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a thing that all the contracts for the work-house went among themselves that no one, unless he was one of the board, ever offered at all; so they got just what price they liked. Now what were the magistrates and gentlemen about, not to stop such things? It was a very good law, Ben, if it had been rightly worked; but those who were put to look after it either cheated themselves or let others cheat, and then cried out that the rates were eating up all the rents. I tell you what, Ben, I have often thought that the old poor-law was a very safe thing in times of famine or want of work. Men won't stand and see their children starve. If people don't give them food they will take it, and, once they begin taking, will take something more. I recollect hearing a lecturer man say, that the first duty of the soil was the support of every one upon it, and then I thought that it was a very lucky thing that there was a law for making it do that duty in a regular sort of way, rather than let those who wanted support take it where they could find it."

"They would tell you that the same is the case now," answered Ben, "though it is not, Jacob, for it was a very different case when a man who could get a little