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AN ESSAY

ON THE

PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION;

OR,

A VIEW OF ITS PAST AND PRESENT EFFECTS

ON

*HUMAN HAPPINESS;*

WITH

AN INQUIRY INTO OUR PROSPECTS RESPECTING THE FUTURE  
REMOVAL OR MITIGATION OF THE EVILS WHICH  
IT OCCASIONS.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## THE SECOND VOLUME.

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## BOOK II.

OF THE CHECKS TO POPULATION IN THE DIFFERENT STATES OF MODERN EUROPE.

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### CHAP. VI.

*Of the Checks to Population in France.*

AS the parochial registers in France, before the revolution, were not kept with particular care, nor for any great length of time, and as the few which have been produced exhibit no very extraordinary results, I should not have made this country the subject of a distinct chapter, but for a circumstance attending the revolution, which has excited considerable surprise. This is, the undiminished state of the population in spite of the losses sustained during so long and destructive a contest.

A great national work, founded on the reports of the prefects in the different departments, is at present in some state of forwardness at Paris, and when completed may reasonably be expected to form a very valuable accession to the materials of statistical science in general. The returns of all the prefects are not however yet complete ; but I was positively assured by the person who has the principal superintendence of them, that enough is already known to be certain that the population of the old territory of France has rather increased than diminished during the revolution.

Such an event, if true, very strongly confirms the general principles of this work ; and assuming it for the present as a fact, it may tend to throw some light on the subject, to trace a little in detail the manner in which such an event might happen.

In every country there is always a considerable body of unmarried persons, formed by the gradual accumulation of the excess of the number arising annually to the age of puberty above the number of persons annually married. The stop to the further accumulation of this body is when its number

ber is such, that the yearly mortality equals the yearly accessions that are made to it. In the Pays de Vaud, as appeared in the last chapter, this body, including widows and widowers, persons who are not actually in the state of marriage, equals the whole number of married persons. But in a country like France, where both the mortality and the tendency to marriage are much greater than in Switzerland, this body does not bear so large a proportion to the population.

According to a calculation in an *Essai d'une Statistique Générale*, published at Paris in 1800, by M. Peuchet, the number of unmarried males in France between 18 and 50 is estimated at 1,451,063; and the number of males, whether married or not, between the same ages, at 5,000,000<sup>a</sup>. It does not appear at what period exactly this calculation was made; but as the author uses the expression *en tems ordinaire*, it is probable that he refers to the period before the revolution. Let us suppose, then, that this number of 1,451,063 expresses the collective body of unmarried males of a military age at the commencement of the revolution.

<sup>a</sup> P. 32, 8vo. 78 pages.

The population of France before the beginning of the war was estimated by the Constituent Assembly at 26,363,074<sup>a</sup>; and there is no reason to believe that this calculation was too high. Necker, though he mentions the number 24,800,000, expresses his firm belief that the yearly births at that time amounted to above a million, and consequently, according to his multiplier of  $25\frac{3}{4}$ , the whole population was nearly 26 millions<sup>b</sup>; and this calculation was made ten years previous to the estimate of the Constituent Assembly.

Taking then the annual births at rather above a million, and estimating that rather above  $\frac{2}{3}$  would die under 18, which appears to be the case from some calculations of M. Peuchet<sup>c</sup>, it will follow, that about 600,000 persons will annually arrive at the age of 18.

The annual marriages, according to Necker, are 213,774<sup>d</sup>; but as this number

<sup>a</sup> A. Young's *Travels in France*, vol. i. c. 17, p. 466, 4to. 1792.

<sup>b</sup> *De l'Administration des Finances*, tom. i. c. ix. p. 256, 12mo. 1785.

<sup>c</sup> *Essai*, p. 31.

<sup>d</sup> *De l'Administration des Finances*, tom. i. c. ix. p. 255.



is an average of ten years, taken while the population was increasing, it is probably too low. If we take 220,000, then 440,000 persons will be supposed to marry out of the 600,000 rising to a marriageable age ; and, consequently, the excess of those rising to the age of 18 above the number wanted to complete the usual proportion of annual marriages, will be 160,000, or 80,000 males. It is evident, therefore, that the accumulated body of 1,451,063 unmarried males, of a military age, and the annual supply of 80,000 youths of 18, might be taken for the service of the state, without affecting in any degree the number of annual marriages. But we cannot suppose that the 1,451,063 should be taken all at once ; and many soldiers are married, and in a situation not to be entirely useless to the population. Let us suppose 600,000 of the corps of unmarried males to be embodied at once ; and this number to be kept up by the annual supply of 150,000 persons, taken partly from the 80,000, rising annually to the age of 18, and not wanted to complete the number of annual marriages, and partly from  
the

the 851,063 remaining of the body of unmarried males, which existed at the beginning of the war.

It is evident, that from these two sources 150,000 might be supplied each year, for ten years, and yet allow of an increase in the usual number of annual marriages of above 10,000.

It is true that in the course of the ten years many of the original body of unmarried males will have passed the military age; but this will be balanced, and indeed much more than balanced, by their utility in the married life. From the beginning it should be taken into consideration, that though a man of fifty be generally considered as past the military age, yet, if he marry a fruitful subject, he may by no means be useless to the population; and in fact the supply of 150,000 recruits each year would be taken principally from the 300,000 males rising annually to 18; and the annual marriages would be supplied in a great measure from the remaining part of the original body of unmarried persons. Widowers and bachelors of forty and fifty,  
who

who in the common state of things might have found it difficult to obtain an agreeable partner, would probably see these difficulties removed in such a scarcity of husbands ; and the absence of 600,000 persons would of course make room for a very considerable addition to the number of annual marriages. This addition in all probability took place. Many among the remaining part of the original body of bachelors, who might otherwise have continued single, would marry under this change of circumstances ; and it is known that a very considerable portion of youths under 18, in order to avoid the military conscriptions, entered prematurely into the married state. This was so much the case, and contributed so much to diminish the number of unmarried persons, that in the beginning of the year 1798 it was found necessary to repeal the law, which had exempted married persons from the conscriptions ; and those who married subsequently to this new regulation were taken indiscriminately with the unmarried. And though after this the levies fell in part upon those who were  
actually

actually engaged in the peopling of the country; yet the number of marriages untouched by these levies might still remain greater than the usual number of marriages before the revolution; and the marriages which were broken by the removal of the husband to the armies would not probably have been entirely barren.

Sir Francis d'Ivernois, who had certainly a tendency to exaggerate, and probably has exaggerated considerably, the losses of the French nation, estimates the total loss of the troops of France, both by land and sea, up to the year 1799, at a million and a half<sup>a</sup>. The round numbers which I have

<sup>a</sup> *Tableau des Pertes*, &c. c. ii. p. 7.—Mons. Garnier, in the notes to his edition of Adam Smith, calculates that only about a sixtieth part of the French population was destroyed in the armies. He supposes only 500,000 embodied at once, and that this number was supplied by 400,000 more in the course of the war; and allowing for the number which would die naturally, that the additional mortality occasioned by the war was only about 45,000 each year. *Tom. v. note xxx. p. 284.* If the actual loss were no more than these statements make it, a small increase of births would have easily repaired it; but I should think that these estimates are probably as much below the truth, as Sir Francis d'Ivernois's are above.

allowed,

allowed for the sake of illustrating the subject, exceed Sir Francis d'Ivernois's estimate by six hundred thousand. He calculates however a loss of a million of persons more, from the other causes of destruction attendant on the revolution; but as this loss fell indiscriminately on all ages and both sexes, it would not affect the population in the same degree, and will be much more than covered by the 600,000 men in the full vigour of life, which remain above Sir Francis's calculation. It should be observed also, that in the latter part of the revolutionary war the military conscriptions were probably enforced with still more severity in the newly-acquired territories than in the old state; and as the population of these new acquisitions is estimated at five or six millions, it would bear a considerable proportion of the million and a half supposed to be destroyed in the armies. The law which facilitated divorces to so great a degree in the early part of the revolution was radically bad both in a moral and political view, yet, under the circumstance of a great scarcity of men, it would  
operate

operate a little like the custom of polygamy, and increase the number of children in proportion to the number of husbands. In addition to this, the women without husbands do not appear all to have been barren; as the proportion of illegitimate births is now raised to  $\frac{1}{11}$  of the whole number of births, from  $\frac{1}{47}$  <sup>a</sup>, which it was before the revolution; and though this be a melancholy proof of the depravation of morals, yet it would certainly contribute to increase the number of births; and as the female peasants in France were enabled to earn more than usual during the revolution, on account of the scarcity of hands, it is probable that a considerable portion of these children would survive.

Under all these circumstances, it cannot appear impossible, and scarcely even improbable, that the population of France should remain undiminished, in spite of all the causes of destruction which have operated upon it during the course of the revolution, provided the agriculture of the country has been such as to continue

<sup>a</sup> Essai de Peuchet, p. 28.

the means of subsistence unimpaired. And it seems now to be generally acknowledged that, however severely the manufactures of France may have suffered, her agriculture has increased rather than diminished. At no period of the war can we suppose that the number of embodied troops exceeded the number of men employed before the revolution in manufactures. Those who were thrown out of work by the destruction of these manufactures, and who did not go to the armies, would of course betake themselves to the labours of agriculture; and it was always the custom in France for the women to work much in the fields, which custom was probably increased during the revolution. At the same time, the absence of a large portion of the best and most vigorous hands would raise the price of labour; and as, from the new land brought into cultivation, and the absence of a considerable part of the greatest consumers<sup>a</sup> in foreign countries,

<sup>a</sup> Supposing the increased number of children at any period to equal the number of men absent in the armies, yet these children, being all very young, could not be supposed

countries, the price of provisions would not rise in proportion, this advance in the price of labour would not only operate as a powerful encouragement to marriage, but would enable the peasants to live better, and to rear a greater number of their children.

At all times the number of small farmers and proprietors in France was great ; and though such a state of things is by no means favourable to the clear surplus produce or disposable wealth of a nation ; yet sometimes it is not unfavourable to the absolute produce, and it has always a strong tendency to encourage population. From the sale and division of many of the large domains of the nobles and clergy, the number of landed proprietors has considerably increased during the revolution ; and as a part of these domains consisted of parks and chaces, new territory has been given to the plough. It is true that the land-tax has been not only too heavy, but injudiciously imposed. It is probable,

supposed to consume a quantity equal to that which would be consumed by the same number of grown-up persons.

however,



however, that this disadvantage has been nearly counterbalanced by the removal of the former oppressions, under which the cultivator laboured; and that the sale and division of the great domains may be considered as a clear advantage on the side of agriculture, or at any rate of the gross produce, which is the principal point with regard to mere population.

These considerations make it appear probable that the means of subsistence have at least remained unimpaired, if they have not increased, during the revolution; and a view of the cultivation of France in its present state certainly rather tends to confirm this supposition.

We shall not therefore be inclined to agree with Sir Francis d'Ivernois in his conjecture that the annual births in France have diminished by one-seventh during the revolution<sup>a</sup>. On the contrary, it is more probable that they have increased by this number. The average proportion of births to the population in all France, before the revolution, was, according to

<sup>a</sup> Tableau des Pertes, &c. c. ii. p. 14.

Necker, as 1 to  $25\frac{3}{4}$ <sup>a</sup>. It has appeared in the reports of some of the prefects which have been returned, that the proportion in many country places was raised to 1 to 21, 22,  $22\frac{1}{2}$ , and 23<sup>b</sup>; and though these proportions might, in some degree, be caused by the absence of a part of the population in the armies, yet I have little doubt that they are principally to be attributed to the birth of a greater number of children than usual. If, when the reports of all the prefects are put together, it should appear, that the number of births has not increased in proportion to the population, and yet that the population is undiminished; it will follow, either that Necker's multiplier for the births was too small, which is extremely probable, as from this cause he appears to have calculated the population too low; or that the mortality among those not exposed to violent deaths has been less than usual; which, from the high price of labour and the desertion of the towns for the country, is not unlikely.

<sup>a</sup> De l'Administration des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 254.

<sup>b</sup> Essai de Peuchet, p. 28.

According

According to Necker and Moheau, the mortality in France, before the revolution, was 1 in 30 or  $30\frac{1}{5}$ <sup>a</sup>. Considering that the proportion of the population which lives in the country is to that in the towns as  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 1<sup>b</sup>, this mortality is extraordinarily great, caused probably by the misery arising from an excess of population; and from the remarks of Arthur Young on the state of the peasantry in France<sup>c</sup>, which are completely sanctioned by Necker<sup>d</sup>, this appears to have been really the case. If we suppose that, from the removal of a part of this redundant population, the mortality has decreased from 1 in 30 to 1 in 35, this favourable change would go a considerable way in repairing the breaches made by war on the frontiers.

The probability is, that both the causes

<sup>a</sup> De l'Administration des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 255. Essai de Peuchet, p. 29.

<sup>b</sup> Young's Travels in France, vol. i. c. xvii. p. 466.

<sup>c</sup> See generally c. xvii. vol. i. and the just observations on these subjects interspersed in many other parts of his very valuable Tour.

<sup>d</sup> De l'Administration des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 262, et seq.

mentioned

mentioned have operated in part. The births have increased, and the deaths of those remaining in the country have diminished ; so that, putting the two circumstances together, it will probably appear, when the results of all the reports of the prefects are known, that, including those who have fallen in the armies and by violent means, the deaths have not exceeded the births in the course of the revolution.

The returns of the prefects are to be given for the year IX. of the republic, and to be compared with the year 1789 ; but if the proportion of births to the population be given merely for the individual year IX. it will not shew the average proportion of births to the population during the course of the revolution. In the confusion occasioned by this event, it is not probable that any very exact registers should have been kept ; but from theory I should be inclined to expect that soon after the beginning of the war, and at other periods during the course of it, the proportion of births to the whole population would be

be greater than in 1800 and 1801<sup>a</sup>. If it should appear by the returns, that the number

<sup>a</sup> In the *Statistique Générale et Particulière de la France, et de ses Colonies*, lately published, the returns of the prefects for the year IX. are given, and seem to justify this conjecture. The births are 955,430, the deaths 821,871, and the marriages 202,177. These numbers hardly equal Necker's estimates; and yet all the calculations in this work, both with respect to the whole population and its proportion to a square league, make the old territory of France more populous now than at the beginning of the revolution. The estimate of the population, at the period of the Constituent Assembly, has already been mentioned; and at this time the number of persons to a square league was reckoned 996. In the year VI. of the republic, the result of the Bureau de Cadastre gave a population of 26,048,254, and the number to a square league 1,020. In the year VII. Dèpèze calculated the whole population of France at 33,501,094, of which 28,810,694 belonged to ancient France; the number to a square league 1,101; but the calculations, it appears, were founded upon the first estimate made by the Constituent Assembly, which was afterwards rejected as too high. In the years IX. and X. the addition of Piedmont and the isle of Elba raised the whole population to 34,376,313; the number to a square league 1,086. The number belonging to Old France is not stated. It seems to have been about 28,000,000.

In the face of these calculations, the author takes a lower multiplier than Necker for the births, observing, that though Necker's proportions remained true in the

ber of annual marriages has not increased during the revolution, the circumstance will

towns, yet in the country the proportion of births had increased to  $\frac{1}{21}$ ,  $\frac{1}{22}$ ,  $\frac{1}{22} \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{23}$ , which he attributes to the premature marriages, to avoid the military levies ; and on the whole, concludes with mentioning 25 as the proper multiplier. And yet, if we make use of this multiplier, we shall get a population under 25 millions, instead of 28 millions. It is true, indeed, that no just inferences can be drawn from the births of a single year ; but, as these are the only births referred to, the contradiction is obvious. Perhaps the future returns may solve the difficulty, and the births in the following years be greater ; but I am inclined to think, as I have mentioned in the text, that the greatest increase in the proportion of births was before the year IX. and probably during the first six or seven years of the republic, while married persons were exempt from the military conscriptions. If the state of the agricultural part of the nation has been improved by the revolution, I am strongly inclined to believe that the proportions both of births and deaths will be found to diminish. In so fine a climate as France, nothing but the very great misery of the lower classes could occasion a mortality of  $\frac{1}{30}$ , and a proportion of births as  $\frac{1}{25} \frac{3}{4}$ , according to Necker's calculations. And consequently, upon this supposition, the births for the year IX. may not be incorrect, and in future the births and deaths may not bear so large a proportion to the population. The contrast between France and England in this respect is quite wonderful.

The part of this work relating to population is not drawn

will be obviously accounted for by the extraordinary increase in the illegitimate births mentioned before in this chapter, which amount at present to one-eleventh of all the births, instead of one-forty-seventh,

drawn up with much knowledge of the subject. One remark is very curious. It is observed that the proportion of marriages to the population is as 1 to 110, and of births as 1 to 25; from which it is inferred, that one-fourth of the born live to marry. If this inference were just, France would soon be depopulated.

In calculating the value of lives, the author makes use of Buffon's tables, which are entirely incorrect, being founded principally on registers taken from the villages round Paris. They make the probability of life at birth only a little above eight years; which, taking the towns and the country together, is very short of the just average.

Scarcely any thing worth noticing has been added in this work to the details given in the Essay of Peuchet, which I have already frequently referred to. On the whole I have not seen sufficient grounds to make me alter any of my conjectures in this chapter, though probably they are not all well-founded. Indeed, in adopting Sir F. d'Ivernois' calculations respecting the actual loss of men during the revolution, I never thought myself borne out by facts; but the reader will be aware that I adopted them rather for the sake of illustration than from supposing them strictly true.

according to the calculation of Necker before the revolution <sup>a</sup>.

Sir Francis d'Ivernois observes, "that  
" those have yet to learn the first principles  
" of political arithmetic, who imagine that  
" it is in the field of battle and the hospitals  
" that an account can be taken of the  
" lives which a revolution or a war has  
" cost. The number of men it has killed  
" is of much less importance than the number  
" of children which it has prevented,  
" and will still prevent, from coming into  
" the world. This is the deepest wound  
" which the population of France has received."  
"—"Supposing," he says, "that,  
" of the whole number of men destroyed,  
" only two millions had been united to as  
" many females: according to the calculation  
" of Buffon, these two millions of  
" couples ought to bring into the world

<sup>a</sup> Essai de Peuchet, p. 28. It is highly probable that this increase of illegitimate births occasioned a more than usual number of children to be exposed in those dreadful receptacles, *les Hôpitaux des Enfants trouvés*, as noticed by Sir Francis d'Ivernois; but probably this cruel custom was confined to particular districts, and the number exposed, upon the whole, might bear no great proportion to the sum of all the births.

" twelve.



“ twelve millions of children, in order to  
“ supply, at the age of thirty-nine, a num-  
“ ber equal to that of their parents. This  
“ is a point of view, in which the conse-  
“ quences of such a destruction of men be-  
“ come almost incalculable; because they  
“ have much more effect with regard  
“ to the twelve millions of children, which  
“ they prevent from coming into existence,  
“ than with regard to the actual loss of the  
“ two millions and a half of men for whom  
“ France mourns. It is not till a future  
“ period that she will be able to estimate  
“ this dreadful breach <sup>a</sup>.”

And yet, if the foregoing reasonings are well-founded, France may not have lost a single birth by the revolution. She has the most just reason to mourn the two millions and a half of individuals which she may have lost, but not their posterity; because, if these individuals had remained in the country, a proportionate number of children born of other parents, which are now living in France, would not have come into existence. If, in

<sup>a</sup> *Tableau des Pertes, &c.* c. ii. p. 13, 14.

the best-governed country in Europe, we were to mourn the posterity which is prevented from coming into being, we should always wear the habit of grief.

It is evident that the constant tendency of the births in every country, to supply the vacancies made by death, cannot, in a moral point of view, afford the slightest shadow of excuse for the wanton sacrifice of men. The positive evil, that is committed in this case, the pain, misery, and wide-spreading desolation and sorrow, that are occasioned to the existing inhabitants, can by no means be counterbalanced by the consideration, that the numerical breach in the population will be rapidly repaired. We can have no other right, moral or political, except that of the most urgent necessity, to exchange the lives of beings in the full vigour of their enjoyments, for an equal number of helpless infants.

It should also be remarked that, though the numerical population of France may not have suffered by the revolution, yet, if her losses have been in any degree equal to the conjectures on the subject, her military strength

strength cannot be unimpaired. Her population at present must consist of a much greater proportion than usual of women and children ; and the body of unmarried persons, of a military age, must be diminished in a very striking manner. This indeed is known to be the case, from the returns of the prefects which have already been received.

It has appeared that the point at which the drains of men will begin essentially to affect the population of a country is, when the original body of unmarried persons is exhausted, and the annual demands are greater than the excess of the number of males, rising annually to the age of puberty, above the number wanted to complete the usual proportion of annual marriages. France was probably at some distance from this point at the conclusion of the war ; but in the present state of her population, with an increased proportion of women and children, and a great diminution of males of a military age, she could not make the same gigantic exertions, which were made at one period, without trenching

trenching on the sources of her population.

At all times the number of males of a military age in France was small in proportion to the population, on account of the tendency to marriage<sup>a</sup>, and the great number of children. Necker takes particular notice of this circumstance. He observes, that the effect of the very great misery of the peasantry is to produce a dreadful mortality of infants under three or four years of age ; and the consequence is, that the number of young children will always be in too great a proportion to the number of grown-up people. A million of individuals, he justly observes, will in this case neither present the same military force nor the same capacity of labour, as an equal number of individuals in a country where the people are less miserable<sup>b</sup>.

Switzerland, before the revolution, could have brought into the field, or have employed

<sup>a</sup> The proportion of marriages to the population in France, according to Necker, is 1 to 113, tom. i. c. ix. p. 255.

<sup>b</sup> De l'Administration des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 263.  
in

in labour appropriate to grown-up persons, a much greater proportion of her population than France at the same period <sup>a</sup>.

For

<sup>a</sup> Since I wrote this chapter, I have had an opportunity of seeing the *Analyse des Procès Verbaux des Conseils Généraux de Département*, which gives a very particular and highly curious account of the internal state of France for the year VIII. With respect to the population, out of 69 departments, the reports from which are given, in 16 the population is supposed to be increased; in 42 diminished; in 9 stationary; and in 2 the active population is said to be diminished, but the numerical to remain the same. It appears, however, that most of these reports are not founded on actual enumerations; and without such positive data, the prevailing opinions on the subject of population, together with the necessary and universally acknowledged fact of a very considerable diminution in the males of a military age, would naturally dispose people to think that the numbers upon the whole must be diminished. Judging merely from appearances, the substitution of a hundred children for a hundred grown-up persons would certainly not produce the same impression with regard to population. I should not be surprised, therefore, if, when the enumerations for the year IX. are completed, it should appear that the population upon the whole has not diminished. In some of the reports *l'aisance générale répandue sur le peuple*, and *la division des grands propriétés*, are mentioned as the causes of increase; and almost universally, *les mariages prématurés*, and *les mariages multipliés par la crainte des loix militaires*, are particularly noticed.

With

For the state of population in Spain, I refer the reader to the valuable and entertaining travels of Mr. Townsend in that country,

With respect to the state of agriculture, out of 78 reports, 6 are of opinion that it is improved; 10, that it is deteriorated; 70 demand that it should be encouraged in general; 32 complain *de la multiplicité des défrichemens*; and 12 demand *des encouragemens pour les défrichemens*. One of the reports mentions, *la quantité prodigieuse de terres vagues mise en culture depuis quelque tems, et les travaux multipliées, au delà de ce que peuvent exécuter les bras employés en agriculture*; and others speak of *les défrichemens multipliés qui ont eu lieu depuis plusieurs années*, which appeared to be successful at first; but it was soon perceived that it would be more profitable to cultivate less, and cultivate well. Many of the reports notice the cheapness of corn, and the want of sufficient vent for this commodity; and in the discussion of the question respecting the division of the *biens communaux*, it is observed, that, “le partage, en opérant le défrichement de ces biens, a sans doute produit une augmentation réelle de denrées, mais d’un autre côté, les vaines pâtures n’existent plus, et les bestiaux sont peut-être diminués.” On the whole therefore I should be inclined to infer that, though the agriculture of the country does not appear to have been conducted judiciously so as to obtain a large neat produce, yet the gross produce had by no means been diminished during the revolution; and that the attempt to bring so much new land under cultivation had contributed to make the scarcity of labourers still more

country, in which he will often find the principle of population very happily illustrated. I should have made it the subject of

more sensible. And if it be allowed that the food of the country did not decrease during the revolution, the high price of labour, which is very generally noticed, must have operated as a most powerful encouragement to population among the labouring part of the society.

The land-tax, or *contribution foncière*, is universally complained of; indeed it appears to be extremely heavy, and to fall very unequally. It was intended to be only a fifth of the neat produce; but, from the unimproved state of agriculture in general, the number of small proprietors, and particularly the attempt to cultivate too much surface in proportion to the capital employed, it often amounts to a fourth, a third or even a half. When property is so much divided that the rent and profit of a farm must be combined, in order to support a family upon it, a land-tax must necessarily greatly impede cultivation; though it has little or no effect of this kind when farms are large, and let out to tenants, as is most frequently the case in England. Among the impediments to agriculture mentioned in the reports, the too great division of lands from the new laws of succession is noticed. The partition of some of the great domains would probably contribute to the improvement of agriculture; but subdivisions of the nature here alluded to would certainly have a contrary effect, and would tend most particularly to diminish neat produce, and make a land-tax both oppressive and unproductive. If all the land in England were divided into  
farms

of a distinct chapter, but was fearful of extending this part of the work too much, and of falling almost unavoidably into too many

farms of 20*l.* a year, we should probably be more populous than we are at present; but as a nation we should be extremely poor. We should be almost without disposable revenue, and should be under a total inability of maintaining the same number of manufactures or collecting the same taxes as at present. All the departments demand a diminution of the *contribution foncière* as absolutely necessary to the prosperity of agriculture.

Of the state of the hospitals and charitable establishments, of the prevalence of beggary and the mortality among the exposed children, a most deplorable picture is drawn in almost all the reports; from which we should at first be disposed to infer a greater degree of poverty and misery among all the lower classes of people in general. It appears, however, that the hospitals and charitable establishments lost almost the whole of their revenues during the revolution; and this sudden subtraction of support from a great number of people who had no other reliance, together with the known failure of manufactures in the towns, and the very great increase of illegitimate children, might produce all the distressing appearances described in the reports, without impeaching the great fact of the meliorated condition of agricultural labourers in general, necessarily arising from the acknowledged high price of labour and comparative cheapness of corn; and it is from this part of the society that the effective population of a country is principally supplied.

