfluities or indulgences, or, at most, of their dispensable comforts, in order to provide that *general compensating medium*, to which they may look in the event of their falling below this ordinary or average state. Those who are so fortunate as not to require such compensation, have, by this arrangement, the gratification of knowing and feeling that they had prepared against the contingency which was as likely to be their lot as another's; while, at any rate, they have administered to the necessities of their less-fortunate brethren who, in a reversed state of things, would have been the benefactors and not the benefited. Money being now the universal representative of things relating to man's material wants, it is, of course, by means of it that the co-operative and compensative principle is carried into practical effect. It is in this point of view, that a mere trifle deducted from the weekly, monthly, or annual income of any set of men—scarcely at all missed at the time—may be made to return to them, in the day of their necessities, multiplied a thousandfold; and stand to them as strength in their weakness, health in their sickness, competence in their poverty, vigour in their old age, and even take the form of blessings to those nearest and dearest to them, when they themselves have paid the great debt which all must pay.

In all these arrangements of the co-operative or mutual kind, this essential quality, this crowning excellence, is never to be overlooked, namely, that while they stimulate and gratify the active feelings of benevolence and brotherly love in all who contribute to the general stock, they entail no sense of dependence, much less any obligation of charity, on those whose lot it is to draw from it. What they gave they gave voluntarily for the good of all; what they receive they receive as a right, not as a boon; or, if a boon, only such a boon as the best and most independent of men ought to be happy in receiving from their fellows, in recognition of the common weakness of their common humanity. So far from being a burthen on either party, such aid is, assuredly, of the kind that is "twice blessed, blessing him that gives and him that takes." Unlike eleemosynary relief, or charity in the common sense of the word, this mode of ministering to man's wants, so far from degrading the receiver or encouraging a slavish spirit of dependence, cherishes feelings of independence, excites the noble pride of self-reliance, engenders habits of moderation and prudence, and checks the tendency to imprudence and thoughtless extravagance so common to us all. Such an arrangement teaches even the young to look before and after, and forces every one to take that sober and