If



many repetitions, from the necessity of drawing the same kind of inference from so many different countries. I could expect, besides,

If the poor's rates of England were suddenly abolished, there would undoubtedly be the most complicated distress among those who were before supported by them; but I should not expect that either the condition of the labouring part of the society in general, or the population of the country, would suffer from it. As the proportion of illegitimate children in France has risen so extraordinarily as from  $\frac{1}{47}$  of all the births to  $\frac{1}{11}$ , it is evident that more might be abandoned in hospitals, and more out of these die than usual, and yet a more than usual number be reared at home, and escape the mortality of those dreadful receptacles. It appears that from the low state of the funds in the hospitals the proper nurses could not be paid, and numbers of children died from absolute famine. Some of the hospitals at last very properly refused to receive any more.

The reports, upon the whole, do not present a favourable picture of the internal state of France; but something is undoubtedly to be attributed to the nature of these reports, which, consisting as they do of observations explaining the state of the different departments, and of particular demands, with a view to obtain assistance or relief from government, it is to be expected that they should lean rather to the unfavourable side. When the question is respecting the imposition of new taxes, or the relief from old ones, people will generally complain of their poverty. On the subject of taxes, indeed, it would appear, as if the

besides, to add very little to what has been so well done by Mr. Townsend.

the French government must be a little puzzled. For though it very properly recommended to the *Conseils généraux* not to indulge in vague complaints, but to mention specific grievances, and propose specific remedies, and particularly not to advise the abolition of one tax without suggesting another; yet all the taxes appear to me to be reprobated, and most frequently in general terms, without the proposal of any substitute. *La contribution foncière, la taxe mobiliare, les barrières, les droits de douane*, all excite bitter complaints; and the only new substitute that struck me was a tax upon game, which, being at present almost extinct in France, cannot be expected to yield a revenue sufficient to balance all the rest. The work, upon the whole, is extremely curious; and as shewing the wish of the government to know the state of each department, and to listen to every observation and proposal for its improvement, is highly creditable to the ruling power. It was published for a short time; but the circulation of it was soon stopped and confined to the ministers, *les conseils généraux*, &c. Indeed the documents are evidently more of a private than of a public nature, and certainly have not the air of being intended for general circulation.

## CHAP. VII.

*Of the Checks to Population in France (continued).*

I HAVE not thought it advisable to alter the conjectural calculations and suppositions of the preceding chapter, on account of the returns of the 'prefects for the year IX, as well as some returns published since by the government in 1813, having given a smaller proportion of births than I had thought probable; first, because these returns do not contain the early years of the revolution, when the encouragement to marriage and the proportion of births might be expected to be the greatest; and secondly, because they still seem fully to establish the main fact, which it was the object of the chapter to account for, namely, the undiminished population of France, notwithstanding the losses sustained during the revolution; although it may have been effected rather by a decreased proportion of  
deaths

deaths than an increased proportion of births.

According to the returns of the year IX, the proportions of the births, deaths, and marriages, to the whole population, are as follows:—

Births.	Deaths.	Marriages.
1 in 33	1 in $38\frac{1}{2}$	1 in 157 <sup>a</sup> .

But these are in fact only the proportions of one year, from which no certain inference can be drawn. They are also applied to a population between three and four millions greater than was contained in ancient France, which population may have always had a smaller proportion of births, deaths, and marriages; and further, it appears highly probable from some of the statements in the *Analyse des Procès Verbaux*, that the

<sup>a</sup> See a valuable note of M. Prevost of Geneva to his Translation of this Work, vol. ii. p. 88. M. Prevost thinks it probable that there are omissions in the returns of the births, deaths, and marriages, for the year IX. He further shews that the proportion of the population to the square league for Old France should be 1014, and not 1086. But if there is reason to believe that there are omissions in the registers, and that the population is made too great, the real proportions will be essentially different from those which are here given.

registers had not been very carefully kept. Under these circumstances, they cannot be considered as proving what the numbers imply.

In the year XI., according to the *Statistique Elementaire* by Peuchet, published subsequently to his *Essai*, an inquiry was instituted under the orders of M. Chaptal for the express purpose of ascertaining the average proportion of births to the population<sup>a</sup>; and such an inquiry, so soon after the returns of the year IX., affords a clear proof that these returns were not considered by the minister as correct. In order to accomplish the object in view, choice was made of those communes in 30 departments distributed over the whole surface of France, which were likely to afford the most accurate returns. And these returns for the years VIII., IX., and X., gave a proportion of births as 1 in  $28\frac{3.5}{100}$ ; of deaths, as 1 in  $30\frac{9}{100}$ ; and of marriages, as 1 in  $132\frac{7.8}{1000}$ .

It is observed by M. Peuchet that the proportion of population to the births is

<sup>a</sup> P. 331. Paris, 1805.

here much greater than had been formerly assumed, but he thinks that, as this calculation had been made from actual enumerations, it should be adopted in preference.

The returns published by the government in 1813 make the population of ancient France 28,786,911, which, compared with 28,000,000, the estimated population of the year IX., shew an increase of about 800,000 in the 11 years, from 1802 to 1813.

No returns of marriages are given, and the returns of births and deaths are given only for fifty departments.

In these fifty departments, during the ten years beginning with 1802 and ending with 1811, the whole number of births amounted to 5,478,669, and of deaths to 4,696,857, which, on a population of 16,710,719, indicates a proportion of births as 1 in  $30\frac{1}{2}$ , and of deaths as 1 in  $35\frac{1}{2}$ .

It is natural to suppose that these fifty departments were chosen on account of their shewing the greatest increase. They contain indeed nearly the whole increase that had taken place in all the departments from the time of the enumeration in the year IX.;  
and

and consequently the population of the other departments must have been almost stationary. It may further be reasonably conjectured that the returns of marriages were not published on account of their being considered as unsatisfactory, and shewing a diminution of marriages, and an increased proportion of illegitimate births.

From these returns, and the circumstances accompanying them, it may be concluded, that whatever might have been the real proportion of births before the revolution, and for the six or seven subsequent years, when the *mariages prématurés* are alluded to in the Procès Verbaux, and proportions of births as 1 in 21, 22, and 23, are mentioned in the Statistique Générale, the proportions of births, deaths, and marriages, are now all considerably less than they were formerly supposed to be<sup>a</sup>. It

<sup>a</sup> In the year 1792 a law was passed extremely favourable to early marriages. This was repealed in the year XI., and a law substituted which threw great obstacles in the way of marriage, according to Peuchet (p. 234). These two laws will assist in accounting for a small proportion of births and marriages in the ten years previous to 1813, consistently with the possibility of a large pro-

It has been asked, whether if this fact be allowed, it does not clearly follow that the population was incorrectly estimated before the revolution, and that it has been diminished rather than increased since 1792? To this question I should distinctly answer, that it does not follow. It has been seen, in many of the preceding chapters, that the proportions of births, deaths, and marriages, are extremely different in different countries, and there is the strongest reason for believing that they are very different in the same country at different periods, and under different circumstances.

That changes of this kind have taken place in Switzerland has appeared to be almost certain. A similar effect from increased healthiness in our own country may be considered as an established fact. And if we give any credit to the best authorities that can be collected on the subject, it can scarcely be doubted that the rate of mortality has diminished, during the last one or two hundred years, in almost every country  
portion in the first six or seven years after the commencement of the revolution.

in



in Europe. There is nothing therefore that ought to surprise us in the mere fact of the same population being kept up, or even a decided increase taking place, under a smaller proportion of births, deaths, and marriages. And the only question is, whether the actual circumstances of France seem to render such a change probable.

Now it is generally agreed that the condition of the lower classes of people in France before the revolution was very wretched. The wages of labour were about 20 sous, or ten pence a day, at a time when the wages of labour in England were nearly seventeen pence, and the price of wheat of the same quality in the two countries was not very different. Accordingly Arthur Young represents the labouring classes of France, just at the commencement of the revolution, as "76 per cent. worse fed, worse clothed, and worse supported, both in sickness and health, than the same classes in England\*." And though this statement is perhaps rather too strong, and sufficient

\* Young's Travels in France, vol. i. p. 437.

allowance is not made for the real difference of prices, yet his work every where abounds with observations which shew the depressed condition of the labouring classes in France at that time, and imply the pressure of the population very hard against the limits of subsistence.

On the other hand, it is universally allowed that the condition of the French peasantry has been decidedly improved by the revolution and the division of the national domains. All the writers who advert to the subject notice a considerable rise in the price of labour, partly occasioned by the extension of cultivation, and partly by the demands of the army. In the *Statistique Élémentaire* of Peuchet, common labour is stated to have risen from 20 to 30 sous<sup>a</sup>, while the price of provisions appears to have remained nearly the same; and Mr. Birbeck, in his late *Agricultural Tour in France*<sup>b</sup>, says that the price of labour without board is twenty *pence* a day, and that provisions of all kinds are full as cheap again as in England. This would give the French

<sup>a</sup> P. 391.

<sup>b</sup> P. 13.

labourer the same command of subsistence as an English labourer would have with three shillings and four pence a day. But at no time were the wages of common day-labour in England so high as three shillings and four pence.

Allowing for some errors in these statements, they are evidently sufficient to establish a very marked improvement in the condition of the lower classes of people in France. But it is next to a physical impossibility that such a relief from the pressure of distress should take place without a diminution in the rate of mortality; and if this diminution in the rate of mortality has not been accompanied by a rapid increase of population, it must necessarily have been accompanied by a smaller proportion of births. In the interval between 1802 and 1813 the population seems to have increased, but to have increased slowly. Consequently a smaller proportion of births, deaths, and marriages, or the more general operation of prudential restraint, is exactly what the circumstances would have led us to expect. There is perhaps no proposition  
more

more incontrovertible than this, that, in two countries, in which the rate of increase, the natural healthiness of climate, and the state of towns and manufactures are supposed to be nearly the same, the one in which the pressure of poverty is the greatest will have the greatest proportion of births, deaths, and marriages.

It does not then by any means follow, as has been supposed, that because since 1802 the proportion of births in France has been as 1 in 30, Necker ought to have used 30 as his multiplier instead of  $25\frac{3}{4}$ . If the representations given of the state of the labouring classes in France before and since the revolution be in any degree near the truth, as the march of the population in both periods seems to have been nearly the same, the present proportion of births could not have been applicable at the period when Necker wrote. At the same time it is by no means improbable that he took too low a multiplier. It is hardly credible under all circumstances that the population of France should have increased in the interval between 1785 and 1802 so much as from  $25\frac{1}{2}$  millions

to

to 28. But if we allow that the multiplier might at that time have been 27 instead of  $25\frac{3}{4}$ , it will be allowing as much as is in any degree probable, and yet this will imply an increase of nearly two millions from 1785 to 1813; an increase far short of the rate that has taken place in England, but still sufficient amply to shew the force of the principle of population in overcoming obstacles apparently the most powerful.

With regard to the question of the increase of births in the six or seven first years after the commencement of the revolution, there is no probability of its ever being determined.

In the confusion of the times, it is scarcely possible to suppose that the registers should have been regularly kept; and as they were not collected in the year IX., there is no chance of their being brought forward in a correct state at a subsequent period.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Of the Checks to Population in England.*

THE most cursory view of society in this country must convince us, that throughout all ranks the preventive check to population prevails in a considerable degree. Those among the higher classes, who live principally in towns, often want the inclination to marry, from the facility with which they can indulge themselves in an illicit intercourse with the sex. And others are deterred from marrying by the idea of the expenses that they must retrench, and the pleasures of which they must deprive themselves, on the supposition of having a family. When the fortune is large, these considerations are certainly trivial; but a preventive foresight of this kind has objects of much greater weight for its contemplation as we go lower.

A man

A man of liberal education, with an income only just sufficient to enable him to associate in the rank of gentlemen, must feel absolutely certain that, if he marry and have a family, he shall be obliged to give up all his former connexions. The woman, whom a man of education would naturally make the object of his choice, is one brought up in the same habits and sentiments with himself, and used to the familiar intercourse of a society totally different from that to which she must be reduced by marriage. Can a man easily consent to place the object of his affection in a situation so discordant, probably, to her habits and inclinations? Two or three steps of descent in society, particularly at this round of the ladder, where education ends and ignorance begins, will not be considered by the generality of people as a chimerical, but a real evil. If society be desirable, it surely must be free, equal and reciprocal society, where benefits are conferred as well as received, and not such as the dependent finds with his patron, or the poor with the rich.

These

These considerations certainly prevent many in this rank of life from following the bent of their inclinations in an early attachment. Others, influenced either by a stronger passion or a weaker judgment, disregard these considerations ; and it would be hard, indeed, if the gratification of so delightful a passion as virtuous love did not sometimes more than counterbalance all its attendant evils. But I fear it must be acknowledged that the more general consequences of such marriages are rather calculated to justify than disappoint the forebodings of the prudent.

The sons of tradesmen and farmers are exhorted not to marry, and generally find it necessary to comply with this advice, till they are settled in some business or farm, which may enable them to support a family. These events may not perhaps occur till they are far advanced in life. The scarcity of farms is a very general complaint ; and the competition in every kind of business is so great, that it is not possible that all should be successful. Among the clerks in counting-houses, and the competitors for all  
kinds



kinds of mercantile and professional employment, it is probable that the preventive check to population prevails more than in any other department of society.

The labourer who earns eighteen pence or two shillings a day, and lives at his ease as a single man, will hesitate a little before he divides that pittance among four or five, which seems to be not more than sufficient for one. Harder fare and harder labour he would perhaps be willing to submit to for the sake of living with the woman that he loves ; but he must feel conscious, that, should he have a large family and any ill fortune whatever, no degree of frugality, no possible exertion of his manual strength, would preserve him from the heart-rending sensation of seeing his children starve, or of being obliged to the parish for their support. The love of independence is a sentiment that surely none would wish to see eradicated ; though the poor-laws of England, it must be confessed, are a system of all others the most calculated gradually to weaken this sentiment, and in the end will probably destroy it completely.

The

The servants who live in the families of the rich, have restraints yet stronger to break through in venturing upon marriage. They possess the necessaries, and even the comforts of life, almost in as great plenty as their masters. Their work is easy and their food luxurious, compared with the work and food of the class of labourers; and their sense of dependence is weakened by the conscious power of changing their masters if they feel themselves offended. Thus comfortably situated at present, what are their prospects if they marry? Without knowledge or capital, either for business or farming, and unused and therefore unable to earn a subsistence by daily labour, their only refuge seems to be a miserable alehouse, which certainly offers no very enchanting prospect of a happy evening to their lives. The greater number of them, therefore, deterred by this uninviting view of their future situation, content themselves with remaining single where they are.

If this sketch of the state of society in England be near the truth, it will be allowed that the preventive check to population

pulation operates with considerable force throughout all the classes of the community. And this observation is further confirmed by the abstracts from the registers returned in 1800 in consequence of the Population Act.

The results of these abstracts shew, that the annual marriages in England and Wales are to the whole population as 1 to  $123\frac{1}{3}$ <sup>a</sup>, a smaller proportion of marriages than is to be found in any of the countries which have been examined, except Norway and Switzerland.

<sup>a</sup> Observ. on the Results of the Population Act, p. 11, printed in 1800. The answers to the Population Act have at length happily rescued the question of the population of this country from the obscurity in which it had been so long involved, and have afforded some very valuable data to the political calculator. At the same time it must be confessed that they are not so complete as entirely to exclude reasonings and conjectures respecting the inferences which are to be drawn from them. It is earnestly to be hoped that the subject may not be suffered to drop after the present effort. Now that the first difficulty is removed, an enumeration every ten years might be rendered easy and familiar; and the registers of births, deaths and marriages might be received every year, or at least every five years. I am persuaded, that more inferences are to be drawn respecting the internal state of a country from such registers than we have yet been in the habit of supposing.

In

In the earlier part of the last century, Dr. Short estimated this proportion at about 1 to 115<sup>a</sup>. It is probable that this calculation was then correct; and the present diminution in the proportion of marriages, notwithstanding an increase of population more rapid than formerly, owing to the more rapid progress of commerce and agriculture, is partly a cause, and partly a consequence, of the diminished mortality observed of late years.

The returns of the marriages, pursuant to the late act, are supposed to be less liable to the suspicion of inaccuracy than any other parts of the registers.

Dr. Short, in his *New Observations on Town and Country Bills of Mortality*, says, he will “conclude with the observation of  
“an eminent Judge of this nation, that  
“the growth and increase of mankind is  
“more stunted from the cautious difficulty  
“people make to enter on marriage, from  
“the prospect of the trouble and expenses  
“in providing for a family, than from any  
“thing in the nature of the species.” And,

<sup>a</sup> New Observ. on Bills of Mortality, p. 265. 8vo. 1750.

in conformity to this idea, Dr. Short proposes to lay heavy taxes and fines on those who live single, for the support of the married poor <sup>a</sup>.

The observation of the eminent Judge is, with regard to the numbers which are prevented from being born, perfectly just; but the inference, that the unmarried ought to be punished, does not appear to be equally so. The prolific power of nature is very far indeed from being called fully into action in this country. And yet when we contemplate the insufficiency of the price of labour to maintain a large family, and the amount of mortality which arises directly and indirectly from poverty; and add to this the crowds of children, which are cut off prematurely in our great towns, our manufactories and our work-houses; we shall be compelled to acknowledge, that, if the number born annually were not greatly thinned by this premature mortality, the funds for the maintenance of labour must increase with much greater rapidity than they have ever done hitherto

<sup>a</sup> New Observ. on Bills of Mortality, p. 247. 8vo. 1750.

in this country, in order to find work and food for the additional numbers that would then grow up to manhood.

Those, therefore, who live single, or marry late, do not by such conduct contribute in any degree to diminish the actual population; but merely to diminish the proportion of premature mortality, which would otherwise be excessive; and consequently in this point of view do not seem to deserve any very severe reprobation or punishment.

The returns of the births and deaths are supposed, on good grounds, to be deficient; and it will therefore be difficult to estimate, with any degree of accuracy, the proportion which they bear to the whole population.

If we divide the existing population of England and Wales by the average of burials for the five years ending in 1800, it would appear, that the mortality was only 1 in 49<sup>a</sup>; but this is a proportion so ex-

<sup>a</sup> The population is taken at 9,168,000, and the annual deaths at 186,000. (Obs. on the Results of Pop. Act. p. 6 and 9.)

traordinarily

traordinarily small, considering the number of our great towns and manufactories, that it cannot be considered as approaching to the truth.

Whatever may be the exact proportion of the inhabitants of the towns to the inhabitants of the country, the southern part of this island certainly ranks in that class of states, where this proportion is greater than 1 to 3; indeed there is ample reason to believe, that it is greater than 1 to 2. According to the rule laid down by Crome, the mortality ought consequently to be above 1 in 30<sup>a</sup>; according to Sussmilch, above 1 in 33<sup>b</sup>. In the *Observations on the Results of the Population Act*<sup>c</sup>, many probable causes of deficiency in the registry of the burials are pointed out; but no calculation is offered respecting the sum of these deficiencies, and I have no data whatever to supply such a calculation. I will only observe, therefore, that if we suppose them

<sup>a</sup> Ueber die Bevölkerung der Europäischen Staaten, p. 127.

<sup>b</sup> Sussmilch, Göttliche Ordnung, vol. iii. p. 60.

<sup>c</sup> P. 6.

altogether to amount to such a number as will make the present annual mortality about 1 in 40, this must appear to be the lowest proportion of deaths that can well be supposed, considering the circumstances of the country; and, if true, would indicate a most astonishing superiority over the generality of other states, either in the habits of the people with respect to prudence and cleanliness, or in natural healthiness of situation<sup>a</sup>. Indeed, it seems to be nearly ascertained that both these causes, which tend to diminish mortality, operate in this country to a considerable degree. The

<sup>a</sup> It is by no means surprising, that our population should have been underrated formerly, at least by any person who attempted to estimate it from the proportion of births or deaths. Till the late Population Act no one could have imagined that the actual returns of annual deaths, which might naturally have been expected to be as accurate in this country as in others, would turn out to be less than a 49th part of the population. If the actual returns for France, even so long ago as the ten years ending with 1780, had been multiplied by 49, she would have appeared at that time to have a population of above 40 millions. The average of annual deaths was 818,491. Necker de l'Administration des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 255. 12mo. 1785.



small proportion of annual marriages before mentioned indicates that habits of prudence, extremely favourable to happiness, prevail through a large part of the community, in spite of the poor-laws ; and it appears from the clearest evidence, that the generality of our country parishes are very healthy. Dr. Price quotes an account of Dr. Percival, collected from the ministers of different parishes and taken from positive enumerations, according to which, in some villages, only a 45th, a 50th, a 60th, a 66th, and even a 75th, part dies annually. In many of these parishes the births are to the deaths above 2 to 1, and in a single parish above 3 to 1<sup>a</sup>. These however are particular instances, and cannot be applied to the agricultural part of the country in general. In some of the flat situations, and particularly those near marshes, the pro-

<sup>a</sup> Price's *Observ. on Revers. Paym.* vol. ii. note, p. 10. First additional Essay, 4th edit. In particular parishes, private communications are perhaps more to be depended upon than public returns ; because in general those clergymen only are applied to, who are in some degree interested in the subject, and of course take more pains to be accurate.

portions are found very different, and in a few the deaths exceed the births. In the 54 country parishes, the registers of which Dr. Short collected, choosing them purposely in a great variety of situations, the average mortality was as high as 1 in 37<sup>a</sup>. This is certainly much above the present mortality of our agricultural parishes in general. The period which Dr. Short took, included some considerable epidemics, which may possibly have been above the usual proportion. But sickly seasons should always be included, or we shall fall into great errors. In 1056 villages of Brandenburg, which Sussmilch examined, the mortality for six good years was 1 in 43; for 10 mixed years about 1 in 38½<sup>b</sup>. In the villages of England which Sir F. M. Eden mentions, the mortality seems to be about 1 in 47 or 48<sup>c</sup>; and in the late returns pursuant to the Population Act, a still greater degree of healthiness appears. Com-

<sup>a</sup> New Observations on Bills of Mortality, table ix. p. 133.

<sup>b</sup> Göttliche Ordnung, vol. i. c. ii. s. xxi. p. 74.

<sup>c</sup> Estimate of the Number of Inhabitants in G. Britain.

bining these observations together, if we take 1 in 46 or 1 in 48, as the average mortality of the agricultural part of the country, including sickly seasons, this will be the lowest that can be supposed with any degree of probability. But this proportion will certainly be raised to 1 in 40, when we blend it with the mortality of the towns and the manufacturing part of the community, in order to obtain the average for the whole kingdom.

The mortality in London, which includes so considerable a part of the inhabitants of this country, was, according to Dr. Price, at the time he made his calculations, 1 in  $20\frac{3}{4}$ ; in Norwich 1 in  $24\frac{1}{2}$ ; in Northampton 1 in  $26\frac{1}{2}$ ; in Newbury 1 in  $27\frac{1}{2}$ <sup>a</sup>; in Manchester 1 in 28; in Liverpool 1 in  $27\frac{1}{2}$ <sup>b</sup>, &c. He observes that the number dying annually in towns is seldom so low as 1 in 28, except in consequence of a rapid increase produced by an influx of people at those periods of life when the fewest die, which is

<sup>a</sup> Price's *Observ. on Revers. Paym.* vol. i. note, p. 272.

<sup>b</sup> *Id.* vol. ii. *First additional Essay*, note, p. 4.

the case with Manchester and Liverpool <sup>a</sup>, and other very flourishing manufacturing towns. In general he thinks that the mortality in great towns may be stated at from 1 in 19 <sup>b</sup> to 1 in 22 and 23; in moderate towns, from 1 in 24 to 1 in 28; and in the country villages, from 1 in 40 to 1 in 50 <sup>c</sup>.

The tendency of Dr. Price to exaggerate the unhealthiness of towns may perhaps be objected to these statements; but the objection seems to be only of weight with regard to London. The accounts from the other towns, which are given, are from documents which his particular opinions could not influence <sup>d</sup>. It should be remarked, however,

<sup>a</sup> Price's *Observ. on Revers. Paym.* vol. ii. First additional Essay, note, p. 4.

<sup>b</sup> The mortality at Stockholm was, according to Wargentin, 1 in 19.

<sup>c</sup> *Observ. on Revers. Paym.* vol. ii. First additional Essay, p. 4.

<sup>d</sup> An estimate of the population or mortality of London, before the late enumeration, always depended much on conjecture and opinion, on account of the great acknowledged deficiencies in the registers; but this was not the case in the same degree with the other towns here named. Dr. Price, in allusion to a diminishing population,

however, that there is good reason to believe, that not only London, but the other towns in England, and probably also country villages, were at the time of these calculations less healthy than at present. Dr. William Heberden observes, that the registers of the ten years from 1759 to 1768<sup>a</sup>, from which Dr. Price calculated the probabilities of life in London, indicate a much greater degree of unhealthiness than the registers of late years. And the returns pursuant to the Population Act, even after allowing for great omissions in the burials, exhibit in all our provincial towns, and in the country, a degree of healthiness much greater than had before been calculated. At the same time I cannot but think that 1 in 31, the proportion of mortality for London mentioned in the *Observations on the Results of the Population Act*<sup>b</sup>, is smaller

lation, on which subject it appears that he has so widely erred, says very candidly, that perhaps he may have been insensibly influenced to maintain an opinion once advanced.

<sup>a</sup> Increase and Decrease of Diseases, p. 32, 4to. 1801.

<sup>b</sup> P. 13.

than

than the truth. Five thousand are not probably enough to allow for the omissions in the burials; and the absentees in the employments of war and commerce are not sufficiently adverted to. In estimating the proportional mortality the resident population alone should be considered.

There certainly seems to be something in great towns, and even in moderate towns, peculiarly unfavourable to the very early stages of life; and the part of the community, on which the mortality principally falls, seems to indicate that it arises more from the closeness and foulness of the air, which may be supposed to be unfavourable to the tender lungs of children, and the greater confinement which they almost necessarily experience, than from the superior degree of luxury and debauchery usually and justly attributed to towns. A married pair with the best constitutions, who lead the most regular and quiet life, seldom find that their children enjoy the same health in towns as in the country.

In London, according to former calculations, one half of the born died under three  
years

years of age ; in Vienna and Stockholm under two ; in Manchester under five ; in Norwich under five ; in Northampton under ten <sup>a</sup>. In country villages, on the contrary, half of the born live till thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-six, and above. In the parish of Ackworth, in Yorkshire, it appears from a very exact account kept by Dr. Lee of the ages at which all died there for 20 years, that half of the inhabitants live to the age of 46<sup>b</sup> ; and there is little doubt, that, if the same kind of account had been kept in some of those parishes before mentioned, in which the mortality is so small as 1 in 60, 1 in 66, and even 1 in 75, half of the born would be found to have lived to 50 or 55.

As the calculations respecting the ages to which half of the born live in towns depend more upon the births and deaths which appear in the registers, than upon any estimates of the number of people, they are on this account less liable to uncer-

<sup>a</sup> Price's *Observ. on Revers. Paym.* vol. i. p. 264—266. 4th edit.

<sup>b</sup> *Id.* vol. i. p. 268.

tainty, than the calculations respecting the proportion of the inhabitants of any place which dies annually.

To fill up the void occasioned by this mortality in towns, and to answer all further demands for population, it is evident that a constant supply of recruits from the country is necessary ; and this supply appears in fact to be always flowing in from the redundant births of the country. Even in those towns where the births exceed the deaths, this effect is produced by the marriages of persons not born in the place. At a time when our provincial towns were increasing much less rapidly than at present, Dr. Short calculated that  $\frac{9}{19}$  of the married were strangers <sup>a</sup>. Of 1618 married men, and 1618 married women, examined at the Westminster Infirmary, only 329 of the men and 495 of the women had been born in London <sup>b</sup>.

Dr. Price supposes that London with its neighbouring parishes, where the deaths exceed the births, requires a supply of 10,000

<sup>a</sup> New Observations on Bills of Mortality, p. 76.

<sup>b</sup> Price's Observ. on Revers. Paym. vol. ii. p. 17.



persons annually. Graunt, in his time, estimated this supply for London alone at 6000<sup>a</sup>; and he further observes, that, let the mortality of the city be what it will, arising from plague, or any other great cause of destruction, it always fully repairs its loss in two years<sup>b</sup>.

As all these demands, therefore, are supplied from the country, it is evident that we should fall into a very great error, if we were to estimate the proportion of births to deaths for the whole kingdom by the proportion observed in country parishes, from which there must be such numerous emigrations.

We need not, however, accompany Dr. Price in his apprehensions that the country will be depopulated by these emigrations, at least as long as the funds for the maintenance of agricultural labour remain unimpaired. The proportion of births, as well as the proportion of marriages, clearly proves, that, in spite of our increasing towns and manufactories, the de-

<sup>a</sup> Short's New Observ. Abstract from Graunt, p. 277.

<sup>b</sup> Id. p. 276.

mand on the country for people is by no means very pressing.

If we divide the present population of England and Wales by the average number of baptisms for the last five years <sup>a</sup>, it will appear, that the baptisms are to the population as 1 to very nearly 36 <sup>b</sup>; but it is supposed, with reason, that there are great omissions in the baptisms, and that these omissions are greater than in the burials:

Dr. Short estimated the proportion of births to the population of England as 1 to 28 <sup>c</sup>. In the agricultural report of Suffolk, the proportion of births to the population was calculated at 1 to 30. For the whole of Suffolk, according to the late returns, this proportion is not much less than 1 to 33 <sup>d</sup>. According to a correct account  
of

<sup>a</sup> This was written before the omitted returns were added in 1810. These additions make the births in 1800 amount to 263,000, instead of 255,426, and increase the proportion of registered births to 1 in 35.—See the next chapter.

<sup>b</sup> Average medium of baptisms for the last five years 255,426. Pop. 9,198,000. (*Observ. on Results*, p. 9.)

<sup>c</sup> *New Observ.* p. 267.

<sup>d</sup> In private inquiries, dissenters and those who do not christen

of thirteen villages from actual enumerations, produced by Sir F. M. Eden, the proportion of births to the population was as 1 to 33; and according to another account on the same authority, taken from towns and manufacturing parishes, as 1 to  $27\frac{2}{3}$ <sup>a</sup>. If, combining all these circumstances, and adverting at the same time to the acknowledged deficiency in the registry of births, and the known increase of our population of late years, we suppose the true proportion of the births to the population to be as 1 to 30; then assuming the present mortality to be 1 in 40, as before suggested, we shall nearly keep the proportion of baptisms to burials, which appears in the late returns. The births will be to the deaths as 4 to 3 or  $13\frac{1}{3}$  to 10, a proportion more than sufficient to account for the increase

christen their children, will not of course be reckoned in the population; consequently such inquiries, as far as they extend, will more accurately express the true proportion of births; and we are fairly justified in making use of them, in order to estimate the acknowledged deficiency of births in the public returns.

<sup>a</sup> Estimate of the Number of Inhabitants in Great Britain, &c. p. 27.

of population which has taken place since the American war, after allowing for those who may be supposed to have died abroad.

In the *Observations on the Results of the Population Act* it is remarked that the average duration of life in England appears to have increased in the proportion of 117 to 100<sup>a</sup>, since the year 1780. So great a change, in so short a time, if true, would be a most striking phenomenon. But I am inclined to suspect that the whole of this proportional diminution of burials does not arise from increased healthiness, but is occasioned, in part, by the greater number of deaths which must necessarily have taken place abroad, owing to the very rapid increase of our foreign commerce since this period; and to the great number of persons absent on naval and military employments, and the constant supply of fresh recruits necessary to maintain undiminished so great a force. A perpetual drain of this kind would certainly have a tendency to produce the effect observed in the returns, and might keep the burials stationary, while

<sup>a</sup> P. 6.

the births and marriages were increasing with some rapidity. At the same time, as the increase of population since 1780 is incontrovertible, and the present mortality extraordinarily small, I should still be disposed to believe, that much the greater part of the effect is to be attributed to increased healthiness.

A mortality of 1 in 36 is perhaps too small a proportion of deaths for the average of the whole century ; but a proportion of births to deaths as 12 to 10, calculated on a mortality of 1 in 36, would double the population of a country in 125 years, and is therefore as great a proportion of births to deaths as can be true for the average of the whole century. None of the late calculations imply a more rapid increase than this.

We must not suppose, however, that this proportion of births to deaths, or any assumed proportion of births and deaths to the whole population, has continued nearly uniform throughout the century. It appears from the registers of every country which have been kept for any length of time, that

considerable variations occur at different periods. Dr. Short, about the middle of the century, estimated the proportion of births to deaths as 11 to 10<sup>a</sup>; and if the births were at the same time a twenty-eighth part of the population, the mortality was then as high as 1 in 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ . We now suppose that the proportion of births to deaths is above 13 to 10; but if we were to assume this proportion as a criterion by which to estimate the increase of population for the next thirty or forty years, we should probably fall into a very gross error. The effects of the late scarcities are strongly marked in the returns of the *Population Act* by a decrease of births and an increase of burials; and should such seasons frequently recur, they would soon destroy the great excess of births which has been observed during the last twenty years; and indeed we cannot reasonably suppose that the resources of this country should increase for any long continuance with such rapidity as to allow of a permanent proportion of births to

<sup>a</sup> New Observ. tables ii. and iii. p. 22 and 44; Price's Observ. on Revers. Paym. vol. ii. p. 311.

deaths as 13 to 10, unless indeed this proportion were principally caused by great foreign drains.

From all the data that could be collected, the proportion of births to the whole population of England and Wales has been assumed to be as 1 to 30; but this is a smaller proportion of births than has appeared in the course of this review to take place in any other country except Norway and Switzerland; and it has been hitherto usual with political calculators, to consider a great proportion of births as the surest sign of a vigorous and flourishing state. It is to be hoped, however, that this prejudice will not last long. In countries circumstanced like America or Russia, or in other countries after any great mortality, a large proportion of births is a favourable symptom; but in the average state of a well-peopled territory there cannot well be a worse sign than a large proportion of births, nor can there well be a better sign than a small proportion.

Sir Francis d'Ivernois very justly observes, that, “ if the various states of Eu-

“ rope kept and published annually an  
“ exact account of their population, noting  
“ carefully in a second column the exact  
“ age at which the children die, this second  
“ column would shew the relative merit of  
“ the governments, and the comparative  
“ happiness of their subjects. A simple  
“ arithmetical statement would then per-  
“ haps be more conclusive than all the ar-  
“ guments that could be adduced<sup>a</sup>.” In  
the importance of the inferences to be drawn  
from such tables, I fully agree with him;  
and to make these inferences, it is evident,  
that we should attend less to the column ex-  
pressing the number of children born, than  
to the column expressing the number which  
survived the age of infancy and reached  
manhood; and this number will almost in-  
variably be the greatest, where the propor-  
tion of the births to the whole population is  
the least. In this point, we rank next after  
Norway and Switzerland, which, consider-  
ing the number of our great towns and ma-  
nufactories, is certainly a very extraordi-  
nary fact. As nothing can be more clear,

<sup>a</sup> *Tableau des Pertes, &c.* c. ii. p. 16.

than



than that all our demands for population are fully supplied, if this be done with a small proportion of births, it is a decided proof of a very small mortality, a distinction on which we may justly pride ourselves. Should it appear from future investigations that I have made too great an allowance for omissions both in the births and in the burials, I shall be extremely happy to find that this distinction, which, other circumstances being the same, I consider as the surest test of happiness and good government, is even greater than I have supposed it to be. In despotic, miserable, or naturally unhealthy countries, the proportion of births to the whole population will generally be found very great.

On an average of the five years ending in 1800 the proportion of births to marriages is 347 to 100. In 1760 it was 362 to 100, from which an inference is drawn, that the registers of births, however deficient, were certainly not more deficient formerly than at present\*. But a change of this nature, in the appearance of the registers, might arise

\* *Observ. on the Results of the Population Act*, p. 8.

from causes totally unconnected with deficiencies. If from the acknowledged greater healthiness of the latter part of the century, compared with the middle of it, a greater number of children survived the age of infancy, a greater proportion of the born would of course live to marry, and this circumstance would produce a greater present proportion of marriages compared with the births. On the other hand, if the marriages were rather more prolific formerly than at present, owing to their being contracted at an earlier age, the effect would be a greater proportion of births compared with the marriages. The operation of either or both of these causes would produce exactly the effect observed in the registers: and consequently from the existence of such an effect no inference can justly be drawn against the supposed increasing accuracy of the registers. The influence of the two cases just mentioned on the proportions of annual births to marriages will be explained in a subsequent chapter.

With regard to the general question, whether we have just grounds for supposing  
that

that the registry of births and deaths was more deficient in the former part of the century than in the latter part; I should say, that the late returns tend to confirm the suspicion of former inaccuracy, and to shew that the registers of the earlier part of the century, in every point of view, afford very uncertain data on which to ground any estimates of past population. In the years 1710, 1720, and 1730, it appears from the returns that the deaths exceeded the births; and taking the six periods ending in 1750<sup>a</sup>, including the first half of the century, if we compare the sum of the births with the sum of the deaths, the excess of the births is so small, as to be perfectly inadequate to account for the increase of a million, which, upon a calculation from the births alone, is supposed to have taken place in that time<sup>b</sup>. Consequently, either the registers are very inaccurate, and the deficiencies in the births greater than in the deaths; or these periods, each at the distance of ten years, do not ex-

<sup>a</sup> Population Abstracts, Parish Registers. Final summary, p. 455.

<sup>b</sup> Observ. on the Results of the Population Act, p. 9.  
press

press the just average. These particular years may have been more unfavourable with respect to the proportion of births to deaths than the rest; indeed one of them, 1710, is known to have been a year of great scarcity and distress. But if this suspicion, which is very probable, be admitted, so as to affect the six first periods, we may justly suspect the contrary accident to have happened with regard to the three following periods ending with 1780; in which thirty years it would seem, by the same mode of calculation, that an increase of a million and a half had taken place<sup>a</sup>. At any rate it must be allowed, that the three separate years, taken in this manner, can by no means be considered as sufficient to establish a just average; and what rather encourages the suspicion, that these particular years might be more than usually favourable with regard to births is, that the increase of births from 1780 to 1785 is unusually small<sup>b</sup>, which would naturally be

<sup>a</sup> Observ. on the Results of the Population Act, p. 9.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

the case without supposing a slower progress than before, if the births in 1780 had been accidentally above the average.

On the whole, therefore, considering the probable inaccuracy of the earlier registers, and the very great danger of fallacy in drawing general inferences from a few detached years, I do not think that we can depend upon any estimates of past population, founded on a calculation from the births, till after the year 1780, when every following year is given, and a just average of the births may be obtained. As a further confirmation of this remark I will just observe, that in the final summary of the abstracts from the registers of England and Wales it appears, that in the year 1790 the total number of births was 248,774, in the year 1795, 247,218, and in 1800, 247,147<sup>a</sup>. Consequently if we had been estimating the population from the births, taken at three separate periods of five years, it would have appeared, that the population during the last ten years had been regularly decreasing,

<sup>a</sup> Population Abstracts, Parish Registers, p. 455.

though

though we have very good reason to believe, that it has increased considerably.

In the *Observations on the Results of the Population Act*<sup>a</sup>, a table is given of the population of England and Wales throughout the last century calculated from the births; but for the reasons given above, little reliance can be placed on it; and for the population at the revolution, I should be inclined to place more dependence on the old calculations from the number of houses.

It is possible, indeed, though not probable, that these estimates of the population at the different periods of the century may not be very far from the truth, because opposite errors may have corrected each other; but the assumption of the uniform proportion of births on which they are founded is false on the face of the calculations themselves. According to these calculations, the increase of population was more rapid in the period from 1760 to 1780, than from 1780 to 1800; yet it appears, that the proportion of deaths about the year 1780 was greater than in 1800 in the ratio

<sup>a</sup> P. 9.

of 117 to 100. Consequently the proportion of births before 1780 must have been much greater than in 1800, or the population in that period could not possibly have increased faster. This overthrows at once the supposition of any thing like uniformity in the proportion of births.

I should indeed have supposed from the analogy of other countries, and the calculations of Mr. King and Dr. Short, that the proportion of births at the beginning and in the middle of the century was greater than at the end. But this supposition would, in a calculation from the births, give a smaller population in the early part of the century than is given in the *Results of the Population Act*, though there are strong reasons for supposing that the population there given is too small. According to Davenant, the number of houses in 1690 was 1,319,215, and there is no reason to think that this calculation erred on the side of excess. Allowing only five to a house instead of  $5\frac{1}{3}$ , which is supposed to be the proportion at present, this would give a population of above six millions and a half, and it is perfectly

fectly incredible, that from this time to the year 1710, the population should have diminished nearly a million and a half. It is far more probable that the omissions in the births should have been much greater than at present, and greater than in the deaths; and this is further confirmed by the observation before alluded to, that in the first half of the century the increase of population, as calculated from the births, is much greater than is warranted by the proportion of births to deaths. In every point of view, therefore, the calculations from the births are little to be depended on.

It must indeed have appeared to the reader, in the course of this work, that registers of births or deaths, excluding any suspicion of deficiencies, must at all times afford very uncertain data for an estimate of population. On account of the varying circumstances of every country, they are both precarious guides. From the greater apparent regularity of the births, political calculators have generally adopted them as the ground of their estimates in preference to the deaths. Necker, in estimating the population of France,



France, observes, that an epidemic disease, or an emigration, may occasion temporary differences in the deaths, and that therefore the number of births is the most certain criterion<sup>a</sup>. But the very circumstance of the apparent regularity of the births in the registers will now and then lead into great errors. If in any country we can obtain registers of burials for two or three years together, a plague or mortal epidemic will always shew itself, from the very sudden increase of the deaths during its operation, and the still greater diminution of them afterwards. From these appearances, we should of course be directed, not to include the whole of a great mortality in any very short term of years. But there would be nothing of this kind to guide us in the registers of births; and after a country had lost an eighth part of its population by a plague, an average of the five or six subsequent years might shew an increase in the number of births, and our calculations would give the population the highest at the

<sup>a</sup> De l'Administration des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 252.  
12mo. 1785.

very time that it was the lowest. This appears very strikingly in many of Sussmilch's tables, and most particularly in a table for Prussia and Lithuania, which I shall insert in a following chapter; where, in the year subsequent to the loss of one third of the population, the births were considerably increased, and in an average of five years but very little diminished; and this at a time when, of course, the country could have made but a very small progress towards recovering its former population.

We do not know indeed of any extraordinary mortality which has occurred in England since 1700; and there are reasons for supposing that the proportions of the births and deaths to the population during the last century have not experienced such great variations as in many countries on the continent; at the same time it is certain that the sickly seasons which are known to have occurred, would, in proportion to the degree of their fatality, produce similar effects; and the change which has been observed in the mortality of late years, should dispose us to believe, that similar changes might

might formerly have taken place respecting the births, and should instruct us to be extremely cautious in applying the proportions, which are observed to be true at present, to past or future periods.

## CHAP. IX.

*Of the Checks to Population in England (continued).*

THE returns of the Population Act in 1811 undoubtedly presented extraordinary results. They shewed a greatly accelerated rate of progress, and a greatly improved healthiness of the people, notwithstanding the increase of the towns and the increased proportion of the population engaged in manufacturing employments. They thus furnished another striking instance of the readiness with which population starts forwards, under almost any weight, when the resources of a country are rapidly increasing.

The amount of the population in 1800, together with the proportions of births, deaths and marriages, given in the registers, had made it appear that the population had been for some time increasing at a rate rather exceeding what would result from a proportion

proportion of births to deaths as 4 to 3, with a mortality of 1 in 40.

These proportions would add to the population of a country every year  $\frac{1}{120}$ th part; and if they were to continue, would according to table ii., page 168, double the population in every successive period of  $83\frac{1}{2}$  years. This is a rate of progress which in a rich and well-peopled country might reasonably be expected to diminish rather than to increase. But instead of any such diminution, it appears that as far as 1810 it had been considerably accelerated.

In 1810, according to the returns from each parish, with the additions of  $\frac{1}{30}$  for the soldiers, sailors, &c., the population of England and Wales was estimated at 10,488,000<sup>a</sup>, which compared with 9,168,000, the population of 1800 estimated in a similar manner, shews an increase in the ten years of 1,320,000.

The registered baptisms during ten years were 2,878,906, and the registered burials 1,950,189. The excess of the births is

<sup>a</sup> See the Population Abstracts published in 1811, and the valuable Preliminary Observations by Mr. Rickman.

therefore 928,717, which falls very considerably short of the increase shewn by the two enumerations. This deficiency could only be occasioned either by the enumeration in 1800 being below the truth, or by the inaccuracy of the registers of births and burials, or by the operation of these two causes combined ; as it is obvious that, if the population in 1800 were estimated correctly, and the registers contained all the births and burials, the difference must exceed rather than fall short of the real addition to the population ; that is, it would exceed it exactly by the number of persons dying abroad in the army, navy, &c.

There is reason to believe that both causes had a share in producing the effect observed, though the latter, that is, the inaccuracy of the registers, in much the greatest degree.

In estimating the population throughout the century <sup>a</sup>, the births have been assumed to bear the same proportion at all times to

<sup>a</sup> See a table of the population throughout the century, in page xxv. of the Preliminary Observations to the Population Abstracts, printed in 1811.

the number of people. It has been seen that such an assumption might often lead to a very incorrect estimate of the population of a country at different and distant periods. As the population however is known to have increased with great rapidity from 1800 to 1810, it is probable that the proportion of births did not essentially diminish during that period. But if, taking the last enumeration as correct, we compare the births of 1810 with the births of 1800, the result will imply a larger population in 1800 than is given in the enumeration for that year.

Thus the average of the last five years' births to 1810 is 297,000, and the average of the five years' births to 1800 is 263,000. But 297,000 is to 263,000 as 10,488,000, the population of 1810, to 9,287,000, which must therefore have been the population in 1800 if the proportion of births be assumed to be the same, instead of 9,168,000, the result of the enumeration. It is further to be observed that the increase of population from 1795 to 1800 is according to the table unusually small, compared with most of the preceding periods of five years. And a

slight inspection of the registers will shew that the proportion of births for five years from 1795, including the diminished numbers of 1796 and 1800, was more likely to be below than above the general average. For these reasons, together with the general impression on the subject, it is probable that the enumeration in 1800 was short of the truth, and perhaps the population at that time may be safely taken at as much as 9,287,000 at the least, or about 119,000 greater than the returns gave it.

But even upon this supposition, neither the excess of births above the deaths in the whole of the ten years, nor the proportion of births to deaths, as given in the registers, will account for an increase from 9,287,000 to 10,488,000. Yet it is not probable that the increase has been much less than is shewn by the proportion of the births at the two periods. Some allowance must therefore necessarily be made for omissions in the registers of births and deaths, which are known to be very far from correct, particularly the registers of births.

There is reason to believe that there are  
few



few or no omissions in the register of marriages ; and if we suppose the omissions in the births to be one-6th, this will preserve a proportion of the births to the marriages as 4 to 1, a proportion which appears to be satisfactorily established upon other grounds <sup>a</sup> ; but if we are warranted in this supposition, it will be fair to take the omissions in the deaths at such a number as will make the excess of the births above the deaths in the ten years accord with the increase of population estimated by the increase of the births.

The registered births in the ten years, as was mentioned before, are 2,878,906, which increased by one-6th will be 3,358,723. The registered burials are 1,950,189, which increased by one-12th will be 2,112,704. The latter subtracted from the former will give 1,246,019 for the excess of births, and the increase of population in the ten years, which number added to 9,287,000, the corrected population of 1800, will give 10,533,019, forty-five thousand above the enumeration of 1810, leaving almost exactly

<sup>a</sup> See the Preliminary Observations on the Population Abstracts, p. xxvi.

the number which in the course of the ten years appears to have died abroad. This number has been calculated generally at about  $4\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. on the male births; but in the present case there are the means of ascertaining more accurately the number of males dying abroad during the period in question. In the last population returns the male and female births and deaths are separated; and from the excess of the male births above the female births, compared with the male and female deaths, it appears that forty-five thousand males died abroad<sup>a</sup>.

The assumed omissions therefore in the births and burials seem to answer so far very well.

It remains to see whether the same suppositions will give such a proportion of births to deaths, with such a rate of mortality, as will also account for an increase of numbers in ten years from 9,287,000 to 10,488,000.

If we divide the population of 1810 by

<sup>a</sup> See Population Abstracts, 1811, page 196 of the Parish Register Abstract.

It is certainly very extraordinary that a smaller proportion of males than usual should appear to have died abroad from 1800 to 1810; but as the registers for this period seem to prove it, I have made my calculations accordingly.

the average births of the preceding five years, with the addition of one-sixth, it will appear that the proportion of births to the population is as 1 to 30. But it is obvious that if the population be increasing with some rapidity, the average of births for five years, compared with the population at the end of such period, must give the proportion of births too small. And further there is always a probability that a proportion which is correct for five years may not be correct for ten years. In order to obtain the true proportion applicable to the progress of population during the period in question, we must compare the annual average of the births for the whole term, with the average or mean population of the whole term.

The whole number of births, with the addition of  $\frac{1}{6}$ , is, as before stated, 3,358,723, and the annual average during the ten years 335,872. The mean population, or the mean between 10,488,000 (the population of 1810) and 9,287,000 (the corrected population of 1800) is 9,887,000; and the latter number divided by the average of  
the

the births will give a proportion of births to the population as 1 to rather less than  $29\frac{1}{2}$ , instead of 30, which will make a considerable difference.

In the same manner, if we divide the population of 1810 by the average of the burials for the preceding five years, with the addition of one-12th, the mortality will appear to be as 1 in nearly 50 ; but upon the same grounds as with regard to the births, an average of the burials for five years, compared with the population at the end of such term, must give the proportion of burials too small ; and further it is known, in the present case, that the proportion of burials to the population by no means continued the same during the whole time. In fact the registers clearly shew an improvement in the healthiness of the country, and a diminution of mortality progressively through the ten years ; and while the average number of annual births increased from 263,000 to 297,000, or more than one-8th, the burials increased only from 192,000 to 196,000, or one-48th. It is obviously necessary

cessary then for the purpose in view to compare the average mortality with the average or mean population.

The whole number of burials in the ten years, with the addition of one-12th, is, as was before stated, 2,112,704, and the mean population 9,887,000. The latter, divided by the former, gives the annual average of burials compared with the population as 1 to rather less than 47. But a proportion of births as 1 to  $29\frac{1}{2}$ , with a proportion of deaths as 1 to 47, will add yearly to the numbers of a country one-79th of the whole, and in ten years will increase the population from 9,287,000 to 10,531,000, leaving 43,000 for the deaths abroad, and agreeing very nearly with the calculation founded on the excess of births <sup>a</sup>.

We

<sup>a</sup> A general formula for estimating the population of a country at any distance from a certain period, under given circumstances of births and mortality, may be found in Bridge's Elements of Algebra, p. 225.

$$\text{Log. } A = \text{log. } P + n \times \text{log. } 1 + \frac{m - b}{m \ b}$$

A representing the required population at the end of any number of years; n the number of years; P the actual population

We may presume therefore that the assumed omissions in the births and deaths from 1800 to 1810 are not far from the truth.

But if these omissions of one-6th for the births and one-12th for the burials, may be considered as nearly right for the period between 1800 and 1810, it is probable that they may be applied without much danger of error to the period between 1780 and 1800, and may serve to correct some of the conclusions founded on the births alone. Next to an accurate enumeration, a calculation from the excess of births above the deaths is the most to be depended upon. Indeed population at the given period;  $\frac{1}{m}$  the proportion of yearly deaths to the population, or ratio of mortality;  $\frac{1}{b}$  the proportion of yearly births to the population, or ratio of births.

In the present case,  $P = 9,287,000$ ;  $n = 10$ ;  $m = 47$ ;  $b = 29\frac{1}{2}$ .

$$\frac{m-b}{mb} = \frac{1}{79} \text{ and } 1 + \frac{m-b}{mb} = \frac{80}{79}$$

The log. of  $\frac{80}{79} = 00546$ ;  $\therefore n \times \log. 1 + \frac{m-b}{mb}$   
 $= 05460$ . Log.  $P. = 6.96787$ , which added to  $05460$   
 $= 7.02247$  the log. of  $A$ , the number answering to which  
 is  $10.531,000$ .

when

when the registers contain all the births and deaths, and these are the means of setting out from a known population, it is obviously the same as an actual enumeration ; and where a nearly correct allowance can be made for the omissions in the registers, and for the deaths abroad, a much nearer approximation to it may be obtained in this way than from the proportion of births to the whole population, which is known to be liable to such frequent variations.

The whole number of births returned in the twenty years, from 1780 to 1800, is 5,014,899, and of the burials 3,840,455. If we add one-6th to the former, and one-12th to the latter, the two numbers will be 5,850,715; and 4,160,492, and subtracting the latter from the former, the excess of the births above the deaths will be 1,690,223. Adding this excess to the population of 1780, as calculated in Mr. Rickman's tables, from the births, which is 7,953,000, the result will be 9,643,000, a number which, after making a proper allowance for the deaths abroad, is very much above the population of 1800, as before corrected, and still more above the  
number

number which is given in the table as the result of the enumeration.

But if we proceed upon the safer ground just suggested, and, taking the corrected population of 1800 as established, subtract from it the excess of the births during the twenty years, diminished by the probable number of deaths abroad, which in this case will be about 124,000, we shall have the number 7,721,000 for the population of 1780, instead of 7,953,000; and there is good reason to believe that this is nearer the truth<sup>a</sup>; and that not only in 1780, but in many of the intermediate periods, the estimate from the births has represented the population as greater, and increasing more irregularly, than would be found to be true, if recourse could be had to enumerations. This has arisen from the proportion of births to the population being variable, and, on the whole, greater in 1780, and at other periods during the course of the twenty years, than it was in 1800,

In 1795, for instance, the population is

\* The very small difference between the population of 1780 and 1785, as given in the table, seems strongly to imply that one of the two estimates is erroneous.

represented



represented to be 9,055,000, and in 1800 9,168,000<sup>a</sup>; but if we suppose the first number to be correct, and add the excess of the births above the deaths in the five intervening years, even without making any allowance for omissions in the registers, we shall find that the population in 1800 ought to have been 9,398,000 instead of 9,168,000; or if we take the number returned for 1800 as correct, it will appear by subtracting from it the excess of births during the five preceding years, that the population in 1795 ought to have been 8,825,000, instead of 9,055,000. Hence it follows, that the estimate from the births in 1795 cannot be correct.

To obtain the population at that period, the safest way is to apply the before-mentioned corrections to the registers, and, having made the allowance of  $4\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. on the male births for the deaths abroad, subtract the remaining excess of the births from the corrected returns of 1800. The result in

<sup>a</sup> Population Abstracts, 1811. Preliminary View, p. xxv.

this case will be 8,831,086 for the population of 1795, implying an increase in the five years of 455,914, instead of only 113,000, as shewn by the table calculated from the births.

If we proceed in the same manner with the period from 1790 to 1795, we shall find that the excess of births above the deaths (after the foregoing corrections have been applied, and an allowance has been made of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. upon the male births for the deaths abroad), will be 415,669, which, subtracted from 8,831,086, the population of 1795, as above estimated, leaves 8,415,417 for the population of 1790.

Upon the same principle, the excess of the births above the deaths in the interval between 1785 and 1790 will turn out to be 416,776. The population in 1785 will therefore be 7,998,641. And in like manner the excess of the births above the deaths in the interval between 1780 and 1785 will be 277,544, and the population in 1780 7,721,097.

The

The two tables therefore, of the population, from 1780 to 1810, will stand thus:—

Table, calculated from the births alone, in the Preliminary Observations to the Population Abstracts printed in 1811.		Table, calculated from the excess of the births above the deaths, after an allowance made for the omissions in the registers, and the deaths abroad.	
Population in		Population in	
1780	7,953,000	1780	7,721,000
1785	8,016,000	1785	7,998,000
1790	8,675,000	1790	8,415,000
1795	9,055,000	1795	8,831,000
1800	9,168,000	1800	9,287,000
1805	9,828,000	1805	9,837,000
1810	10,488,000	1810	10,488,000

In the first table, or table calculated from the births alone, the additions made to the population in each period of five years are as follow:—

From 1780 to 1785	63,000
From 1785 to 1790	659,000
From 1790 to 1795	380,000
From 1795 to 1800	113,000
From 1800 to 1805	660,000
From 1805 to 1810	660,000

In

In the second table, or table calculated from the excess of the births above the deaths, after the proposed corrections have been applied, the additions made to the population in each period of five years will stand thus :—

From 1780 to 1785	277,000
From 1785 to 1790	417,000
From 1790 to 1795	416,000
From 1795 to 1800	456,000
From 1800 to 1805	550,000
From 1805 to 1810	651,000

The progress of the population, according to this latter table, appears much more natural and probable than according to the former.

It is in no respect likely that, in the interval between 1780 and 1785, the increase of the population should only have been 63,000, and in the next period 659,000 ; or that, in the interval between 1795 and 1800, it should have been only 113,000, and in the next period 660,000. But it is not necessary to dwell on probabilities ; the most distinct proofs may be brought  
to

to shew that, whether the new table be right or not, the old table must be wrong. Without any allowances being made for omissions in the registers, the excess of the births above the deaths, in the period from 1780 to 1785, shews an increase of 193,000, instead of 63,000. And, on the other hand, no allowances for omissions in the registers, that could with the slightest degree of probability be supposed, would make the excess of births above the deaths in the period from 1785 to 1790 equal to 659,000. Making no allowance for omissions, this excess only amounts to 317,406; and if we were to suppose the omissions in the births one 4th, instead of one 6th, and that there were no omissions in the registers of burials, and that no one died abroad, the excess would still fall short of the number stated by many thousands.

The same results would follow, if we were to estimate the progress of population during these periods by the proportion of births to deaths, and the rate of mortality. In the first period the increase would turn out to be very much greater

than the increase stated, and in the other very much less.

Similar observations may be made with regard to some of the other periods in the old table, particularly that between 1795 and 1800, which has been already noticed.

It will be found on the other hand that, if the proportion of births to deaths during each period be estimated with tolerable accuracy and compared with the mean population, the rate of the progress of the population determined by this criterion will, in every period, agree very nearly with the rate of progress determined by the excess of the births above the deaths, after applying the proposed corrections. And it is further worthy of remark that, if the corrections proposed should be in some degree inaccurate, as is probable, the errors arising from any such inaccuracies are likely to be very much less considerable than those which must necessarily arise from the assumption on which the old table is founded; namely, that the births bear at all times the same proportion to the population.

Of course I do not mean to reject any estimates of population formed in this way, when no better materials are to be found ; but, in the present case, the registers of the burials as well as baptisms are given every year, as far back as 1780, and these registers, with the firm ground of the last enumeration to stand upon, afford the means of giving a more correct table of the population from 1780 than was before furnished, and of shewing at the same time the uncertainty of estimates from the births alone, particularly with a view to the progress of population during particular periods. In estimating the whole population of a large country, two or three hundred thousand are not of much importance ; but, in estimating the rate of increase during a period of five or ten years, an error to this amount is quite fatal. It will be allowed, I conceive, to make an essential difference in our conclusions respecting the rate of increase for any five years which we may fix upon, whether the addition made to the population during the term in question is 63,000

or 277,000, 115,000 or 456,000, 659,000 or 417,000.

With regard to the period of the century previous to 1780, as the registers of the baptisms and burials are not returned for every year, it is not possible to apply the same corrections. And it will be obvious that, in the table calculated from the births previous to this period, when the registers are only given for insulated years at some distance from each other, very considerable errors may arise, not merely from the varying proportion of the births to the population, on averages of five years, but from the individual years produced not representing with tolerable correctness these averages<sup>a</sup>. A very slight glance at the valuable table of baptisms, burials and marriages, given in the Preliminary Observations, to the Population Abstracts<sup>b</sup>, will shew

<sup>a</sup> From the one or the other of these causes, I have little doubt, that the numbers in the table for 1760 and 1770, which imply so rapid an increase of population in that interval, do not bear the proper relation to each other. It is probable that the number given for 1770 is too great.

<sup>b</sup> P. 20.

how



how very little dependence ought to be placed upon inferences respecting the population drawn from the number of births, deaths or marriages in individual years. If, for instance, we were estimating the population in the two years 1800 and 1801, compared with the two following years 1802 and 1803, from the proportion of marriages to the population, assuming this proportion to be always the same, it would appear that, if the population in the first two years were nine millions, in the second two years immediately succeeding it would be considerably above twelve millions, and thus it would seem to have increased above three millions, or more than one-third, in this short interval. Nor would the result of an estimate, formed from the births for the two years 1800 and 1801, compared with the two years 1803 and 1804, be materially different; at least such an estimate would indicate an increase of two millions six hundred thousand in three years.

The reader can hardly be surprised at these results, if he recollects that the births, deaths and marriages bear but a small proportion

proportion to the whole population ; and that consequently variations in either of these, which may take place from temporary causes, cannot possibly be accompanied by similar variations in the whole mass of the population. An increase in the births of one-third, which might occur in a single year, instead of increasing the population one-third, would only perhaps increase it one-eightieth or ninetieth.

It follows therefore, as I stated in the last chapter, that the table of the population for the century previous to 1780, calculated from the returns of the births alone, at the distance of ten years each, can only be considered as a very rough approximation towards the truth, in the absence of better materials, and can scarcely in any degree be depended upon for the comparative rate of increase at particular periods.

The population in 1810, compared with that of 1800, corrected as proposed in this chapter, implies a less rapid increase than the difference between the two enumerations ; and it has further appeared that the assumed proportion of births to deaths as

47 to  $29\frac{1}{2}$  is rather below than above the truth. Yet this proportion is quite extraordinary for a rich and well-peopled territory. It would add to the population of a country one 79th every year, and, were it to continue, would, according to table ii. p. 168 in this volume, double the number of inhabitants in less than fifty-five years.

This is a rate of increase, which in the nature of things cannot be permanent. It has been occasioned by the stimulus of a greatly-increased demand for labour, combined with a greatly-increased power of production, both in agriculture and manufactures. These are the two elements necessary to form an effective encouragement to a rapid increase of population. A failure of either of these must immediately weaken the stimulus ; and there is but too much reason to fear the failure of one of them at present. But what has already taken place is a striking illustration of the principle of population, and a proof that in spite of great towns, manufacturing occupations, and the gradually-acquired habits of an opulent and luxuriant people, if the re-  
sources

sources of a country will admit of a rapid increase, and if these resources are so advantageously distributed as to occasion a constantly-increasing demand for labour, the population will not fail to keep pace with them.

## CHAP. X.

*Of the Checks to Population in Scotland and Ireland.*

AN examination, in detail, of the statistical account of Scotland, would furnish numerous illustrations of the principle of population ; but I have already extended this part of the work so much, that I am fearful of tiring the patience of my readers ; and shall therefore confine my remarks in the present instance to a few circumstances which have happened to strike me.

On account of the acknowledged omissions in the registers of births, deaths and marriages in most of the parishes of Scotland, few just inferences can be drawn from them. Many give extraordinary results. In the parish of Crossmichael \* in Kircudbright, the mortality appears to be only 1 in 98, and the yearly marriages 1 in 192. These proportions would imply the most

\* Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. i. p. 167.

unheard-of

unheard-of healthiness, and the most extraordinary operation of the preventive check; but there can be but little doubt that they are principally occasioned by omissions in the registry of burials, and the celebration of a part of the marriages in other parishes.

In general, however, it appears from registers which are supposed to be accurate, that in the country parishes the mortality is small; and that the proportions of 1 in 45, 1 in 50, and 1 in 55, are not uncommon. According to a table of the probabilities of life, calculated from the bills of mortality in the parish of Kettle by Mr. Wilkie, the expectation of an infant's life is 46·6<sup>a</sup>, which is very high, and the proportion which dies in the first year is only one 10th. Mr. Wilkie further adds, that from 36 parish accounts, published in the first volume, the expectation of an infant's life appears to be 40·3. But in a table which he has produced in the last volume, calculated for the whole of Scotland from Dr. Webster's survey, the expectation at

<sup>a</sup> Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 407.

birth appears to be only 31 years <sup>a</sup>. This, however, he thinks, must be too low, as it exceeds but little the calculations for the town of Edinburgh.

The Scotch registers appeared to be in general so incomplete, that the returns of 99 parishes only are published in the Population Abstracts of 1801; and, if any judgment can be formed from these, they shew a very extraordinary degree of healthiness and a very small proportion of births. The sum of the population of these parishes in 1801 was 217,873 <sup>b</sup>; the average of burials, for five years ending in 1800, was about 3,815; and of births 4,928 <sup>c</sup>: from which it would appear that the mortality in these parishes was only 1 in 56, and the proportion of births 1 in 44. But these proportions are so extraordinary, that it is difficult to conceive that they approach near the truth. Combining them with the calculations of Mr. Wilkie, it will not appear probable that the proportion of deaths and births in Scotland

<sup>a</sup> Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. xxi. p. 383.

<sup>b</sup> Population Abstracts, Parish Registers, p. 459.

<sup>c</sup> Id. p. 458.

should

should be smaller than what has been allowed for England and Wales ; namely, 1 in 40 for the deaths, and 1 in 30 for the births ; and it seems to be generally agreed that the proportion of births to deaths is 4 to 3<sup>a</sup>.

With respect to the marriages, it will be still more difficult to form a conjecture. They are registered so irregularly, that no returns of them are given in the Population Abstract. I should naturally have thought, from the Statistical Account, that the tendency to marriage in Scotland was upon the whole greater than in England ; but if it be true that the births and deaths bear the same proportion to each other, and to the whole population, in both countries, the proportion of marriages cannot be very different. It should be remarked, however, that, supposing the operation of the preventive check to be exactly the same in both countries, and the climates to be equally salubrious, a greater degree of want and poverty would take place in Scotland, before the same mortality was produced as in

<sup>a</sup> Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. xxi. p. 383.

England,



England, owing to the smaller proportion of towns and manufactories in the former country than in the latter.

From a general view of the statistical accounts the result seems clearly to be, that the condition of the lower classes of people in Scotland has been considerably improved of late years. The price of provisions has risen, but almost invariably the price of labour has risen in a greater proportion; and it is remarked in most parishes, that more butcher's meat is consumed among the common people than formerly; that they are both better lodged and better clothed; and that their habits with respect to cleanliness are decidedly improved.

A part of this improvement is probably to be attributed to the increase of the preventive check. In some parishes a habit of later marriages is noticed; and in many places, where it is not mentioned, it may be fairly inferred from the proportions of births and marriages and other circumstances. The writer of the account of the parish of Elgin\*, in enumerating the general causes

\* Vol. v. p. 1.

of depopulation in Scotland, speaks of the discouragement to marriage from the union of farms, and the consequent emigration of the flower of their young men of every class and description, very few of whom ever return. Another cause that he mentions is the discouragement to marriage from luxury ; at least he observes, till people are advanced in years, and then a puny race of children are produced. “ Hence how  
“ many men of every description remain  
“ single? and how many young women of  
“ every rank are never married, who in the  
“ beginning of this century, or even so late  
“ as 1745, would have been the parents of  
“ a numerous and healthy progeny?”

In those parts of the country where the population has been rather diminished by the introduction of grazing, or an improved system of husbandry which requires fewer hands, this effect has chiefly taken place; and I have little doubt that in estimating the decrease of the population since the end of the last, or the beginning of the present century, by the proportion of births at the different periods, they have fallen into  
the

the error which has been particularly noticed with regard to Switzerland and France, and have in consequence made the difference greater than it really is <sup>a</sup>.

The general inference on this subject which I should draw from the different accounts is, that the marriages are rather later than formerly. There are however some decided exceptions. In those parishes where manufactures have been introduced which afford employment to children as soon as they have reached their 6th or 7th year, a habit of marrying early naturally follows; and while the manufacture continues to flourish and increase, the evil arising from it is not very perceptible; though humanity must confess with a sigh, that one of the reasons why it is not so perceptible is, that room is made for fresh families by the unnatural mortality which

\* One writer takes notice of this circumstance, and observes, that formerly the births seem to have borne a greater proportion to the whole population than at present. Probably, he says, more were born, and there was a greater mortality. Parish of Montquitter, *voir* vi. p. 121.

takes place among the children so employed.

There are other parts of Scotland however, particularly the Western Isles, and some parts of the Highlands, where population has considerably increased from the subdivision of possessions ; and where perhaps the marriages may be earlier than they were formerly, though not caused by the introduction of manufactures. Here the poverty which follows is but too conspicuous. In the account of Delting in Shetland <sup>a</sup> it is remarked that the people marry very young, and are encouraged to this by their landlords, who wish to have as many men on their grounds as possible to prosecute the ling fishery ; but that they generally involve themselves in debt and large families. The writer further observes, that formerly there were some old regulations called country acts, by one of which it was enacted, that no pair should marry unless possessed of 40*l.* Scots of free gear. This regulation is not now enforced. It is said

<sup>a</sup> Vol. i. p. 385.

that

that these regulations were approved and confirmed by the parliament of Scotland, in the reign of Queen Mary, or James VI.

In the account of Bressay Burra and Quarff in Shetland <sup>a</sup>, it is observed that the farms are very small, and few have a plough. The object of the proprietors is to have as many fishermen on their lands as possible—a great obstacle to improvements in agriculture. They fish for their masters, who either give them a fee totally inadequate, or take their fish at a low rate. The writer remarks that “in most countries the increase of population is reckoned an advantage, and justly. It is however the reverse in the present state of Shetland. The farms are split. The young men are encouraged to marry without having any stock. The consequence is poverty and distress. It is believed that there is at present in these islands double the number of people that they can properly maintain.”

The writer of the account of Auchter-

<sup>a</sup> Vol. x. p. 194.

derran<sup>a</sup>, in the county of Fife, says that the meagre food of the labouring man is unequal to oppose the effects of incessant hard labour upon his constitution, and by this means his frame is worn down before the time of nature's appointment; and adds, "That people continuing voluntarily to enter upon such a hard situation by marrying, shews how far the union of the sexes and the love of independence are principles of human nature." In this observation, perhaps the love of independence had better have been changed for the love of progeny.

The island of Jura,<sup>b</sup> appears to be absolutely overflowing with inhabitants in spite of constant and numerous emigrations. There are sometimes 50 or 60 on a farm. The writer observes, that such a swarm of inhabitants, where manufactures and many other branches of industry are unknown, are a very great load upon the proprietors, and useless to the state.

<sup>a</sup> Vol. i. p. 449.

<sup>b</sup> Vol. xii. p. 317.

Another writer<sup>a</sup> is astonished at the rapid increase of population, in spite of a considerable emigration to America in 1770, and a large drain of young men during the late war. He thinks it difficult to assign adequate causes for it; and observes that, if the population continue to increase in this manner, unless some employment be found for the people, the country will soon be unable to support them. And in the account of the parish of Callander<sup>b</sup> the writer says, that the villages of this place and other villages in similar situations, are filled with naked and starving crowds of people, who are pouring down for shelter or for bread; and then observes, that whenever the population of a town or village exceeds the industry of its inhabitants, from that moment the place must decline.

A very extraordinary instance of a tendency to rapid increase occurs in the register of the parish of Duthil<sup>c</sup>, in the county of Elgin; and as errors of excess are not so

<sup>a</sup> Parish of Lochalsh, county of Ross, vol. xi. p. 422.

<sup>b</sup> Vol. xi. p. 574.

<sup>c</sup> Vol. iv. p. 308.

probable as errors of omission, it seems to be worthy of attention. The proportion of annual births to the whole population is as 1 to 12, of marriages as 1 to 55, and of deaths the same. The births are to the deaths as 70 to 15, or  $4\frac{2}{3}$  to 1. We may suppose some inaccuracy respecting the number of deaths, which seems to err on the side of defect; but the very extraordinary proportion of the annual births, amounting to  $\frac{1}{12}$  of the whole population, seems not to be easily liable to error; and the other circumstances respecting the parish tend to confirm the statement. Out of a population of 830, there were only three bachelors, and each marriage yielded seven children. Yet with all this, the population is supposed to have decreased considerably since 1745; and it appears that this excessive tendency to increase had been occasioned by an excessive tendency to emigrate. The writer mentions very great emigrations; and observes that whole tribes, who enjoyed the comforts of life in a reasonable degree, had of late years emigrated from different parts of Scotland, from  
mere



mere humour, and a fantastical idea of becoming their own masters and freeholders.

Such an extraordinary proportion of births, caused evidently by habits of emigration, shews the extreme difficulty of depopulating a country merely by taking away its people. Take but away its industry, and the sources of its subsistence, and it is done at once.

It may be observed that in this parish the average number of children to a marriage is said to be seven, though from the proportion of annual births to annual marriages it would appear to be only  $4\frac{2}{3}$ . This difference occurs in many other parishes, from which we may conclude that the writers of these accounts very judiciously adopted some other mode of calculation, than the mere uncorrected proportion of annual births to marriages; and probably founded the results they give, either on personal inquiries, or researches into their registers, to find the number of children, which had been born to each mother in the course of her marriage.

The women of Scotland appear to be  
prolific.

prolific. The average of 6 children to a marriage is frequent; and of 7, and even  $7\frac{1}{2}$ , not very uncommon. One instance is very curious, as it appears as if this number was actually living to each marriage, which would of course imply, that a much greater number had been and would be born. In the parish of Nigg<sup>a</sup>, in the county of Kincardine, the account says that there are 57 land families, and 405 children, which gives nearly  $7\frac{1}{3}$  each; 42 fisher families, and 314 children; nearly  $7\frac{1}{2}$  each. Of the land families which have had no children there were 7; of the fishers, none. If this statement be just, I should conceive that each marriage must have yielded, or would yield, in the course of its duration, as many as 9 or 10 births.

When from any actual survey it appears, that there are about 3 living children to each marriage, or 5 persons, or only  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to a house, which are very common proportions, we must not infer that the average number of births to a marriage is not much above 3. We must recollect, that all the

<sup>a</sup> Vol. vii. p. 194.

marriages or establishments of the present year are of course without children, all of the year before have only one, all of the year before that can hardly be expected to have as many as two, and all of the fourth year will certainly, in the natural course of things, have less than three. One out of five children is a very unusually small proportion to lose in the course of ten years; and after ten years, it may be supposed that the eldest begin to leave their parents; so that if each marriage be supposed accurately to yield 5 births in the course of its duration, the families which had increased to their full complement would only have four children; and a very large proportion of those which were in the earlier stages of increase would have less than three<sup>a</sup>; and consequently, taking into consideration the number of families where one of the parents may be supposed to be dead, I much doubt whether in this case a survey would give  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to a family. In the parish

<sup>a</sup> It has been calculated that, on an average, the difference of age in the children of the same family is about two years.

of Duthil<sup>a</sup>, already noticed, the number of children to a marriage is mentioned as 7, and the number of persons to a house as only 5.

The poor of Scotland are in general supported by voluntary contributions, distributed under the inspection of the minister of the parish; and it appears, upon the whole, that they have been conducted with considerable judgment. Having no claim of right to relief<sup>b</sup>, and the supplies, from the mode of their collection, being necessarily uncertain, and never abundant, the poor have considered them merely as a last resource in cases of extreme distress, and not as a fund on which they might safely rely, and an adequate portion of which belonged to them by the laws of their country in all difficulties.

The consequence of this is, that the com-

<sup>a</sup> Vol. iv. p. 308.

<sup>b</sup> It has lately been stated in Parliament, that the poor-laws of Scotland are not materially different from those of England, though they have been very differently understood and executed; but, whatever may be the laws on the subject, the practice is generally as here represented; and it is the practice alone that concerns the present question.

mon people make very considerable exertions to avoid the necessity of applying for such a scanty and precarious relief. It is observed, in many of the accounts, that they seldom fail of making a provision for sickness and for age; and, in general, the grown-up children and relations of persons, who are in danger of falling upon the parish, step forward, if they are in any way able, to prevent such a degradation, which is universally considered as a disgrace to the family.

The writers of the accounts of the different parishes frequently reprobate in very strong terms the system of English assessments for the poor, and give a decided preference to the Scotch mode of relief. In the account of Paisley<sup>a</sup>, though a manufacturing town, and with a numerous poor, the author still reprobates the English system, and makes an observation on this subject, in which perhaps he goes too far. He says, that, though there are in no country such large contributions for the poor as in England, yet there is no where so great a num-

<sup>a</sup> Vol. vii. p. 74.

ber of them ; and their condition, in comparison of *the poor of other countries*, is *truly most miserable*.

In the account of Caerlaverock<sup>a</sup>, in answer to the question, How ought the poor to be supplied ? it is most judiciously remarked, “ that distress and poverty multiply in proportion to the funds created to relieve them ; that the measures of charity ought to remain invisible, till the moment when it is necessary that they should be distributed ; that in the country parishes of Scotland in general, small occasional voluntary collections are sufficient ; that the legislature has no occasion to interfere to augment the stream, which is already copious enough ; in fine, that the establishment of a *poors’ rate* would not only be unnecessary but hurtful, as it would tend to oppress the landholder, without bringing relief on the poor.”

These, upon the whole, appear to be the prevailing opinions of the clergy of Scotland. There are, however, some exceptions ; and the system of assessments is some-

<sup>a</sup> Vol. vi. p. 21.

times approved, and the establishment of it recommended. But this is not to be wondered at. In many of these parishes the experiment had never been made; and without being thoroughly aware of the principle of population from theory, or having fully seen the evils of poor-laws in practice, nothing seems, on a first view of the subject, more natural than the proposal of an assessment, to which the uncharitable, as well as the charitable, should be made to contribute according to their abilities, and which might be increased or diminished, according to the wants of the moment.

The endemic and epidemic diseases in Scotland fall chiefly, as is usual, on the poor. The scurvy is in some places extremely troublesome and inveterate; and in others it arises to a contagious leprosy, the effects of which are always dreadful, and not unfrequently mortal. One writer calls it the scourge and bane of human nature<sup>a</sup>. It is generally attributed to cold and wet situations, meagre and unwholesome food,

<sup>a</sup> Parishes of Forbes and Kearn, County of Aberdeen, vol. xi. p. 189.

impure air from damp and crowded houses, indolent habits, and the want of attention to cleanliness.

To the same causes, in a great measure, are attributed the rheumatisms which are general, and the consumptions which are frequent, among the common people. Whenever, in any place, from particular circumstances, the condition of the poor has been rendered worse, these disorders, particularly the latter, have been observed to prevail with greater force.

Low nervous fevers, and others of a more violent and fatal nature, are frequently epidemic, and sometimes take off considerable numbers; but the most fatal epidemic, since the extinction of the plague which formerly visited Scotland, is the small-pox, the returns of which are, in many places, at regular intervals; in others, irregular, but seldom at a greater distance than 7 or 8 years. Its ravages are dreadful, though in some parishes not so fatal as they were some time ago. The prejudices against inoculation are still great; and as the mode of treatment must almost necessarily be bad  
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in small and crowded houses, and the custom of visiting each other during the disorder still subsists in many places, it may be imagined that the mortality must be considerable, and the children of the poor the principal sufferers. In some parishes of the Western Isles and the Highlands, the number of persons to a house has increased from  $4\frac{1}{2}$  and 5, to  $6\frac{1}{2}$  and 7. It is evident, that if such a considerable increase, without the proper accommodations for it, do not absolutely generate the disease, it must give to its devastations tenfold force when it arrives.

Scotland has at all times been subject to years of scarcity, and occasionally even to dreadful famines. The years 1635, 1680, 1688, the concluding years of the 16th century, the years 1740, 1756, 1766, 1778, 1782, and 1783, are all mentioned, in different places, as years of very great sufferings from want. In the year 1680, so many families perished from this cause, that for six miles, in a well-inhabited extent, there was not a smoke remaining\*. The seven

\* Parish of Duthil, vol. iv. p. 308.

years at the end of the 16th century were called the ill years. The writer of the account of the parish of Montquhitter<sup>a</sup> says, that of 16 families, on a farm in that neighbourhood, 13 were extinguished; and on another, out of 169 individuals, only 3 families (the proprietors included) survived. Extensive farms, now containing a hundred souls, being entirely desolated, were converted into a sheep-walk. The inhabitants of the parish in general were diminished by death to one-half, or, as some affirm, to one-fourth of the preceding number. Until 1709 many farms were waste. In 1740, another season of scarcity occurred; and the utmost misery was felt by the poor, though it fell short of death. Many offered in vain to serve for their bread. Stout men accepted thankfully two-pence a day in full for their work. Great distress was also suffered in 1782 and 1783, but none died. “If at this critical period,” the author says, “the American war had not ceased; if the “copious magazines, particularly of pease, “provided for the navy, had not been

<sup>a</sup> Vol. vi. p. 121.

“brought

“ brought to sale, what a scene of desolation and horror would have been exhibited in this country !”

Many similar descriptions occur in different parts of the Statistical Account ; but these will be sufficient to shew the nature and intensity of the distress which has been occasionally felt from want.

The year 1783 depopulated some parts of the Highlands, and is mentioned as the reason why in these places the number of people was found to have diminished since Dr. Webster’s survey. Most of the small farmers in general, as might be expected, were absolutely ruined by the scarcity ; and those of this description in the Highlands were obliged to emigrate to the Lowlands as common labourers <sup>a</sup>, in search of a precarious support. In some parishes, at the time of the last survey, the effect of the ruin of the farmers, during this bad year, was still visible in their depressed condition, and the increased poverty and misery of the common people, which is a necessary consequence of it.

<sup>a</sup> Parish of Kincardine, County of Ross, vol. iii. p. 505.  
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In the account of the parish of Grange\*, in the county of Banff, it is observed, that the year 1783 put a stop to all improvements by green crops, and made the farmers think of nothing but raising grain. Tenants were most of them ruined. Before this period, consumptions were not near so frequent as they have been since. This may be justly attributed to the effects of the scarcity and bad victual in the year 1783, to the long inclement harvests in 1782 and 1787, in both which seasons the labourers were exposed to much cold and wet during the three months that the harvests continued ; but principally to the change that has of late taken place in the manner of living among the lower ranks. Formerly every householder could command a draught of small beer, and killed a sheep now and then out of his own little flock ; but now the case is different. The frequent want of the necessaries of life among the poor, their damp and stinking houses, and dejection of mind among the middling classes, appear to be the principal causes of the prevailing distempers and mortality of this

\* Vol. ix. p. 550.

parish. Young people are cut off by consumptions, and the more advanced by dropsies and nervous fevers.

The state of this parish, which, though there are others like it, may be considered as an exception to the average state of Scotland, was, without doubt, occasioned by the ruin of the tenants; and the effect is not to be wondered at, as no greater evil can easily happen to a country, than the loss of agricultural stock and capital.

We may observe that the diseases of this parish are said to have increased, in consequence of the scarcity and bad victual of 1783. The same circumstance is noticed in many other parishes; and it is remarked, that though few people died of absolute famine, yet that mortal diseases almost universally followed.

It is remarked also, in some parishes, that the number of births and marriages are affected by years of scarcity and plenty.

Of the parish of Dingwall<sup>a</sup>, in the county of Ross, it is observed that, after the scarcity of 1783, the births were 16 below the

<sup>a</sup> Vol. iii. p. i.

average, and 14 below the lowest number of late years. The year 1787 was a year of plenty; and the following year the births increased in a similar proportion, and were 17 above the average, and 11 above the highest of the other years.

In the account of Dunrossness<sup>a</sup> in Orkney, the writer says that the annual number of marriages depends much on the seasons. In good years they may amount to thirty or upwards; but, when crops fail, will hardly come up to the half of that number.

The whole increase of Scotland, since the time of Dr. Webster's survey in 1755, is about 260,000<sup>b</sup>, for which a proportionate provision has been made in the improved state of agriculture and manufactures, and in the increased cultivation of potatoes, which in some places form two-thirds of the diet of the common people. It has been calculated that the half of the surplus of births in Scotland is drawn off in emigrations; and it can-

<sup>a</sup> Vol. vii. p. 391.

<sup>b</sup> According to the returns in the estimate of 1800, the whole population of Scotland was above 1,590,000, and therefore the increase up to that time was above 320,000. In 1810 the population was 1,805,688.

not be doubted that this drain tends greatly to relieve the country, and to improve the condition of those which remain. Scotland is certainly still over-peopled, but not so much as it was a century or half a century ago, when it contained fewer inhabitants.

The details of the population of Ireland are but little known. I shall only observe therefore, that the extended use of potatoes has allowed of a very rapid increase of it during the last century. But the cheapness of this nourishing root, and the small piece of ground which, under this kind of cultivation, will in average years produce the food for a family, joined to the ignorance and barbarism of the people, which have prompted them to follow their inclinations with no other prospect than an immediate bare subsistence, have encouraged marriage to such a degree, that the population is pushed much beyond the industry and present resources of the country; and the consequence naturally is, that the lower classes of people are in the most depressed and miserable state. The checks to the

population are of course chiefly of the positive kind, and arise from the diseases occasioned by squalid poverty, by damp and wretched cabins, by bad and insufficient clothing, by the filth of their persons, and occasional want. To these positive checks have, of late years, been added the vice and misery of intestine commotion, of civil war, and of martial law.



## CHAP. XI.

*On the Fruitfulness of Marriages.*

IT would be extremely desirable to be able to deduce from the rate of increase, the actual population, and the registers of births, deaths and marriages in different countries, the real prolifickness of marriages, and the true proportion of the born which lives to marry. Perhaps the problem may not be capable of an accurate solution; but we shall make some approximation towards it, and be able to account for some of the difficulties which appear in many registers, if we attend to the following considerations.

It should be premised, however, that in the registers of most countries there is some reason to believe that the omissions in the births and deaths are greater than in the marriages; and consequently, that the proportion of marriages is almost always given too great. In the enumeration which lately  
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took place in this country, while it is supposed with reason that the registry of marriages is nearly correct, it is known with certainty that there are very great omissions in the births and deaths ; and it is probable that similar omissions, though not perhaps to the same extent, prevail in other countries.

To form a judgment of the prolifickness of marriages taken as they occur, including second and third marriages, let us cut off a certain period of the registers of any country (30 years for instance) and inquire what is the number of births which has been produced by all the marriages included in the period cut off. It is evident, that with the marriages at the beginning of the period will be arranged a number of births proceeding from marriages not included in the period ; and at the end, a number of births produced by the marriages included in the period will be found arranged with the marriages of a succeeding period. Now, if we could subtract the former number, and add the latter, we should obtain exactly all the births produced by the marriages of  
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the period, and of course the real prolifickness of those marriages. If the population be stationary, the number of births to be added would exactly equal the number to be subtracted, and the proportion of births to marriages, as found in the registers, would exactly represent the real prolifickness of marriages. But if the population be either increasing or decreasing, the number to be added would never be equal to the number to be subtracted, and the proportion of births to marriages in the registers would never truly represent the prolifickness of marriages. In an increasing population the number to be added would evidently be greater than the number to be subtracted, and of course the proportion of births to marriages as found in the registers would always be too small to represent the true prolifickness of marriages. And the contrary effect would take place in a decreasing population. The question therefore is, what we are to add, and what to subtract, when the births and deaths are not equal.

The average proportion of births to marriages

riages in Europe is about 4 to 1. Let us suppose, for the sake of illustration, that each marriage yields four children, one every other year<sup>a</sup>. In this case it is evident that, wherever you begin your period in the registers, the marriages of the preceding eight years will only have produced half of their births, and the other half will be arranged with the marriages included in the period, and ought to be subtracted from them. In the same manner the marriages of the last eight years of the period will only have produced half of their births, and the other half ought to be added. But half of the births of any eight years may be considered as nearly equal to all the births of the succeeding  $3\frac{3}{4}$  years. In instances of the most rapid increase it will rather exceed the births of the next  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, and, in cases of slow increase, approach towards the births of the next 4 years. The mean therefore may be taken at  $3\frac{3}{4}$  years<sup>b</sup>. Consequently,

<sup>a</sup> In the statistical account of Scotland it is said, that the average distance between the children of the same family has been calculated to be about two years.

<sup>b</sup> According to the rate of increase which has lately been taking

sequently, if we subtract the births of the first  $3\frac{1}{4}$  years of the period, and add the births of the  $3\frac{3}{4}$  years subsequent to the period, we shall have a number of births nearly equal to the births produced by all the marriages included in the period, and of course the prolifickness of these marriages. But if the population of a country be increasing regularly, and the births, deaths and marriages continue always to bear the same proportion to each other, and to the whole population, it is evident that all the births of any period will bear the same proportion to all the births of any other period of the same extent, taken a certain number of years later, as the births of any single year, or an average of five years, to the births of a single year, or an average of five years, taken the same number of years later; and the same will be true with regard to the marriages. And consequently, to estimate the prolifickness of marriages, we have only to compare the marriages of the present year, or average of five years, with the births of a subtaking place in England (1802), the period by calculation would be about  $3\frac{3}{4}$  years.

sequent

sequent year, or average of five years, taken  $3\frac{3}{4}$  years later.

We have supposed, in the present instance, that each marriage yields four births; but the average proportion of births to marriages in Europe is 4 to 1<sup>a</sup>; and as the population of Europe is known to be increasing at present, the prolifickness of marriages must be greater than 4. If, allowing for this circumstance, we take the distance of 4 years instead of  $3\frac{3}{4}$  years, we shall probably be not far from the truth. And though undoubtedly the period will differ in different countries, yet it will not differ so much as we might at first imagine; because in countries where the marriages are more prolific, the births generally follow at shorter intervals, and where they are less prolific, at longer intervals; and with different degrees of prolifickness, the length of the period might still remain the same<sup>b</sup>. It

<sup>a</sup> I think the proportion is probably greater, as there is reason to believe that in all registers the omissions in the births and deaths are more numerous than in the marriages.

<sup>b</sup> In places where there are many exports and imports of people, the calculations will of course be disturbed.

It will follow from these observations, that the more rapid is the increase of population, the more will the real prolifickness of marriages exceed the proportion of births to marriages in the registers.

The rule which has been here laid down attempts to estimate the prolifickness of marriages taken as they occur; but this prolifickness should be carefully distinguished from the prolifickness of first marriages and of married women, and still more from the natural prolifickness of women in general taken at the most favourable age. It is probable, that the natural prolifickness of women is nearly the same in most parts of the world; but the prolifickness of marriages is liable to be affected by a variety of circumstances peculiar to each country, and particularly by the number of late marriages. In all countries the second and third marriages alone form a most important consideration, and materially influence the

In towns, particularly, where there is a frequent change of inhabitants, and where it often happens that the marriages of the people in the neighbouring country are celebrated, the inferences from the proportion of births to marriages are not to be depended on.

average

average proportions. According to Sussmilch, in all Pomerania, from 1748 to 1756 both included, the number of persons who married were 56,956, and of these 10,586 were widows and widowers<sup>a</sup>. According to Busching, in Prussia and Silesia for the year 1781, out of 29,308 persons who married, 4,841 were widows and widowers<sup>b</sup>, and consequently the proportion of marriages will be given full one sixth too much. In estimating the prolifickness of married women, the number of illegitimate births<sup>c</sup> would tend, though in a very slight degree, to counterbalance the overplus of marriages; and as it is found that the number of widowers who marry again, is greater than the number of widows, the whole of the correction should not on this account be applied; but in estimating the proportion of the born which lives to marry from a comparison of the marriages and deaths, which is what we are now about to proceed

<sup>a</sup> Göttliche Ordnung, vol. i. tables, p. 98.

<sup>b</sup> Sussmilch, vol. iii. tables, p. 95.

<sup>c</sup> In France, before the revolution, the proportion of illegitimate births was  $\frac{1}{47}$  of the whole number. Probably it is less in this country.

to,



to, the whole of this correction is always necessary.

To find the proportion of the born which lives to marry, we must first subtract one sixth from the marriages, and then compare the marriages of any year so corrected, with the deaths in the registers at such a distance from them, as is equal to the difference between the average age of marriage and the average age of death.

Thus, for example; if the proportion of marriages to deaths were as 1 to 3, then subtracting one sixth from the marriages this proportion would be as 5 to 18, and the number of persons marrying annually the first time would be to the number or annual deaths as 10 to 18. Supposing in this case the mean age of death to be ten years later than the mean age of marriage, in which ten years the deaths would increase  $\frac{1}{6}$ , then the number of persons marrying annually the first time, compared with the number of annual deaths, at the distance of the difference between the age of marriage and the age of death, would be as 10 to 20; from which it would follow that

that exactly half of the born lived to marry.

The grounds of this rule will appear from the following observations on registers in general.

In a country in which the population is stationary, the contemporary deaths compared with the births will be equal, and will of course represent the deaths of all the born; and the marriages, or more properly the number of married persons, compared with both the births and deaths, will, when a proper allowance has been made for second and third marriages, represent the true proportion of the born which lives to marry. But if the population be either increasing or decreasing, and the births, deaths and marriages increasing or decreasing in the same ratio, then the deaths compared with the births, and the marriages compared with the births and deaths, will cease to express what they did before, unless the events which are contemporary in the registers are also contemporary in the order of nature.

In the first place, it is evident that death cannot be contemporary with birth, but must on an average be always at such a distance

distance from it as is equal to the expectation of life, or the mean age of death. Consequently, though the deaths of all the born are, or will be, in the registers, where there are no emigrations, yet, except when the population is stationary, the contemporary periods of births and deaths never shew this, and we can only expect to find the deaths equal to the births, if the deaths be taken at such a distance from the births in the registers as is equal to the expectation of life. And in fact, thus taken, the births and deaths will always be found equal.

Secondly, the marriages of any year can never be contemporary with the births from which they have resulted, but must always be at such a distance from them as is equal to the average age of marriage. If the population be increasing, the marriages of the present year have resulted from a smaller number of births than the births of the present year, and of course the marriages, compared with the contemporary births, will always be too few to represent the proportion of the born which lives to marry; and the contrary will take place

place if the population be decreasing ; and, to find this proportion, we must compare the marriages of any year with the births of a previous year at the distance of the average age of marriage.

Thirdly, the average age of marriage will almost always be much nearer to the average age of death than marriage is to birth ; and consequently the annual marriages compared with the contemporary annual deaths will much more nearly represent the true proportion of the born living to marry, than the marriages compared with the births <sup>a</sup>. The marriages compared with the  
births,

<sup>a</sup> Dr. Price very justly says (*Observ. on Revers. Pay.* vol. i. p. 269, 4th. edit.) “ that the general effect of an “ increase while it is going on in a country is to render the “ proportion of persons marrying annually, to the annual deaths *greater* and to the annual births *less* than “ the true proportion marrying out of any given number “ born. This proportion generally lies between the other “ two proportions, but always nearest the first.” In these observations I entirely agree with him, but in a note to this passage he appears to me to fall into an error. He says, that if the prolificness of marriages be increased (the *probabilities of life* and the *encouragement to marriage* remaining the same) both the annual births and burials  
would

births, after a proper allowance has been made for second and third marriages, can never represent the true proportion of the born living to marry, unless when the population is absolutely stationary ; but al-

would increase in proportion to the annual weddings. That the proportion of annual births would increase is certainly true ; and I here acknowledge my error in differing from Dr. Price on this point in my last edition ; but I still think that the proportion of burials to weddings would not necessarily increase under the circumstances here supposed.

The reason why the proportion of births to weddings increases is, that the births occurring in the order of nature considerably prior to the marriages which result from them, their increase will affect the register of births much more than the contemporary register of marriages. But the same reason by no means holds with regard to the deaths, the average age of which is generally later than the age of marriage. And in this case, after the first interval between birth and marriage, the permanent effect would be, that the register of marriages would be more affected by the increase of births than the contemporary register of deaths ; and consequently the proportion of the burials to the weddings would be rather decreased than increased. From not attending to the circumstance that the average age of marriage may often be considerably earlier than the mean age of death, the general conclusion also which Dr. Price draws in this note does not appear to be strictly correct.

though the population be increasing or decreasing, the average age of marriage may still be equal to the average of death ; and in this case the marriages in the registers compared with the contemporary deaths, (after the correction for second and third marriages,) will represent the true proportion of the born living to marry<sup>a</sup>. Generally however, when an increase of population is going forwards, the average age of marriage is less than the average of death, and then the proportion of marriages, compared with the contemporary deaths, will be too great to represent the true proportion of the born living to marry ; and, to find this proportion, we must compare the marriages of any particular year with the deaths of a subsequent year at such a distance from it

\* The reader will be aware that, as all the born must die, deaths may in some cases be taken as synonymous with births. If we had the deaths registered of all the births which had taken place in a country during a certain period, distinguishing the married from the unmarried, it is evident that the number of those who died married, compared with the whole number of deaths, would accurately express the proportion of the *births* which had lived to marry.

in the registers, as is equal to the difference between the average age of marriage and the average age of death.

There is no absolutely necessary connexion between the average age of marriage and the average age of death. In a country, the resources of which will allow of a rapid increase of population, the expectation of life or the average age of death may be extremely high, and yet the age of marriage be very early ; and the marriages then, compared with the contemporary deaths in the registers, would (even after the correction for second and third marriages) be very much too great to represent the true proportion of the born living to marry. In such a country we might suppose the average age of death to be 40, and the age of marriage only 20 ; and in this case, which however would be a rare one, the distance between marriage and death would be the same as between birth and marriage.

If we apply these observations to registers in general, though we shall seldom be able to obtain accurately the true proportion of

the born living to marry, on account of our not knowing the average age of marriage, yet we may draw many useful inferences from the information which they contain, and reconcile many of the difficulties with which they are accompanied ; and it will generally be found that, in those countries where the marriages bear a very large proportion to the deaths, we shall see reason to believe that the age of marriage is much earlier than the average age of death.

In the Russian table for the year 1799, produced by Mr. Tooke, and referred to vol. i. p. 372, the proportion of marriages to deaths appeared to be as 100 to 210. When corrected for second and third marriages, by subtracting one sixth from the marriages, it will be as 100 to 252. From which it would seem to follow, that out of 252 births 200 of them had lived to marry ; but we cannot conceive any country to be so healthy, as that 200 out of 252 should live to marry. If however we suppose what seems to be probable, that the age of marriage in Russia is 15 years earlier than the expectation of life or the average  
age



age of death, then, in order to find the proportion which lives to marry, we must compare the marriages of the present year with the deaths 15 years later. Supposing the births to deaths to be (as stated, vol. i. p. 372) 183 to 100, and the mortality 1 in 50, the yearly increase will be about  $\frac{1}{60}$  of the population ; and consequently in 15 years the deaths will have increased a little above .28 ; and the result will be, that the marriages, compared with the deaths 15 years later, will be as 100 to 322. Out of 322 births it will appear that 200 live to marry, which, from the known healthiness of children in Russia, and the early age of marriage, is not an improbable proportion. The proportion of marriages to births, being as 100 to 385, the prolificness of marriages, according to the rule laid down, will be as 100 to 411 ; or each marriage will on an average, including second and third marriages, produce 4.11 births.

The lists given in the earlier part of the chapter on Russia are probably not correct. It is suspected with reason, that there are considerable omissions both in the births  
and

and deaths, but particularly in the deaths ; and consequently the proportion of marriages is given too great. There may also be a further reason for this large proportion of marriages in Russia. The Empress Catherine, in her instructions for a new code of laws, notices a custom prevalent among the peasants, of parents obliging their sons, while actually children, to marry full-grown women, in order to save the expense of buying female slaves. These women, it is said, generally become the mistresses of the father ; and the custom is particularly reprobated by the Empress as prejudicial to population. This practice would naturally occasion a more than usual number of second and third marriages, and of course more than usually increase the proportion of marriages to births in the registers.

In the Transactions of the Society at Philadelphia, (vol. iii. No. vii. p. 25,) there is a paper by Mr. Barton, entitled *Observations on the Probability of Life in the United States*, in which it appears, that the proportion of marriages to births is as 1 to  $4\frac{1}{2}$ .

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He mentions indeed  $6\frac{1}{2}$ , but his numbers give only  $4\frac{1}{2}$ . As however this proportion was taken principally from towns, it is probable that the births are given too low; and I think we may very safely take as many as five for the average of towns and country. According to the same authority, the mortality is about 1 in 45; and if the population doubles every 25 years, the births would be about 1 in 20. The proportion of marriages to deaths would on these suppositions be as 1 to  $2\frac{2}{3}$ ; and, corrected for second and third marriages, as 1 to 2·7 nearly. But we cannot suppose, that out of 27 births 20 should live to marry. If however the age of marriage be ten years earlier than the mean age of death, which is highly probable, we must compare the marriages of the present year with the deaths ten years later, in order to obtain the true proportion of the born which lives to marry. According to the progress of population here stated, the increase of the deaths in ten years would be a little above ·3, and the result will be, that 200 out of 351, or about 20 out of 35, instead of 20 out

out of 27, will live to marry<sup>a</sup>. The marriages compared with the births 4 years later, according to the rule laid down, will in this case give 5.58 for the prolifickness of marriages. The calculations of Mr. Barton respecting the age to which half of the born live, cannot possibly be applicable to America in general. The registers, on which they are founded, are taken from Philadelphia and one or two small towns and villages, which do not appear to be so healthy as the moderate towns of Europe, and therefore can form no criterion for the country in general.

<sup>a</sup> If the proportions mentioned by Mr. Barton be just, the expectation of life in America is considerably less than in Russia, which is the reason that I have taken only 10 years for the difference between the age of marriage and the age of death, instead of 15 years, as in Russia. According to the mode adopted by Dr. Price, (vol. i. p. 272,) of estimating the expectation of life in countries the population of which is increasing, this expectation in Russia would be about 38, (births  $\frac{1}{26}$ , deaths  $\frac{1}{50}$ , mean  $\frac{1}{38}$ ), and supposing the age of marriage to be 23, the difference would be 15.

In America the expectation of life would, upon the same principles, be only  $32\frac{1}{2}$ , (births  $\frac{1}{20}$ , deaths  $\frac{1}{45}$ , mean  $\frac{1}{32\frac{1}{2}}$ ); and supposing the age of marriage  $22\frac{1}{2}$ , the difference would be 10.

In England the average proportion of marriages to births appears of late years to have been about 100 to 350. If we add  $\frac{1}{7}$  to the births instead of  $\frac{1}{6}$ , which in the chapter on *the Checks to Population in England* I conjectured might be nearly the amount of the omissions in the births and deaths, this will allow for the circumstance of illegitimate births; and the marriages will then be to the births as 1 to 4, to the deaths as 1 to 3<sup>a</sup>. Corrected for second and third marriages, the proportion of marriages to deaths will be as 1 to 3·6. Supposing the age of marriage in England about 7 years earlier than the mean age of death, the increase in these 7 years, according to the present progress of population of  $\frac{1}{1\frac{1}{2}0}$  yearly, would be ·06, and the proportion living to marry would be 200 out of 381, or rather more than half<sup>b</sup>. The marriages compared with

<sup>a</sup> This applies to the state of population before 1800.

<sup>b</sup> Births  $\frac{1}{30}$ , deaths  $\frac{1}{40}$ , mean  $\frac{1}{35}$ ; and on the supposition that the age of marriage is 28, the difference would be 7. With regard to the allowance which I have made here and in a former chapter for the omissions in the births and deaths, I wish to observe that, as I had no very

with the births four years later will give 4.136 for the prolifickness of marriages.

These instances will be sufficient to shew the mode of applying the rules which have been given, in order to form a judgment, from registers, of the prolifickness of marriages, and the proportion of the born which lives to marry.

It will be observed how very important the correction for second and third marriages is. Supposing each marriage to yield four births, and the births and deaths to be equal, it would at first appear necessary that, in order to produce this effect,

very certain and satisfactory grounds on which to proceed, it may be incorrect and perhaps too great; though, assuming this allowance, the mortality appears to be extraordinarily small considering the circumstances of the country. It should be remarked, however, that in countries which are different in their rates of increase, the annual mortality is a very incorrect criterion of their comparative healthiness. When an increase is going forward the portion of the population, which becomes extinct every year, is very different from the expectation of life, as has appeared very clearly in the cases of Russia and America just noticed. And as the increase of population in England has of late years been more rapid than in France, this circumstance will undoubtedly contribute in part to the great difference in the annual mortality.

exactly

exactly half of the born should live to marry; but if, on account of the second and third marriages, we subtract  $\frac{1}{8}$  from the marriages, and then compare them with the deaths, the proportion will be as 1 to  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ; and it will appear that, instead of one half, it will only be necessary that 2 children out of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  should live to marry. Upon the same principle, if the births were to the marriages as 4 to 1, and exactly half of the born live to marry, it might be supposed at first that the population would be stationary; but if we subtract  $\frac{1}{8}$  from the marriages; and then take the proportion of deaths to marriages as 4 to 1, we shall find that the deaths in the registers, compared with the marriages, would only be as  $3\frac{1}{3}$  to 1; and the births would be to the deaths as 4 to  $3\frac{1}{3}$ , or 12 to 10, which is a tolerably fast rate of increase.

It should be further observed, that as a much greater number of widowers marry again than of widows, if we wish to know the proportion of males which lives to marry, we must subtract full  $\frac{1}{4}$  from the marriages  
instead

instead of  $\frac{1}{6}$  <sup>a</sup>. According to this correction, if each marriage yielded 4 births, it would only be necessary that two male children out of 5 should live to marry in order to keep up the population; and if each marriage yielded 5 births, less than one third would be necessary for this purpose; and so for the other calculations. In estimating the proportion of males living to marry, some allowance ought also to be made for the greater proportion of male births.

Three causes appear to operate in producing an excess of the births above the deaths: 1. the prolifickness of marriages; 2. the proportion of the born which lives to marry; and 3. the earliness of these marriages compared with the expectation of life, or the shortness of a generation by

\* Of 28,473 marriages in Pomerania, 5,964 of the men were widowers. Sussmilch, vol. i. tables, p. 98. And according to Busching, of 14,759 marriages in Prussia and Silesia, 3,071 of the men were widowers. Sussmilch, vol. iii. tables, p. 95. Muret calculates that 100 men generally marry 110 women. *Mémoires par la Société Économique de Berne. Année 1766, première partie*, page 30.



marriage and birth, compared with the passing away of a generation by death. This latter cause Dr. Price seems to have omitted to consider. For though he very justly says that the rate of increase, supposing the prolific powers the same, depends upon the encouragement to marriage, and the expectation of a child just born; yet in explaining himself, he seems to consider an increase in the expectation of life, merely as it affects the increase of the number of persons who reach maturity and marry, and not as it affects, besides, the distance between the age of marriage and the age of death. But it is evident that, if there be any principle of increase, that is, if one marriage in the present generation yields more than one in the next, including second and third marriages, the quicker these generations are repeated, compared with the passing away of a generation by death, the more rapid will be the increase.

A favourable change in either of these three causes, the other two remaining the same, will clearly produce an effect upon population, and occasion a greater excess of  
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the births above the deaths in the registers. With regard to the two first causes, though an increase in either of them will produce the same kind of effect on the proportion of births to deaths, yet their effects on the proportion of marriages to births will be in opposite directions. The greater is the prolifickness of marriages, the greater will be the proportion of births to marriages; and the greater is the number of the born which lives to be married, the less will be the proportion of births to marriages<sup>a</sup>. Consequently, if  
 within

<sup>a</sup> Dr. Price himself has insisted strongly upon this, (vol. i. p. 270, 4th edit.) and yet he says (p. 275) that healthfulness and prolifickness are probably causes of increase seldom separated, and refers to registers of births and weddings as a proof of it. But though these causes may undoubtedly exist together, yet if Dr. Price's reasoning be just, such co-existence cannot possibly be inferred from the lists of births and weddings. Indeed the two countries, Sweden and France, to the registers of which he refers as shewing the prolifickness of their marriages, are known to be by no means remarkably healthy; and the registers of towns to which he alludes, though they may shew, as he intends, a want of prolifickness, yet, according to his previous reasoning, shew at the same time  
 great

within certain limits, the prolifickness of marriages and the number of the born living to marry increase at the same time, the proportion of births to marriages in the registers may still remain unaltered. And this is the reason why the registers of different countries, with respect to births and marriages, are often found the same under very different rates of increase.

The proportion of births to marriages, indeed, forms no criterion whatever, by which to judge of the rate of increase. The population of a country may be stationary or declining with a proportion of 5 to 1, and may be increasing with some rapidity with a proportion of 4 to 1. But given the rate

great healthiness, and therefore ought not to be produced as a proof of the absence of both. The general fact that Dr. Price wishes to establish may still remain true, that country situations are both more healthy and more prolific than towns: but this fact certainly cannot be inferred merely from lists of births and marriages. With regard to the different countries of Europe, it will generally be found, that those are the most healthy which are the least prolific, and those the most prolific which are the least healthy. The earlier age of marriage in unhealthy countries is the obvious reason of this fact.

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of increase, which may be obtained from other sources, it is clearly desirable to find in the registers a small rather than a large proportion of births to marriages ; because the smaller this proportion is, the greater must be the proportion of the born which lives to marry, and of course the more healthy must be the country.

Crome<sup>a</sup> observes that, when the marriages of a country yield less than 4 births, the population is in a very precarious state ; and he estimates the prolifickness of marriages by the proportion of yearly births to marriages. If this observation were just, the population of many countries of Europe would be in a precarious state, as in many countries the proportion of births to marriages in the registers is rather below than above 4 to 1. It has been shewn in what manner this proportion in the registers should be corrected, in order to make it a just representation of the prolifickness of marriages ; and if a large part of the born live to marry, and the age of marriage be considerably earlier than the expectation of

<sup>a</sup> Ueber die Bevölkerung der Europais. Staat. p. 91.  
life,

life, such a proportion in the registers is by no means inconsistent with a rapid increase. In Russia it has appeared that the proportion of births to marriages is less than 4 to 1; and yet its population increases faster than that of any other nation in Europe. In England the population increases more rapidly than in France; and yet in England the proportion of births to marriages, when allowance has been made for omissions, is about 4 to 1, in France  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 1. To occasion so rapid a progress as that which has taken place in America, it will indeed be necessary that all the causes of increase should be called into action; and if the prolifickness of marriages be very great, the proportion of births to marriages will certainly be above 4 to 1: but in all ordinary cases, where the whole power of procreation has not room to expand itself, it is surely better that the actual increase should arise from that degree of healthiness in the early stages of life which causes a great proportion of the born to live to maturity and to marry, than from a great degree of prolifickness accompanied by a great mortality.

tality. And consequently in all ordinary cases a proportion of births to marriages as 4, or less than 4, to 1 cannot be considered as an unfavourable sign.

It should be observed that it does not follow that the marriages of a country are early, or that the preventive check to population does not prevail, because the greater part of the born live to marry. In such countries as Norway and Switzerland, where half of the born live to above 40, it is evident that, though rather more than half live to marry, a large portion of the people between the ages of 20 and 40 would be living in an unmarried state, and the preventive check would appear to prevail to a great degree. In England it is probable that half of the born live to above 35 ; and though rather more than half live to marry, the preventive check might prevail considerably (as we know it does), though not to the same extent as in Norway and Switzerland.

The preventive check is perhaps best measured by the smallness of the proportion of yearly births to the whole population.

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The proportion of yearly marriages to the population is only a just criterion in countries similarly circumstanced, but is incorrect where there is a difference in the prolificness of marriages or in the proportion of the population under the age of puberty, and in the rate of increase. If all the marriages of a country, be they few or many, take place young, and be consequently prolific, it is evident that, to produce the same proportion of births, a smaller proportion of marriages will be necessary ; or with the same proportion of marriages a greater proportion of births will be produced. This latter case seems to be applicable to France, where both the births and deaths are greater than in Sweden, though the proportion of marriages is nearly the same, or rather less. And when, in two countries compared, one of them has a much greater part of its population under the age of puberty than the other, it is evident that any general proportion of the yearly marriages to the whole population will not imply the same operation of the preventive check among those of a marriageable age.

It is, in part, the small proportion of the population under the age of puberty, as well as the influx of strangers, that occasions in towns a greater proportion of marriages than in the country, although there can be little doubt that the preventive check prevails most in towns. The converse of this will also be true; and consequently in such a country as America, where half of the population is under sixteen, the proportion of yearly marriages will not accurately express how little the preventive check really operates.

But on the supposition of nearly the same natural prolifickness in the women of most countries, the smallness of the proportion of births will generally indicate, with tolerable exactness, the degree in which the preventive check prevails, whether arising principally from late, and consequently unprolific, marriages, or from a large proportion of the population above the age of puberty dying unmarried.

That the reader may see at once the rate of increase, and the period of doubling, which would result from any observed proportion



portion of births to deaths, and of these to the whole population, I subjoin two tables from Sussmilch, calculated by Euler, which I believe are very correct. The first is confined to the supposition of a mortality of 1 in 36, and therefore can only be applied to countries where such a mortality is known to take place. The other is general, depending solely upon the proportion which the excess of the births above the burials bears to the whole population, and therefore may be applied universally to all countries, whatever may be the degree of their mortality.

It will be observed that, when the proportion between the births and burials is given, the period of doubling will be shorter, the greater the mortality; because the births as well as deaths are increased by this supposition, and they both bear a greater proportion to the whole population than if the mortality were smaller, and there were a greater number of people in advanced life.

The mortality of Russia, according to Mr. Tooke, is 1 in 58, and the proportion  
of

of births 1 in 26. Allowing for the omissions in the burials, if we assume the mortality to be 1 in 52, then the births will be to the deaths as 2 to 1, and the proportion which the excess of births bears to the whole population will be  $\frac{1}{52}$ <sup>a</sup>. According to Table II. the period of doubling will, in this case, be about 36 years. But if we were to keep the proportion of births to deaths as 2 to 1, and suppose a mortality of 1 in 36, as in Table I., the excess of births above the burials would be  $\frac{1}{36}$  of the whole population, and the period of doubling would be only 25 years.

\* The proportions here mentioned are different from those which have been taken from the additional table in Mr. Tooke's second edition ; but they are assumed here as more easily and clearly illustrating the subject.

TABLE I.

When in any country there are 103,000 persons living,  
and the mortality is 1 in 36.

If the proportion of deaths to births be as	Then the excess of the births will be	The proportion of the excess of the births, to the whole popula- tion, will be	And therefore the pe- riod of doubling will be
10 : { 11	277	$\frac{1}{360}$	250 years.
12	555	$\frac{1}{180}$	125
13	833	$\frac{1}{120}$	$83\frac{1}{2}$
14	1110	$\frac{1}{90}$	$62\frac{1}{2}$
15	1388	$\frac{1}{72}$	$50\frac{1}{4}$
16	1666	$\frac{1}{60}$	42
17	1943	$\frac{1}{51}$	$35\frac{1}{4}$
18	2221	$\frac{1}{45}$	$31\frac{2}{3}$
19	2499	$\frac{1}{40}$	28
20	2777	$\frac{1}{36}$	$25\frac{3}{10}$
22	3332	$\frac{1}{30}$	$21\frac{1}{6}$
25	4165	$\frac{1}{24}$	17
30	5554	$\frac{1}{18}$	$12\frac{4}{5}$

TABLE II.

The proportion of the excess of births above the deaths to the whole of the living.	Periods of doubling in years and ten thousandth parts.	The proportion of the excess of births above the deaths, to the whole of the living.	Periods of doubling in years and ten thou- sandth parts.
1 : { 10	7.2722	1 : { 21	14.9000
11	7.9659	22	15.5932
12	8.6595	23	16.2864
13	9.3530	24	16.9797
14	10.0465	25	17.6729
15	10.7400	26	18.3662
16	11.4333	27	19.0594
17	12.1266	28	19.7527
18	12.8200	29	20.4458
19	13.5133	30	21.1391
20	14.2066		

TABLE

TABLE II. *continued*

The proportion of the excess of births above the deaths, to the whole of the living.	Periods of doubling in years and ten thousandth parts.	The proportion of the excess of births above the deaths, to the whole of the living.	Periods of doubling in years and ten thousandth parts.
1 : { 32	22.5255	1 : { 210	145.9072
34	23.9119	220	152.8387
36	25.2983	230	159.7702
38	26.6847	240	166.7017
40	28.0711	250	173.6332
42	29.4574	260	180.5647
44	30.8438	270	187.4961
46	32.2302	280	194.4275
48	33.6161	290	201.3590
50	35.0029	300	208.2905
1 : { 55	38.4687	1 : { 310	215.2220
60	41.9345	320	222.1535
65	45.4003	330	229.0850
70	48.8661	340	236.0164
75	52.3318	350	242.9479
80	55.7977	360	249.8794
85	59.2634	370	256.8109
90	62.7292	380	263.7425
95	66.1950	390	270.6740
100	69.6607	400	277.6055
1 : { 110	76.5923	1 : { 410	284.5370
120	83.5230	420	291.4685
130	90.4554	430	298.4000
140	97.3868	440	305.3314
150	104.3183	450	312.2629
160	111.2598	460	319.1943
170	118.1813	470	326.1258
180	125.1128	480	333.0573
190	132.0443	490	339.9888
200	138.9757	500	346.9202
		1 : 1000	693.49.

## CHAP. XII.

*Effects of Epidemics on Registers of Births, Deaths, and Marriages.*

IT appears clearly from the very valuable tables of mortality, which Sussmilch has collected, and which include periods of 50 or 60 years, that all the countries of Europe are subject to periodical sickly seasons, which check their increase; and very few are exempt from those great and wasting plagues which, once or twice perhaps in a century, sweep off the third or fourth part of their inhabitants. The way in which these periods of mortality affect all the general proportions of births, deaths, and marriages, is strikingly illustrated in the tables for Prussia and Lithuania, from the year 1692 to the year 1757<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Sussmilch, Göttliche Ordnung, vol. i. table xxi. p. 83 of the tables.

TABLE III.

Annual Average.	Marriages.	Births.	Deaths.	Proportion of marriages to births.	Proportion of deaths to births.
5 y <sup>rs</sup> to 1697	5747	19715	14862	10 : 34	100 : 132
5 y <sup>rs</sup> —1702	6070	24112	14474	10 : 39	100 : 165
6 y <sup>rs</sup> —1708	6082	26896	16430	10 : 44	100 : 163
In 1709 & 1710	a plague	number destroyed in 2 years.	247733		
In 1711	12028	32522	10131	10 : 27	100 : 320
In 1712	6267	22970	10445	10 : 36	100 : 220
5 y <sup>rs</sup> to 1716	4968	21603	11984	10 : 43	100 : 180
5 y <sup>rs</sup> —1721	4324	21396	12039	10 : 49	100 : 177
5 y <sup>rs</sup> —1726	4719	21452	12863	10 : 45	100 : 166
5 y <sup>rs</sup> —1731	4808	29554	12825	10 : 42	100 : 160
4 y <sup>rs</sup> —1735	5424	22692	15475	10 : 41	100 : 146
In 1736	5280	21859	26371	Epidemic years.	
In 1737	5765	18930	24480		
5 y <sup>rs</sup> to 1742	5582	22099	15255	10 : 39	100 : 144
4 y <sup>rs</sup> —1746	5469	25275	15117	10 : 46	100 : 167
5 y <sup>rs</sup> —1751	6423	28235	17272	10 : 43	100 : 163
5 y <sup>rs</sup> —1756	5599	28892	19154	10 : 50	100 : 148
In the 16 y <sup>rs</sup> before the plague.	95585	380516	245763	10 : 39	100 : 154
In 46 y <sup>rs</sup> after the plague	248777	1083872	690324	10 : 43	100 : 157
In 62 good y <sup>rs</sup> .	344361	1464388 936087	936087	10 : 43	100 : 156
More born than died		528301			
In the 2 plague years	5477	23977	247733		
In all the 64 years including the plague	340838	1488365 1183820	1183820	10 : 42	100 : 125
More born than died		304745			

The table, from which this is copied, contains the marriages, births and deaths for every particular year during the whole period; but to bring it into a smaller compass, I have retained only the general average drawn from the shorter periods of five and four years, except where the numbers for the individual years presented any fact worthy of particular observation. The year 1711, immediately succeeding the great plague, is not included by Sussmilch in any general average; but he has given the particular numbers, and if they be accurate they shew the very sudden and prodigious effect of a great mortality on the number of marriages.

Sussmilch calculates that above one third of the people was destroyed by the plague; and yet, notwithstanding this great diminution of the population, it will appear by a reference to the table, that the number of marriages in the year 1711 was very nearly double the average of the six years preceding the plague<sup>a</sup>. To produce this effect,

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<sup>a</sup> The number of people before the plague, according to

we may suppose that almost all who were at the age of puberty were induced, from the demand for labour and the number of vacant employments, immediately to marry. This immense number of marriages in the year could not possibly be accompanied by a great proportional number of births, because we cannot suppose that the new marriages could each yield more than one birth in the year, and the rest must come from the marriages which had continued unbroken through the plague. We cannot there-

to Sussmilch's calculations, (vol. i. ch. ix. sect. 173,) was 570,000, from which if we subtract 247,733, the number dying in the plague, the remainder, 322,267, will be the population after the plague; which, divided by the number of marriages and the number of births for the year 1711, makes the marriages about one twenty-sixth part of the population, and the births about one tenth part. Such extraordinary proportions could only occur in any country, in an individual year. If they were to continue, they would double the population in less than ten years. It is possible that there may be a mistake in the table, and that the births and marriages of the plague years are included in the year 1711; though as the deaths are carefully separated, it seems very strange that it should be so. It is however a matter of no great importance. The other years are sufficient to illustrate the general principle.

fore



fore be surprised that the proportion of births to marriages in this year should be only 2·7 to 1, or 27 to 10. But though the proportion of births to marriages could not be great; yet, on account of the extraordinary number of marriages, the absolute number of births must be great; and as the number of deaths would naturally be small, the proportion of births to deaths is prodigious, being 320 to 100; an excess of births as great, perhaps, as has ever been known in America.

In the next year, 1712, the number of marriages must of course diminish exceedingly; because, nearly all who were at the age of puberty having married the year before, the marriages of this year would be supplied principally by those who had arrived at this age, subsequent to the plague. Still, however, as all who were marriageable had not probably married the year before, the number of marriages in the year 1712 is great in proportion to the population; and, though not much more than half of the number which took place during the preceding year, is greater than the average number in the

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the last period before the plague. The proportion of births to marriages in 1712, though greater than in the preceding year on account of the smaller comparative number of marriages, is, with reference to other countries, not great, being as 36 to 1, or 36 to 10. But the proportion of births to deaths, though less than in the preceding year, when so very large a proportion of the people married, is, with reference to other countries, still unusually great, being as 220 to 100; an excess of births, which, calculated on a mortality of 1 in 36, would double the population of a country (according to Table I, page 167) in  $21\frac{1}{8}$  years.

From this period the number of annual marriages begins to be regulated by the diminished population, and of course to sink considerably below the average number of marriages before the plague, depending principally on the number of persons rising annually to a marriageable state. In the year 1720, about nine or ten years after the plague, the number of annual marriages, either from accident, or the beginning operation of the preventive check, is the smallest

est; and it is at this time that the proportion of births to marriages rises very high. In the period from 1717 to 1721 the proportion, as appears by the table, is 49 to 10; and in the particular years 1719 and 1720, it is 50 to 10 and 55 to 10.

Sussmilch draws the attention of his readers to the fruitfulness of marriages in Prussia after the plague, and mentions the proportion of 50 annual births to 10 annual marriages as a proof of it. There are the best reasons from the general average for supposing that the marriages in Prussia at this time were very fruitful; but certainly the proportion of this individual year, or even period, is not a sufficient proof of it, being evidently caused by a smaller number of marriages taking place in the year, and not by a greater number of births<sup>a</sup>. In the two years immediately succeeding the plague, when the excess of births above the deaths was so astonishing, the births bore a small proportion to the marriages; and according to the usual mode of calculating, it would

<sup>a</sup> Sussmilch, *Göttliche Ordnung*, vol. i. c. v. s. lxxxvi. p. 175.

have

have followed that each marriage yielded only 2·7 or 3·6 children. In the last period of the table, (from 1752 to 1756), the births are to the marriages as 5 to 1, and in the individual year 1756, as 6·1 to 1: and yet during this period the births are to the deaths only as 148 to 100, which could not have been the case, if the high proportion of births to marriages had indicated a much greater number of births than usual, instead of a smaller number of marriages.

The variations in the proportion of births to deaths, in the different periods of the 64 years included in the table, deserve particular attention. If we were to take an average of the four years immediately succeeding the plague, the births would be to the deaths in the proportion of above 22 to 10, which, supposing the mortality to be 1 in 36, would double the population in twenty-one years. If we take the twenty years from 1711 to 1731, the average proportion of the births to deaths will appear to be about 17 to 10, a proportion which (according to Table I. page 167) would double the population in about thirty-five

five years. But if, instead of twenty years, we were to take the whole period of 64 years, the average proportion of births to deaths turns out to be but a little more than 12 to 10; a proportion which would not double the population in less than 125 years. If we were to include the mortality of the plague, or even of the epidemic years 1736 and 1737, in too short a period, the deaths might exceed the births, and the population would appear to be decreasing.

Sussmilch thinks that, instead of 1 in 36, the mortality in Prussia after the plague might be 1 in 38; and it may appear perhaps to some of my readers, that the plenty occasioned by such an event ought to make a still greater difference. Dr. Short has particularly remarked that an extraordinary healthiness generally succeeds any very great mortality<sup>a</sup>; and I have no doubt that the observation is just, comparing similar ages together. But, under the most favourable circumstances, infants under three years are more subject to death than at other ages; and the extraordinary pro-

<sup>a</sup> History of Air, Seasons, &c., vol. ii. p. 344.

portion of children which usually follows a very great mortality, counterbalances at first the natural healthiness of the period, and prevents it from making much difference in the general mortality.

If we divide the population of Prussia after the plague, by the number of deaths in the year 1711, it will appear that the mortality was nearly 1 in 31, and was therefore increased rather than diminished, owing to the prodigious number of children born in that year. But this greater mortality would certainly cease, as soon as these children began to rise into the firmer stages of life, and then probably Sussmilch's observations would be just. In general however, we shall observe that a great previous mortality produces a more sensible effect on the births than on the deaths. By referring to the table it will appear, that the number of annual deaths regularly increases with the increasing population, and nearly keeps up the same relative proportion all the way through. But the number of annual births is not very different during the whole period, though in this time the population

pulation had more than doubled itself; and therefore the *proportion* of births to the whole population, at first and at last, must have changed in an extraordinary degree.

It will appear therefore how liable we should be to err in assuming a given proportion of births, for the purpose of estimating the past population of any country: In the present instance, it would have led to the conclusion, that the population was scarcely diminished by the plague, although from the number of deaths it was known to be diminished one third.

Variations of the same kind, though not in the same degree, appear in the proportions of births, deaths and marriages, in all the tables which Sussmilch has collected; and as writers on these subjects have been too apt to form calculations for past and future times from the proportions of a few years, it may be useful to draw the attention of the reader to a few more instances of such variations.

In the churmark of Brandenburg<sup>a</sup>, during 15 years, ending with 1712, the

<sup>a</sup> Sussmilch's *Göttliche Ordnung*, vol. i. tables, p. 88.

proportion of births to deaths was nearly 17 to 10. For 6 years, ending with 1718, the proportion sunk to 13 to 10; for 4 years ending with 1752, it was only 11 to 10; and for 4 years, ending with 1756, 12 to 10. For 3 years, ending with 1759, the deaths very greatly exceeded the births. The proportion of the births to the whole population is not given; but it is not probable that the great variations observable in the proportion of births to deaths should have arisen solely from the variations in the deaths. The proportion of births to marriages is tolerably uniform, the extremes being only 38 to 10 and 35 to 10, and the mean about 37 to 10. In this table no very great epidemics occur till the 3 years beginning with 1757, and beyond this period the lists are not continued.

In the dukedom of Pomerania<sup>a</sup>, the average proportion of births to deaths for 60 years (from 1694 to 1756 both included) was 138 to 100; but in some of the periods of six years it was as high as 177 to 100, and 155 to 100. In others it sunk as low

<sup>a</sup> Sussmilch, vol. i. tables, p. 91



as 124 to 100, and 130 to 100. The extremes of the proportions of births to marriages in the different periods of 5 and 6 years, were 36 to 10 and 43 to 10, and the mean of the 60 years about 38 to 10. Epidemic years appear to have occurred occasionally, in three of which the deaths exceeded the births; but this temporary diminution of population produced no corresponding diminution of births, and the two individual years which contain the greatest proportion of marriages in the whole table occur, one in the year after, and the other two years after epidemics. The excess of deaths however was not great till the three years ending with 1759, with which the table concludes.

In the Neumark of Brandenburg<sup>a</sup> for 60 years, from 1695 to 1756 both included, the average proportion of births to deaths in the first 30 years was 148 to 100, in the last 30 years 127 to 100, in the whole 60 years 136 to 100. In some periods of 5 years it was as high as 171 and 167 to 100. In others as low as 118 and 128 to 100.

<sup>a</sup> Sussmilch's *Göttliche Ordnung*, vol. i. tables, p. 99.

For 5 years ending with 1726, the yearly average of births was 7012; for 5 years ending with 1746, it was 6927, from which, judging by the births, we might infer that the population had decreased in this interval of 20 years; but it appears from the average proportion of births and deaths during this period, that it must have considerably increased, notwithstanding the intervention of some epidemic years. The proportion of births to the whole population must therefore have decidedly changed. Another interval of 20 years in the same tables gives a similar result, both with regard to the births and the marriages. The extremes of the proportion of births to marriages are 34 to 10 and 42 to 10, and the mean about 38 to 10. The 3 years beginning with 1757, were, as in the other tables, very fatal years.

In the dukedom of Magdeburgh<sup>a</sup> during 64 years ending with 1756, the average proportion of births to deaths was 123 to 100; in the first 28 years of the period 142 to 100, and in the last 34 years only 112 to

<sup>a</sup> Sussmilch, vol. i. tables, p. 103.

100; during one period of 5 years it was as high as 170 to 100, and in two periods the deaths exceeded the births. Slight epidemics appear to be interspersed rather thickly throughout the table. In the two instances, where three or four occur in successive years and diminish the population, they are followed by an increase of marriages and births. The extremes of the proportions of births to marriages are 42 to 10 and 34 to 10, and the mean of the 64 years 39 to 10. On this table Sussmilch remarks, that though the average number of deaths shews an increased population of one third from 1715 or 1720, yet the births and marriages would prove it to be stationary, or even declining. In drawing this conclusion however, he adds the three epidemic years ending with 1759, during which both the marriages and births seem to have diminished.

In the principality of Halberstadt<sup>a</sup>, the average proportion of births to deaths for 68 years, ending with 1756, was 124 to 100; but in some periods of 5 years it was as

<sup>a</sup> Sussmilch, vol. i. tables, p. 108,

high

high as 160 to 100, and in others as low as 110 to 100. The increase in the whole 68 years was considerable, and yet for 5 years ending with 1723, the average number of births was 2818; and for 4 years ending with 1750, 2628, from which it would appear that the population in 27 years had considerably diminished. A similar appearance occurs with regard to the marriages during a period of 32 years. In the 5 years ending with 1718, they were 727; in the 5 years ending with 1750, 689. During both these periods the proportion of deaths would have shewn a considerable increase. Epidemics seem to have occurred frequently; and in almost all the instances, in which they were such as for the deaths to exceed the births, they were immediately succeeded by a more than usual proportion of marriages, and in a few years by an increased proportion of births. The greatest number of marriages in the whole table occurs in the year 1751, after an epidemic in the year 1750, in which the deaths had exceeded the births above one third, and the four or five following years contain

contain the largest proportion of births. The extremes of the proportions of births to marriages are 42 to 10 and 34 to 10; the mean of the 68 years 38 to 10.

The remaining tables contain similar results; but these will be sufficient to shew the variations which are continually occurring in the proportions of the births and marriages, as well as of the deaths, to the whole population.

It will be observed that the least variable of the proportions is that which the births and marriages bear to each other; and the obvious reason is, that this proportion is principally influenced by the prolificness of marriages, which will not of course be subject to great changes. We can hardly indeed suppose, that the prolificness of marriages should vary so much as the different proportions of births to marriages in the tables. Nor is it necessary that it should, as another cause will contribute to produce the same effect. The births which are contemporary with the marriages of any particular year, belong principally to marriages which had  
taken

taken place some years before; and therefore, if for four or five years a large proportion of marriages were to take place, and then accidentally for one or two years a small proportion, the effect would be a large proportion of births to marriages in the registers during these one or two years; and on the contrary, if for four or five years few marriages comparatively were to take place, and then for one or two years a great number, the effect would be a small proportion of births to marriages in the registers. This was strikingly illustrated in the table for Prussia and Lithuania, and would be confirmed by an inspection of all the other tables collected by Sussmilch; in which it appears that the extreme proportions of births to marriages are generally more affected by the number of marriages than the number of births, and consequently arise more from the variations in the disposition or encouragement to matrimony, than from the variations in the prolificness of marriages.

The common epidemical years which are interspersed throughout these tables, will  
not

not of course have the same effects on the marriages and births as the great plague in the table for Prussia ; but in proportion to their magnitude, their operation will in general be found to be similar. From the registers of many other countries, and particularly of towns, it appears that the visitations of the plague were frequent at the latter end of the 17th, and the beginning of the 18th centuries.

In contemplating the plagues and sickly seasons which occur in these tables after a period of rapid increase, it is impossible not to be impressed with the idea, that the number of inhabitants had in these instances exceeded the food and the accommodations necessary to preserve them in health. The mass of the people would, upon this supposition, be obliged to live worse, and a greater number of them would be crowded together in one house ; and these natural causes would evidently contribute to produce sickness, even though the country, absolutely considered, might not be crowded and populous. In a country even thinly inhabited, if an increase of  
population

population take place before more food is raised, and more houses are built, the inhabitants must be distressed for room and subsistence. If in the Highlands of Scotland, for the next ten or twelve years, the marriages were to be either more frequent or more prolific, and no emigration were to take place, instead of five to a cottage, there might be seven ; and this, added to the necessity of worse living, would evidently have a most unfavourable effect on the health of the common people.



## CHAP. XIII.

*General Deductions from the preceding View of Society.*

**T**HAT the checks which have been mentioned are the immediate causes of the slow increase of population, and that these checks result principally from an insufficiency of subsistence, will be evident from the comparatively rapid increase which has invariably taken place, whenever, by some sudden enlargement in the means of subsistence, these checks have in any considerable degree been removed.

It has been universally remarked that all new colonies settled in healthy countries, where room and food were abundant, have constantly made a rapid progress in population. Many of the colonies from ancient Greece, in the course of one or two centuries, appear to have rivalled, and even surpassed, their mother cities. Syracuse and Agrigentum in Sicily; Tarentum and  
Locri

Locri in Italy; Ephesus and Miletus in Lesser Asia; were, by all accounts, at least equal to any of the cities of ancient Greece. All these colonies had established themselves in countries inhabited by savage and barbarous nations, which easily gave place to the new settlers, who had of course plenty of good land. It is calculated that the Israelites, though they increased very slowly while they were wandering in the land of Canaan, on settling in a fertile district of Egypt, doubled their numbers every fifteen years during the whole period of their stay<sup>a</sup>. But not to dwell on remote instances, the European settlements in America bear ample testimony to the truth of a remark, that has never I believe been doubted. Plenty of rich land to be had for little or nothing, is so powerful a cause of population, as generally to overcome all obstacles.

No settlements could easily have been worse managed than those of Spain, in Mexico, Peru, and Quito. The tyranny,

<sup>a</sup> Short's New Observ. on Bills of Mortality, p. 259, 8vo. 1750.

superstition

superstition and vices of the mother country were introduced in ample quantities among her children. Exorbitant taxes were exacted by the crown; the most arbitrary restrictions were imposed on their trade; and the governors were not behind hand in rapacity and extortion for themselves as well as their master. Yet under all these difficulties, the colonies made a quick progress in population. The city of Quito, which was but a hamlet of Indians, is represented by Ulloa as containing fifty or sixty thousand inhabitants above fifty years ago<sup>a</sup>. Lima, which was founded since the conquest, is mentioned by the same author as equally or more populous, before the fatal earthquake in 1746. Mexico is said to contain a hundred thousand inhabitants; which, notwithstanding the exaggerations of the Spanish writers, is supposed to be five times greater than what it contained in the time of Montezuma<sup>b</sup>.

In the Portuguese colony of Brazil, governed with almost equal tyranny, there

<sup>a</sup> Voy. d'Ulloa, tom. i. liv. v. ch. v. p. 229, 4to. 1752.

<sup>b</sup> Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. ii. b. iv. ch. viii. p. 363.

were

were supposed to be above thirty years ago six hundred thousand inhabitants of European extraction <sup>a</sup>.

The Dutch and French colonies, though under the government of exclusive companies of merchants, still persisted in thriving under every disadvantage <sup>b</sup>.

But the English North-American colonies, now the powerful people of the United States of America, far outstripped all the others in the progress of their population. To the quantity of rich land which they possessed in common with the Spanish and Portuguese colonies, they added a greater degree of liberty and equality. Though not without some restrictions on their foreign commerce, they were allowed the liberty of managing their own internal affairs. The political institutions which prevailed were favourable to the alienation and division of property. Lands which were not cultivated by the proprietor within a limited time, were declared grantable to any other person. In Pennsylvania there

<sup>a</sup> Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. ii. b. iv. ch. viii. p. 365.

<sup>b</sup> *Id.* p. 368, 369.

was no right of primogeniture ; and in the provinces of New England, the eldest son had only a double share. There were no tithes in any of the States, and scarcely any taxes. And on account of the extreme cheapness of good land, a capital could not be more advantageously employed than in agriculture ; which, at the same time that it affords the greatest quantity of healthy work, supplies the most valuable produce to the society.

The consequence of these favourable circumstances united, was a rapidity of increase almost without parallel in history. Throughout all the northern provinces the population was found to double itself in 25 years. The original number of persons which had settled in the four provinces of New England in 1643, was 21,200. Afterwards it was calculated that more left them than went to them. In the year 1760 they were increased to half a million. They had therefore, all along doubled their number in 25 years. In New Jersey the period of doubling appeared to be 22 years, and in Rhode Island still less. In the back settle-

ments, where the inhabitants applied themselves solely to agriculture, and luxury was not known, they were supposed to double their number in fifteen years. Along the sea-coast, which would naturally be first inhabited, the period of doubling was about 35 years, and in some of the maritime towns the population was absolutely at a stand <sup>a</sup>. From the late census made in America,

\* Price's *Observ. on Revers. Paym.* vol. i. p. 282, 283, and vol. ii. p. 260. I have lately had an opportunity of seeing some extracts from the sermon of Dr. Styles, from which Dr. Price has taken these facts. Speaking of Rhode Island, Dr. Styles says that, though the period of doubling for the whole colony is 25 years, yet that it is different in different parts, and within land is 20 and 15 years. The population of the five towns of Gloucester, Situate, Coventry, West Greenwich and Exeter, was 5033, A. D. 1748 and 6986, A. D. 1755; which implies a period of doubling of 15 years only. He mentions afterwards, that the county of Kent doubles in 20 years, and the county of Providence in 18 years.

I have also lately seen a paper of *Facts and Calculations respecting the Population of the United States*, which makes the period of doubling for the whole of the States, since their first settlement, only 20 years. I know not of what authority this paper is; but, as far as it goes upon public facts and enumerations, I should think that it must be to be depended upon. One period is very striking.  
From

America, it appears that, taking all the States together, they have still continued to double their numbers every 25 years; and as the whole population is now so great as not to be materially affected by the emigrations from Europe, and as it is known that, in some of the towns and districts near the sea-coast, the progress of population has been comparatively slow; it is evident, that in the interior of the country in general, the period of doubling from procreation only must have been considerably less than 25 years.

From a return to Congress in 1782, the population appeared to be 2,389,300, and in the census of 1790 4,000,000; increase in 9 years, 1,610,700; from which deduct ten thousand per annum for European settlers, which will be 90,000; and allow for their increase at 5 per cent for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years, which will be 20,250; the remaining increase during those 9 years, from procreation only, will be 1,500,450, which is nearly 7 per cent.; and consequently the period of doubling at this rate would be less than 16 years.

If this calculation for the whole population of the States be in any degree near the truth, it cannot be doubted, that in particular districts the period of doubling from procreation only has often been less than 15 years. The period immediately succeeding the war was likely to be a period of very rapid increase.

The population of the United States of America, according to the late census, is 5,172,312 <sup>a</sup>. We have no reason to believe that Great Britain is less populous at present, for the emigration of the small parent stock which produced these numbers. On the contrary, a certain degree of emigration is known to be favourable to the population of the mother country. It has been particularly remarked that the two Spanish provinces, from which the greatest number of people emigrated to America, became in consequence more populous.

Whatever was the original number of British emigrants which increased so fast in North America, let us ask, Why does not an equal number produce an equal increase in the same time in Great Britain? The obvious reason to be assigned is the want of food; and that this want is the most efficient cause of the three immediate checks

<sup>a</sup> One small State is mentioned as being omitted in the census; and I understand that the population is generally considered as above this number. It is said to approach towards 6,000,000. But such vague opinions cannot be much relied on.



to population, which have been observed to prevail in all societies, is evident from the rapidity with which even old states recover the desolations of war, pestilence, famine and the convulsions of nature. They are then for a short time placed a little in the situation of new colonies; and the effect is always answerable to what might be expected. If the industry of the inhabitants be not destroyed, subsistence will soon increase beyond the wants of the reduced numbers; and the invariable consequence will be, that population, which before perhaps was nearly stationary, will begin immediately to increase, and will continue its progress till the former population is recovered.

The fertile province of Flanders, which has been so often the seat of the most destructive wars, after a respite of a few years has always appeared as rich and populous as ever. The undiminished population of France, which has before been noticed, is an instance very strongly in point. The tables of Sussmilch afford continual proofs of a very rapid increase after great mortalities ;

ties; and the table for Prussia and Lithuania, which I have inserted <sup>a</sup>, is particularly striking in this respect. The effects of the dreadful plague in London, in 1666, were not perceptible 15 or 20 years afterwards. It may even be doubted whether Turkey and Egypt are upon an average much less populous for the plagues which periodically lay them waste. If the number of people which they contain be considerably less now than formerly, it is rather to be attributed to the tyranny and oppression of the governments under which they groan, and the consequent discouragements to agriculture, than to the losses which they sustain by the plague. The traces of the most destructive famines in China, Indostan, Egypt, and other countries, are by all accounts very soon obliterated; and the most tremendous convulsions of nature, such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, if they do not happen so frequently as to drive away the inhabitants or destroy their spirit of industry, have been found to produce

\* See p. 538 of this vol.

but

but a trifling effect on the average population of any state.

It has appeared from the registers of different countries, which have already been produced, that the progress of their population is checked by the periodical, though irregular, returns of plagues and sickly seasons. Dr. Short, in his curious researches into bills of mortality, often uses the expression of “terrible correctives of the redundancy of mankind<sup>a</sup> ;” and in a table of all the plagues, pestilences and famines, of which he could collect accounts, shews the constancy and universality of their operation.

The epidemical years in his table, or the years in which the plague or some great and wasting epidemic prevailed, (for smaller sickly seasons seem not to be included,) are 431<sup>b</sup>, of which 32 were before the Christian æra<sup>c</sup>. If we divide therefore the years of the present æra by 399, it will appear, that the periodical returns of such epidemics, to

<sup>a</sup> New Observ. on Bills of Mortality, p. 96.

<sup>b</sup> Hist. of Air, Seasons, &c., vol. ii. p. 566.

<sup>c</sup> Id. vol. ii p. 202.

some countries that we are acquainted with, have been on an average only at the interval of about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years.

Of the 254 great famines and dearths enumerated in the table, 15 were before the Christian æra<sup>a</sup>, beginning with that which occurred in Palestine, in the time of Abraham. If, subtracting these 15, we divide the years of the present æra by the remainder, it will appear that the average interval between the visits of this dreadful scourge has been only about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  years.

How far these “terrible correctives to “the redundance of mankind” have been occasioned by the too rapid increase of population, is a point which it would be very difficult to determine with any degree of precision. The causes of most of our diseases appear to us to be so mysterious, and probably are really so various, that it would be rashness to lay too much stress on any single one; but it will not perhaps be too much to say, that *among* these causes we ought certainly to rank crowded houses and insufficient or unwholesome food, which

<sup>a</sup> Hist. of Air, Seasons, &c., vol. ii. p. 206.

are the natural consequences of an increase of population faster than the accommodations of a country with respect to habitations and food will allow.

Almost all the histories of epidemics, which we possess, tend to confirm this supposition, by describing them in general as making their principal ravages among the lower classes of people. In Dr. Short's tables this circumstance is frequently mentioned <sup>a</sup>; and it further appears that a very considerable proportion of the epidemic years were either followed or were accompanied by seasons of dearth and bad food <sup>b</sup>. In other places he also mentions great plagues as diminishing particularly the numbers of the lower or servile sort of people <sup>c</sup>; and in speaking of different diseases he observes that those which are occasioned by bad and unwholesome food, generally last the longest <sup>d</sup>.

We know from constant experience, that

<sup>a</sup> Hist. of Air, Seasons, &c., vol. ii. p. 206. et. seq.

<sup>b</sup> Id. vol. ii. p. 206. et seq. and 336.

<sup>c</sup> New Observ. p. 125.

<sup>d</sup> Id. p. 108.

fevers are generated in our jails, our manufactories, our crowded workhouses and in the narrow and close streets of our large towns ; all which situations appear to be similar in their effects to squalid poverty ; and we cannot doubt that causes of this kind, aggravated in degree, contributed to the production and prevalence of those great and wasting plagues formerly so common in Europe, but which now, from the mitigation of these causes, are every where considerably abated, and in many places appear to be completely extirpated.

Of the other great scourge of mankind, famine, it may be observed that it is not in the nature of things, that the increase of population should absolutely produce one. This increase, though rapid, is necessarily gradual ; and as the human frame cannot be supported, even for a very short time, without food, it is evident, that no more human beings can grow up than there is provision to maintain. But though the principle of population cannot absolutely produce a famine, it prepares the way for one in the most complete manner ; and by  
obliging

obliging all the lower classes of people to subsist nearly on the smallest quantity of food that will support life, turns even a slight deficiency from the failure of the seasons into a severe dearth ; and may be fairly said therefore, to be one of the principal causes of famine. Among the signs of an approaching dearth, Dr. Short mentions one or more years of luxuriant crops together <sup>a</sup> ; and this observation is probably just, as we know that the general effect of years of cheapness and abundance is to dispose a great number of persons to marry ; and under such circumstances the return to a year merely of an average crop might produce a scarcity.

The small-pox, which at present may be considered as the most prevalent and fatal epidemic in Europe, is of all others, perhaps, the most difficult to account for, though the periods of its returns are in many places regular <sup>b</sup>. Dr. Short observes, that from the histories of this disorder it seems to have very little dependence upon

<sup>a</sup> Hist. of Air, Seasons, &c. vol. ii. p. 367.

<sup>b</sup> Id. vol. ii. p. 411.

the past or present constitution of the weather or seasons, and that it appears epidemically at all times and in all states of the air, though not so frequently in a hard frost. We know of no instances, I believe, of its being clearly generated under any circumstances of situation. I do not mean therefore to insinuate that poverty and crowded houses ever absolutely produced it; but I may be allowed to remark, that in those places where its returns are regular, and its ravages among children, particularly among those of the lower class, are considerable, it necessarily follows that these circumstances, in a greater degree than usual, must always precede and accompany its appearance; that is, from the time of its last visit, the average number of children will be increasing, the people will, in consequence, be growing poorer, and the houses will be more crowded till another visit removes this superabundant population.

In all these cases, how little soever force we may be disposed to attribute to the effects of the principle of population in the actual



actual production of disorders, we cannot avoid allowing their force as predisposing causes to the reception of contagion, and as giving very great additional force to the extensiveness and fatality of its ravages.

It is observed by Dr. Short that a severe mortal epidemic is generally succeeded by an uncommon healthiness, from the late distemper having carried off most of the declining and worn-out constitutions <sup>a</sup>. It is probable, also, that another cause of it may be the greater plenty of room and food, and the consequently meliorated condition of the lower classes of the people. Sometimes, according to Dr. Short, a very fruitful year is followed by a very mortal and sickly one, and mortal ones often succeeded by very fruitful, as if Nature sought either to prevent or quickly repair the loss by death. In general the next year after sickly and mortal ones is prolific in proportion to the breeders left <sup>b</sup>.

This last effect we have seen most strikingly exemplified in the table for

<sup>a</sup> Hist. of Air, Seasons, &c. vol. ii. p. 344.

<sup>b</sup> New Observ. p. 191.

Prussia and Lithuania<sup>a</sup>. And from this and other tables of Sussmilch, it also appears that, when the increasing produce of a country and the increasing demand for labour, so far meliorate the condition of the labourer as greatly to encourage marriage, the custom of early marriages is generally continued, till the population has gone beyond the increased produce, and sickly seasons appear to be the natural and necessary consequence. The continental registers exhibit many instances of rapid increase, interrupted in this manner by mortal diseases ; and the inference seems to be, that those countries where subsistence is increasing sufficiently to encourage population, but not to answer all its demands, will be more subject to periodical epidemics, than those where the increase of population is more nearly accommodated to the average produce.

The converse of this will of course be true. In those countries which are subject to periodical sicknesses, the increase of population, or the excess of births above

<sup>a</sup> New Observ. p. 538 of this vol.

the deaths, will be greater in the intervals of these periods than is usual in countries not so much subject to these diseases. If Turkey and Egypt have been nearly stationary in their average population for the last century, in the intervals of their periodical plagues, the births must have exceeded the deaths in a much greater proportion than in such countries as France and England.

It is for these reasons that no estimates of future population or depopulation, formed from any existing rate of increase or decrease, can be depended upon. Sir William Petty calculated that in the year 1800 the city of London would contain 5,359,000<sup>a</sup> inhabitants, instead of which it does not now contain a fifth part of that number. And Mr. Eaton has lately prophesied the extinction of the population of the Turkish empire in another century<sup>b</sup>, an event which will certainly fail of taking place. If America were to continue increasing at the same rate as at present for

<sup>a</sup> Political Arithmetic, p. 17.

<sup>b</sup> Survey of the Turkish Empire, c. vii. p. 281.

the next 150 years, her population would exceed the population of China ; but though prophecies are dangerous, I will venture to say that such an increase will not take place in that time, though it may perhaps in five or six hundred years.

Europe was without doubt formerly more subject to plagues and wasting epidemics than at present ; and this will account, in a great measure, for the greater proportion of births to deaths in former times, mentioned by many authors ; as it has always been a common practice to estimate these proportions from too short periods, and generally to reject the years of plague as accidental.

The average proportion of births to deaths in England may be considered as about 12 to 10, or 120 to 100. The proportion in France for ten years, ending in 1780, was about 115 to 100<sup>a</sup>. Though these proportions have undoubtedly varied at different periods during the last century, yet we have reason to think that they have

<sup>a</sup> Necker de l'Administration des Finances, tom. i. c. ix. p. 255.

not varied in any very considerable degree; and it will appear therefore, that the population of France and England has accommodated itself more nearly to the average produce of each country than many other states. The operation of the preventive check—wars—the silent though certain destruction of life in large towns and manufactories—and the close habitations and insufficient food of many of the poor—prevent population from outrunning the means of subsistence; and, if I may use an expression, which certainly at first appears strange, supersede the necessity of great and ravaging epidemics to destroy what is redundant. If a wasting plague were to sweep off two millions in England, and six millions in France, it cannot be doubted that, after the inhabitants had recovered from the dreadful shock, the proportion of births to deaths would rise much above the usual average in either country during the last century.

In New Jersey the proportion of births to deaths, on an average of 7 years, ending with 1743, was 300 to 100. In France and

England the average proportion cannot be reckoned at more than 120 to 100. Great and astonishing as this difference is, we ought not to be so wonder-struck at it, as to attribute it to the miraculous interposition of Heaven. The causes of it are not remote, latent and mysterious, but near us, round about us, and open to the investigation of every inquiring mind. It accords with the most liberal spirit of philosophy to believe that no stone can fall, or plant rise, without the immediate agency of divine power. But we know from experience, that these operations of what we call nature have been conducted almost invariably according to fixed laws. And since the world began, the causes of population and depopulation have been probably as constant as any of the laws of nature with which we are acquainted.

The passion between the sexes has appeared in every age to be so nearly the same, that it may always be considered, in algebraic language, as a given quantity. The great law of necessity, which prevents population from increasing in any country  
beyond

beyond the food which it can either produce or acquire, is a law so open to our view, so obvious and evident to our understandings, that we cannot for a moment doubt it. The different modes which nature takes to repress a redundant population, do not appear indeed to us so certain and regular ; but though we cannot always predict the mode, we may with certainty predict the fact. If the proportion of the births to the deaths for a few years indicates an increase of numbers much beyond the proportional increased or acquired food of the country, we may be perfectly certain that, unless an emigration take place, the deaths will shortly exceed the births, and that the increase which had been observed for a few years cannot be the real average increase of the population of the country. If there were no other depopulating causes, and if the preventive check did not operate very strongly, every country would without doubt be subject to periodical plagues and famines.

The only true criterion of a real and permanent increase in the population of

any country, is the increase of the means of subsistence. But even this criterion is subject to some slight variations, which however are completely open to our observation. In some countries population seems to have been forced ; that is, the people have been habituated by degrees to live almost upon the smallest possible quantity of food. There must have been periods in such countries, when population increased permanently without an increase in the means of subsistence. China, India and the countries possessed by the Bedoween Arabs, as we have seen in the former part of this work, appear to answer to this description. The average produce of these countries seems to be but barely sufficient to support the lives of the inhabitants, and of course any deficiency from the badness of the seasons must be fatal. Nations in this state must necessarily be subject to famines.

In America, where the reward of labour is at present so liberal, the lower classes might retrench very considerably in a year of scarcity, without materially distressing themselves



themselves. A famine therefore seems to be almost impossible. It may be expected, that in the progress of the population of America, the labourers will in time be much less liberally rewarded. The numbers will in this case permanently increase, without a proportional increase in the means of subsistence.

In the different countries of Europe there must be some variations in the proportion of the number of inhabitants and the quantity of food consumed, arising from the different habits of living which prevail in each state. The labourers of the south of England are so accustomed to eat fine wheaten bread, that they will suffer themselves to be half starved before they will submit to live like the Scotch peasants.

They might perhaps, in time, by the constant operation of the hard law of necessity, be reduced to live even like the lower classes of the Chinese, and the country would then with the same quantity of food support a greater population. But to effect this must always be a difficult,  
and

and every friend to humanity will hope, an abortive attempt.

I have mentioned some cases where population may permanently increase without a proportional increase in the means of subsistence. But it is evident that the variation in different states between the food and the numbers supported by it is restricted to a limit beyond which it cannot pass. In every country, the population of which is not absolutely decreasing, the food must be necessarily sufficient to support and continue the race of labourers.

Other circumstances being the same, it may be affirmed that countries are populous according to the quantity of human food which they produce or can acquire; and happy, according to the liberality with which this food is divided, or the quantity which a day's labour will purchase. Corn countries are more populous than pasture countries, and rice countries more populous than corn countries. But their happiness does not depend either upon their being thinly or fully inhabited, upon their poverty or their riches, their youth or their  
age ;

age; but on the proportion which the population and the food bear to each other. This proportion is generally the most favourable in new colonies, where the knowledge and industry of an old state operate on the fertile unappropriated land of a new one. In other cases the youth or the age of a state is not, in this respect, of great importance. It is probable that the food of Great Britain is divided in more liberal shares to her inhabitants at the present period, than it was two thousand, three thousand or four thousand years ago. And it has appeared that the poor and thinly-inhabited tracts of the Scotch Highlands are more distressed by a redundant population than the most populous parts of Europe.

If a country were never to be overrun by a people more advanced in arts, but left to its own natural progress in civilization; from the time that its produce might be considered as an unit, to the time that it might be considered as a million, during the lapse of many thousand years, there would not be a single period when the mass of the people could be said to be free from  
distress,

distress, either directly or indirectly, for want of food. In every state in Europe, since we have first had accounts of it, millions and millions of human existencies have been repressed from this simple cause, though perhaps in some of these states an absolute famine may never have been known.

Must it not then be acknowledged by an attentive examiner of the histories of mankind, that, in every age and in every state in which man has existed or does now exist,

The increase of population is necessarily limited by the means of subsistence :

Population invariably increases when the means of subsistence increase<sup>a</sup>, unless prevented by powerful and obvious checks :

These checks, and the checks which keep the population down to the level of the means of subsistence, are moral restraint, vice, and misery ?

In comparing the state of society which

<sup>a</sup> By an increase in the means of subsistence, as the expression is used here, is always meant such an increase as the mass of the population can command; otherwise it can be of no avail in encouraging an increase of people.

has been considered in this second book with that which formed the subject of the first, I think it appears that in modern Europe the positive checks to population prevail less, and the preventive checks more than in past times, and in the more uncivilized parts of the world.

War, the predominant check to the population of savage nations, has certainly abated, even including the late unhappy revolutionary contests ; and since the prevalence of a greater degree of personal cleanliness, of better modes of clearing and building towns, and of a more equable distribution of the products of the soil from improving knowledge in political economy, plagues, violent diseases and famines have been certainly mitigated, and have become less frequent.

With regard to the preventive check to population, though it must be acknowledged that that branch of it which comes under the head of moral restraint <sup>a</sup>, does not at present prevail much among the male

<sup>a</sup> The reader will recollect the confined sense in which I use this term.

part of society ; yet I am strongly disposed to believe that it prevails more than in those states which were first considered ; and it can scarcely be doubted that in modern Europe a much larger proportion of women pass a considerable part of their lives in the exercise of this virtue, than in past times and among uncivilized nations. But however this may be, if we consider only the general term which implies principally a delay of the marriage union from prudential considerations, without reference to consequences, it may be considered in this light as the most powerful of the checks, which in modern Europe keep down the population to the level of the means of subsistence.

# ESSAY,

§c. §c.

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## BOOK III.

OF THE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OR EXPEDIENTS  
WHICH HAVE BEEN PROPOSED OR HAVE PRE-  
VAILED IN SOCIETY, AS THEY AFFECT THE  
EVILS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF  
POPULATION.

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### CHAP. I.

*Of Systems of Equality. Wallace. Condorcet.*

TO a person who views the past and present states of mankind in the light in which they have appeared in the two preceding books, it cannot but be a matter of astonishment, that all the writers on the perfectibility of man and of society, who have noticed the argument of the principle of population, treat it always very lightly, and

and invariably represent the difficulties arising from it as at a great and almost immeasurable distance. Even Mr. Wallace, who thought the argument itself of so much weight as to destroy his whole system of equality, did not seem to be aware that any difficulty would arise from this cause, till the whole earth had been cultivated like a garden, and was incapable of any further increase of produce. If this were really the case, and a beautiful system of equality were in other respects practicable, I cannot think that our ardour in the pursuit of such a scheme ought to be damped by the contemplation of so remote a difficulty. An event at such a distance might fairly be left to Providence. But the truth is, that, if the view of the argument given in this essay be just, the difficulty, so far from being remote, is imminent and immediate. At every period during the progress of cultivation, from the present moment to the time when the whole earth was become like a garden, the distress for want of food would be constantly pressing on all mankind, if they were equal. Though the produce



duce of the earth would be increasing every year, population would have the power of increasing much faster, and this superior power must necessarily be checked by the periodical or constant action of moral restraint, vice, or misery.

M. Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain* was written, it is said, under the pressure of that cruel proscription which terminated in his death. If he had no hopes of its being seen during his life, and of its interesting France in his favour, it is a singular instance of the attachment of a man to principles, which every day's experience was so fatally for himself contradicting. To see the human mind in one of the most enlightened nations of the world, debased by such a fermentation of disgusting passions, of fear, cruelty, malice, revenge, ambition, madness and folly, as would have disgraced the most savage nations in the most barbarous age, must have been such a tremendous shock to his ideas of the necessary and inevitable progress of the human mind, as nothing but the firmest conviction of the truth

truth of his principles, in spite of all appearances, could have withstood.

This posthumous publication is only a sketch of a much larger work, which he proposed should be executed. It necessarily wants therefore that detail and application, which can alone prove the truth of any theory. A few observations will be sufficient to shew how completely this theory is contradicted, when it is applied to the real, and not to an imaginary, state of things.

In the last division of the work, which treats of the future progress of man towards perfection, M. Condorcet says that, comparing in the different civilized nations of Europe the actual population with the extent of territory, and observing their cultivation, their industry, their divisions of labour, and their means of subsistence, we shall see that it would be impossible to preserve the same means of subsistence, and consequently the same population, without a number of individuals who have no other means of supplying their wants than their industry.

Having

Having allowed the necessity of such a class of men, and adverting afterwards to the precarious revenue of those families that would depend so entirely on the life and health of their chief<sup>a</sup>, he says very justly, “ There exists then a necessary “ cause of inequality, of dependence, and “ even of misery, which menaces without “ ceasing the most numerous and active “ class of our societies.” The difficulty is just and well stated ; but his mode of removing it will, I fear, be found totally inefficacious.

By the application of calculations to the probabilities of life, and the interest of money, he proposes that a fund should be established, which should assure to the old an assistance produced in part by their own former savings, and in part by the savings of individuals; who in making the same sacrifice die before they reap the benefit of

\* To save time and long quotations, I shall here give the substance of some of M. Condorcet's sentiments, and I hope that I shall not misrepresent them ; but I refer the reader to the work itself, which will amuse, if it do not convince him.

it. The same or a similar fund should give assistance to women and children who lose their husbands or fathers ; and afford a capital to those who were of an age to found a new family, sufficient for the development of their industry. These establishments, he observes, might be made in the name and under the protection of the society. Going still further, he says, that by the just application of calculations, means might be found of more completely preserving a state of equality, by preventing credit from being the exclusive privilege of great fortunes, and yet giving it a basis equally solid, and by rendering the progress of industry and the activity of commerce less dependent on great capitalists.

Such establishments and calculations may appear very promising upon paper ; but when applied to real life, they will be found to be absolutely nugatory. M. Condorcet allows that a class of people which maintains itself entirely by industry, is necessary to every state. Why does he allow this? No other reason can well be assigned, than because he conceives, that the labour  
necessary

necessary to procure subsistence for an extended population will not be performed without the goad of necessity. If by establishments upon the plans that have been mentioned this spur to industry be removed; if the idle and negligent be placed upon the same footing with regard to their credit and the future support of their wives and families, as the active and industrious; can we expect to see men exert that animated activity in bettering their condition, which now forms the master-spring of public prosperity? If an inquisition were to be established to examine the claims of each individual, and to determine whether he had or had not exerted himself to the utmost, and to grant or refuse assistance accordingly, this would be little else than a repetition upon a larger scale of the English poor-laws, and would be completely destructive of the true principles of liberty and equality.

But independently of this great objection to these establishments, and supposing for a moment that they would give no check to production, the greatest difficulty remains yet behind.

If every man were sure of a comfortable provision for a family, almost every man would have one; and if the rising generation were free from the fear of poverty, population must increase with unusual rapidity. Of this M. Condorcet seems to be fully aware himself; and after having described further improvements, he says,

“ But in this progress of industry  
“ and happiness, each generation will be  
“ called to more extended enjoyments, and  
“ in consequence, by the physical constitution of the human frame, to an increase in the number of individuals.  
“ Must not a period then arrive when these  
“ laws, equally necessary, shall counter-act each other; when, the increase of  
“ the number of men surpassing their means  
“ of subsistence, the necessary result must  
“ be, either a continual diminution of happiness and population—a movement  
“ truly retrograde; or at least a kind of  
“ oscillation between good and evil? In  
“ societies arrived at this term, will not this  
“ oscillation be a constantly subsisting  
“ cause of periodical misery? Will it not  
“ mark

“ mark the limit, when all further melioration will become impossible, and point out that term to the perfectibility of the human race, which it may reach in the course of ages, but can never pass?”

“ He then adds,

“ There is no person who does not see how very distant such a period is from us. But shall we ever arrive at it? It is equally impossible to pronounce for or against the future realization of an event, which cannot take place but at an æra, when the human race will have attained improvements, of which we can at present scarcely form a conception.”

M. Condorcet's picture of what may be expected to happen, when the number of men shall surpass their means of subsistence, is justly drawn. The oscillation which he describes will certainly take place, and will without doubt be a constantly subsisting cause of periodical misery. The only point in which I differ from M. Condorcet in this description is with regard to the period when it may be applied to the human race. M. Condorcet thinks that

it cannot possibly be applicable but at an æra extremely distant. If the proportion between the natural increase of population and food which was stated in the beginning of this essay, and which has received considerable confirmation from the poverty that has been found to prevail in every stage of human society, be in any degree near the truth ; it will appear, on the contrary, that the period when the number of men surpasses their means of easy subsistence has long since arrived ; and that this necessary oscillation, this constantly subsisting cause of periodical misery, has existed in most countries ever since we have had any histories of mankind, and continues to exist at the present moment.

M. Condorcet, however, goes on to say, that should the period which he conceives to be so distant, ever arrive, the human race, and the advocates of the perfectibility of man, need not be alarmed at it. He then proceeds to remove the difficulty in a manner which I profess not to understand. Having observed that the ridiculous prejudices of superstition would by that time have



have ceased to throw over morals a corrupt and degrading austerity, he alludes either to a promiscuous concubinage which would prevent breeding, or to something else as unnatural. To remove the difficulty in this way will surely, in the opinion of most men, be to destroy that virtue and purity of manners, which the advocates of equality and of the perfectibility of man profess to be the end and object of their views.

The last question which M. Condorcet proposes for examination is the organic perfectibility of man. He observes, if the proofs which have been already given, and which, in their developement, will receive greater force in the work itself, are sufficient to establish the indefinite perfectibility of man, upon the supposition of the same natural faculties and the same organization which he has at present; what will be the certainty, what the extent of our hopes, if this organization, these natural faculties themselves, be susceptible of melioration ?

From the improvement of medicine; from the use of more wholesome food and habitations ;

tations ; from a manner of living, which will improve the strength of the body by exercise, without impairing it by excess ; from the destruction of the two great causes of the degradation of man, misery and too great riches ; from the gradual removal of transmissible and contagious disorders by the improvement of physical knowledge, rendered more efficacious by the progress of reason and of social order ; he infers, that though man will not absolutely become immortal, yet the duration between his birth and natural death will increase without ceasing, will have no assignable term, and may properly be expressed by the word indefinite. He then defines this word to mean either a constant approach to an unlimited extent without ever reaching it ; or an increase in the immensity of ages to an extent greater than any assignable quantity.

But surely the application of this term in either of these senses to the duration of human life is in the highest degree unphilosophical, and totally unwarranted by any appearances in the laws of nature. Variations

tions from different causes are essentially distinct from a regular and unretrograde increase. The average duration of human life will to a certain degree vary from healthy or unhealthy climates, from wholesome or unwholesome food, from virtuous or vicious manners and other causes ; but it may be fairly doubted whether there has been really the smallest perceptible advance in the natural duration of human life, since first we had any authentic history of man. The prejudices of all ages have indeed been directly contrary to this supposition ; and though I would not lay much stress upon these prejudices, they must have some tendency to prove that there has been no marked advance in an opposite direction.

It may perhaps be said, that the world is yet so young, so completely in its infancy, that it ought not to be expected that any difference should appear so soon.

If this be the case, there is at once an end of all human science. The whole train of reasonings from effects to causes will be destroyed. We may shut our eyes to the book of nature, as it will no longer be of any use to  
read

read it. The wildest and most improbable conjectures may be advanced with as much certainty, as the most just and sublime theories, founded on careful and reiterated experiments. We may return again to the old mode of philosophizing, and make facts bend to systems, instead of establishing systems upon facts. The grand and consistent theory of Newton will be placed upon the same footing as the wild and eccentric hypotheses of Descartes. In short, if the laws of nature be thus fickle and inconstant; if it can be affirmed, and be believed, that they will change, when for ages and ages they have appeared immutable; the human mind will no longer have any incitements to inquiry, but must remain sunk in inactive torpor, or amuse itself only in bewildering dreams and extravagant fancies.

The constancy of the laws of nature, and of effects and causes, is the foundation of all human knowledge; and if, without any previous observable symptoms or indications of a change, we can infer that a change will take place, we may as well make any  
assertion

assertion whatever ; and think it as unreasonable to be contradicted, in affirming that the moon will come in contact with the earth to morrow, as in saying that the sun will rise at its expected time.

With regard to the duration of human life, there does not appear to have existed, from the earliest ages of the world to the present moment, the smallest permanent symptom or indication of increasing prolongation. The observable effects of climate, habit, diet, and other causes, on length of life, have furnished the pretext for asserting its indefinite extension ; and the sandy foundation on which the argument rests is, that because the limit of human life is undefined, because you cannot mark its precise term, and say so far exactly shall it go, and no further, therefore its extent may increase for ever, and be properly termed indefinite or unlimited. But the fallacy and absurdity of this argument will sufficiently appear from a slight examination of what M. Condorcet calls the organic perfectibility or degeneration of the race of plants and animals which, he  
says,

says, may be regarded as one of the general laws of nature.

I have been told that it is a maxim among some of the improvers of cattle, that you may breed to any degree of nicety you please; and they found this maxim upon another, which is, that some of the offspring will possess the desirable qualities of the parents in a greater degree. In the famous Leicestershire breed of sheep, the object is to procure them with small heads and small legs. Proceeding upon these breeding maxims, it is evident that we might go on, till the heads and legs were evanescent quantities; but this is so palpable an absurdity, that we may be quite sure the premises are not just, and that there really is a limit, though we cannot see it, or say exactly where it is. In this case, the point of the greatest degree of improvement, or the smallest size of the head and legs, may be said to be undefined; but this is very different from unlimited, or from indefinite, in M. Condorcet's acceptation of the term. Though I may not be able in the present instance to mark the limit, at which further  
improvement

improvement will stop, I can very easily mention a point, at which it will not arrive. I should not scruple to assert, that were the breeding to continue for ever, the heads and legs of these sheep would never be so small as the head and legs of a rat.

It cannot be true therefore, that, among animals, some of the offspring will possess the desirable qualities of the parents in a greater degree ; or that animals are indefinitely perfectible.

The progress of a wild plant to a beautiful garden-flower is perhaps more marked and striking, than any thing that takes place among animals ; yet even here it would be the height of absurdity to assert that the progress was unlimited or indefinite. One of the most obvious features of the improvement is the increase of size. The flower has grown gradually larger by cultivation. If the progress were really unlimited, it might be increased ad infinitum ; but this is so gross an absurdity, that we may be quite sure, that among plants as well as among animals there is a limit to improvement, though we do not exactly know

know where it is. It is probable that the gardeners who contend for flower-prizes have often applied stronger dressing without success. At the same time it would be highly presumptuous in any man to say, that he had seen the finest carnation or anemone that could ever be made to grow. He might however assert, without the smallest chance of being contradicted by a future fact, that no carnation or anemone could ever by cultivation be increased to the size of a large cabbage ; and yet there are assignable quantities greater than a cabbage. No man can say that he has seen the largest ear of wheat, or the largest oak, that could ever grow ; but he might easily, and with perfect certainty, name a point of magnitude at which they would not arrive. In all these cases therefore a careful distinction should be made between an unlimited progress, and a progress where the limit is merely undefined.

It will be said perhaps, that the reason why plants and animals cannot increase indefinitely in size is, that they would fall by their own weight. I answer, how do we know



know this but from experience? from experience of the degree of strength, with which these bodies are formed. I know, that a carnation long before it reached the size of a cabbage would not be supported by its stalk; but I only know this from my experience of the weakness and want of tenacity in the materials of a carnation-stalk. There might be substances of the same size that would support as large a head as a cabbage.

The reasons of the mortality of plants are at present perfectly unknown to us. No man can say why such a plant is annual, another biennial, and another endures for ages. The whole affair in all these cases, in plants, animals, and in the human race, is an affair of experience; and I only conclude, that man is mortal, because the invariable experience of all ages has proved the mortality of that organized substance, of which his visible body is made.

“What can we reason but from what we **know**?”

Sound philosophy will not authorize me to alter this opinion of the mortality of man on earth, till it can be clearly proved that  
the

the human race has made, and is making, a decided progress towards an illimitable extent of life. And the chief reason why I adduced the two particular instances from animals and plants was to expose and illustrate, if I could, the fallacy of that argument, which infers an unlimited progress merely because some partial improvement has taken place, and that the limit of this improvement cannot be precisely ascertained.

The capacity of improvement in plants and animals, to a certain degree, no person can possibly doubt. A clear and decided progress has already been made ; and yet I think it appears that it would be highly absurd to say, that this progress has no limits. In human life, though there are great variations from different causes, it may be doubted whether since the world began any organic improvement whatever of the human frame can be clearly ascertained. The foundations therefore, on which the arguments for the organic perfectibility of man rest, are unusually weak, and can only be considered as mere conjectures. It does not however by any means seem impossible, that

that by an attention to breed, a certain degree of improvement similar to that among animals might take place among men. Whether intellect could be communicated may be a matter of doubt; but size, strength, beauty, complexion, and perhaps even longevity, are in a degree transmissible. The error does not lie in supposing a small degree of improvement possible, but in not discriminating between a small improvement, the limit of which is undefined, and an improvement really unlimited. As the human race however could not be improved in this way, without condemning all the bad specimens to celibacy, it is not probable that an attention to breed should ever become general; indeed I know of no well-directed attempts of this kind, except in the ancient family of the Bickerstaffs, who are said to have been very successful in whitening the skins and increasing the height of their race by prudent marriages, particularly by that very judicious cross with Maud the milk-maid, by which some capital defects in the constitutions of the family were corrected.

It

It will not be necessary, I think, in order more completely to shew the improbability of any approach in man towards immortality on earth, to urge the very great additional weight, that an increase in the duration of life would give to the argument of population.

M. Condorcet's book may be considered not only as a sketch of the opinions of a celebrated individual, but of many of the literary men in France at the beginning of the revolution. As such, though merely a sketch, it seems worthy of attention.

Many, I doubt not, will think that the attempting gravely to controvert so absurd a paradox, as the immortality of man on earth, or indeed even the perfectibility of man and society, is a waste of time and words ; and that such unfounded conjectures are best answered by neglect. I profess however to be of a different opinion. When paradoxes of this kind are advanced by ingenious and able men, neglect has no tendency to convince them of their mistakes. Priding themselves on what they conceive to be a mark of the reach and size of their own understandings,

understandings, of the extent and comprehensiveness of their views, they will look upon this neglect merely as an indication of poverty and narrowness in the mental exertions of their contemporaries, and only think that the world is not yet prepared to receive their sublime truths.

On the contrary, a candid investigation of these subjects, accompanied with a perfect readiness to adopt any theory warranted by sound philosophy, may have a tendency to convince them that, in forming improbable and unfounded hypotheses, so far from enlarging the bounds of human science, they are contracting it; so far from promoting the improvement of the human mind, they are obstructing it: they are throwing us back again almost into the infancy of knowledge; and weakening the foundations of that mode of philosophizing, under the auspices of which science has of late made such rapid advances. The late rage for wide and unrestrained speculation seems to have been a kind of mental intoxication, arising perhaps from the great and unexpected discoveries, which had been made in various

branches of science. To men elate and giddy with such successes, every thing appeared to be within the grasp of human powers; and under this illusion they confounded subjects where no real progress could be proved, with those where the progress had been marked, certain and acknowledged. Could they be persuaded to sober themselves with a little severe and chastised thinking, they would see that the cause of truth and of sound philosophy cannot but suffer, by substituting wild flights and unsupported assertions for patient investigation and well-supported proofs.

## CHAP. II.

*Of Systems of Equality. Godwin.*

IN reading Mr. Godwin's ingenious work on political justice, it is impossible not to be struck with the spirit and energy of his style, the force and precision of some of his reasonings, the ardent tone of his thoughts, and particularly with that impressive earnestness of manner which gives an air of truth to the whole. At the same time it must be confessed that he has not proceeded in his inquiries with the caution that sound philosophy requires; his conclusions are often unwarranted by his premises; he fails sometimes in removing objections which he himself brings forward; he relies too much on general and abstract propositions, which will not admit of application; and his conjectures certainly far outstrip the modesty of nature.

The system of equality, which Mr. God-

win proposes, is, on a first view of it, the most beautiful and engaging of any that has yet appeared. A melioration of society to be produced merely by reason and conviction gives more promise of permanence than any change effected and maintained by force. The unlimited exercise of private judgment is a doctrine grand and captivating, and has a vast superiority over those systems, where every individual is in a manner the slave of the public. The substitution of benevolence, as the master-spring and moving principle of society, instead of self-love, appears at first sight to be a consummation devoutly to be wished. In short, it is impossible to contemplate the whole of this fair picture, without emotions of delight and admiration, accompanied with an ardent longing for the period of its accomplishment. But alas! that moment can never arrive. The whole is little better than a dream—a phantom of the imagination. These “gorgeous palaces” of happiness and immortality, these “solemn temples” of truth and virtue, will dissolve, “like the baseless fabric of a vision,” when

we



we awaken to real life, and contemplate the genuine situation of man on earth.

Mr. Godwin, at the conclusion of the third chapter of his eighth book, speaking of population, says, "There is a principle  
" in human society, by which population  
" is perpetually kept down to the level of  
" the means of subsistence. Thus among  
" the wandering tribes of America and  
" Asia we never find, through the lapse of  
" ages, that population has so increased,  
" as to render necessary the cultivation  
" of the earth<sup>a</sup>." This principle, which Mr. Godwin thus mentions as some mysterious and occult cause, and which he does not attempt to investigate, has appeared to be the law of necessity—misery, and the fear of misery.

The great error under which Mr. Godwin labours throughout his whole work is, the attributing of almost all the vices and misery that prevail in civil society to human institutions. Political regulations and the established administration of property are, with him, the fruitful sources of all evil, the

<sup>a</sup> P. 460, 8vo. 2d edit.

hotbeds of all the crimes that degrade mankind. Were this really a true state of the case, it would not seem an absolutely hopeless task, to remove evil completely from the world; and reason seems to be the proper and adequate instrument for effecting so great a purpose. But the truth is, that though human institutions appear to be, and indeed often are, the obvious and obtrusive causes of much mischief to society, they are, in reality, light and superficial, in comparison with those deeper-seated causes of evil, which result from the laws of nature and the passions of mankind.

In a chapter on the benefits attendant upon a system of equality, Mr. Godwin says, "The spirit of oppression, the spirit  
 " of servility, and the spirit of fraud, these  
 " are the immediate growth of the esta-  
 " blished administration of property. They  
 " are alike hostile to intellectual improve-  
 " ment. The other vices of envy, malice  
 " and revenge, are their inseparable com-  
 " panions. In a state of society where  
 " men lived in the midst of plenty, and  
 " where all shared alike the bounties of  
 " nature,

“ nature, these sentiments would inevitably  
“ expire. The narrow principle of self-  
“ ishness would vanish. No man being  
“ obliged to guard his little store, or pro-  
“ vide with anxiety and pain for his restless  
“ wants, each would lose his individual ex-  
“ istence in the thought of the general  
“ good. No man would be an enemy to his  
“ neighbours, for they would have no sub-  
“ ject of contention ; and of consequence  
“ philanthropy would resume the empire  
“ which reason assigns her. Mind would  
“ be delivered from her perpetual anxiety  
“ about corporal support ; and be free  
“ to expatiate in the field of thought which  
“ is congenial to her. Each would assist  
“ the inquiries of all\*.”

This would indeed be a happy state. But that it is merely an imaginary picture with scarcely a feature near the truth, the reader, I am afraid, is already too well convinced!

Man cannot live in the midst of plenty. All cannot share alike the bounties of nature. Were there no established admini-

\* *Political Justice*, b. viii. c. iii. p. 438.

stration

stration of property, every man would be obliged to guard with force his little store. Selfishness would be triumphant. The subjects of contention would be perpetual. Every individual would be under a constant anxiety about corporal support, and not a single intellect would be left free to expatiate in the field of thought.

How little Mr. Godwin has turned his attention to the real state of human society, will sufficiently appear from the manner in which he endeavours to remove the difficulty of a superabundant population. He says, "The obvious answer to this objection is, that to reason thus is to foresee difficulties at a great distance. Three-fourths of the habitable globe are now uncultivated. The parts already cultivated are capable of immeasurable improvement. Myriads of centuries of still increasing population may pass away, and the earth be still found sufficient for the subsistence of its inhabitants<sup>a</sup>."

I have already pointed out the error of supposing that no distress or difficulty

<sup>a</sup> Polit. Justice, b. viii. c. ix. p. 510.

would

would arise from a redundant population, before the earth absolutely refused to produce any more. But let us imagine for a moment Mr. Godwin's system of equality realized in its utmost extent, and see how soon this difficulty might be expected to press, under so perfect a form of society. A theory that will not admit of application cannot possibly be just.

Let us suppose all the causes of vice and misery in this island removed. War and contention cease. Unwholesome trades and manufactories do not exist. Crowds no longer collect together in great and pestilent cities for purposes of court intrigue, of commerce, and of vicious gratification. Simple, healthy and rational amusements take place of drinking, gaming and debauchery. There are no towns sufficiently large to have any prejudicial effects on the human constitution. The greater part of the happy inhabitants of this terrestrial Paradise live in hamlets and farm-houses scattered over the face of the country. All men are equal. The labours of luxury are at an end; and the necessary labours of agriculture

agriculture are shared amicably among all. The number of persons and the produce of the island we suppose to be the same as at present. The spirit of benevolence, guided by impartial justice, will divide this produce among all the members of society according to their wants. Though it would be impossible that they should all have animal food every day, yet vegetable food, with meat occasionally, would satisfy the desires of a frugal people, and would be sufficient to preserve them in health, strength and spirits.

Mr. Godwin considers marriage as a fraud and a monopoly<sup>a</sup>. Let us suppose the commerce of the sexes established upon principles of the most perfect freedom. Mr. Godwin does not think himself, that this freedom would lead to a promiscuous intercourse; and in this I perfectly agree with him. The love of variety is a vicious, corrupt and unnatural taste, and could not prevail in any great degree in a simple and virtuous state of society. Each man would probably select for himself a

<sup>a</sup> Polit. Justice, b. viii. c. viii. p. 498, et seq.

partner,

partner, to whom he would adhere, as long as that adherence continued to be the choice of both parties. It would be of little consequence, according to Mr. Godwin, how many children a woman had, or to whom they belonged. Provisions and assistance would spontaneously flow from the quarter in which they abounded to the quarter in which they were deficient<sup>a</sup>. And every man, according to his capacity, would be ready to furnish instruction to the rising generation.

I cannot conceive a form of society so favourable upon the whole to population. The irremediableness of marriage, as it is at present constituted, undoubtedly deters many from entering into this state. An unshackled intercourse on the contrary would be a most powerful incitement to early attachments; and as we are supposing no anxiety about the future support of children to exist, I do not conceive that there would be one woman in a hundred, of twenty-three years of age, without a family.

<sup>a</sup> Political Justice, b. viii. c. viii. p. 504.

With

With these extraordinary encouragements to population, and every cause of depopulation, as we have supposed, removed, the numbers would necessarily increase faster than in any society that has ever yet been known. I have before mentioned that the inhabitants of the back settlements of America appear to double their numbers in fifteen years. England is certainly a more healthy country than the back settlements of America; and as we have supposed every house in the island to be airy and wholesome, and the encouragements to have a family greater even than in America, no probable reason can be assigned, why the population should not double itself in less, if possible, than fifteen years. But to be quite sure, that we do not go beyond the truth, we will only suppose the period of doubling to be twenty-five years; a ratio of increase, which is slower than is known to have taken place throughout all the United States of America.

There can be little doubt, that the equalization of property which we have supposed, added to the circumstance of the labour



labour of the whole community being directed chiefly to agriculture, would tend greatly to augment the produce of the country. But to answer the demands of a population increasing so rapidly, Mr. Godwin's calculation of half an hour a day would certainly not be sufficient. It is probable that the half of every man's time must be employed for this purpose. Yet with such or much greater exertions, a person who is acquainted with the nature of the soil in this country, and who reflects on the fertility of the lands already in cultivation, and the barrenness of those that are not cultivated, will be very much disposed to doubt, whether the whole average produce could possibly be doubled in twenty-five years from the present period. The only chance of success would be from the ploughing up most of the grazing countries, and putting an end almost entirely to animal food. Yet this scheme would probably defeat itself. The soil of England will not produce much without dressing; and cattle seem to be necessary to make

make that species of manure, which best suits the land.

Difficult however as it might be to double the average produce of the island in twenty-five years, let us suppose it effected. At the expiration of the first period therefore, the food, though almost entirely vegetable, would be sufficient to support in health the doubled population of 22 millions.

During the next period, where will the food be found, to satisfy the importunate demands of the increasing numbers? Where is the fresh land to turn up? Where is the dressing necessary to improve that which is already in cultivation? There is no person with the smallest knowledge of land but would say that it was impossible that the average produce of the country could be increased during the second twenty-five years by a quantity equal to what it at present yields. Yet we will suppose this increase, however improbable, to take place. The exuberant strength of the argument allows of almost any concession. Even with this concession, however, there would be

be 11 millions at the expiration of the second term unprovided for. A quantity equal to the frugal support of 33 millions would be to be divided among 44 millions.

Alas! what becomes of the picture, where men lived in the midst of plenty, where no man was obliged to provide with anxiety and pain for his restless wants; where the narrow principle of selfishness did not exist; where the mind was delivered from her perpetual anxiety about corporal support, and free to expatiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her? This beautiful fabric of the imagination vanishes at the severe touch of truth. The spirit of benevolence, cherished and invigorated by plenty, is repressed by the chilling breath of want. The hateful passions that had vanished reappear. The mighty law of self-preservation expels all the softer and more exalted emotions of the soul. The temptations to evil are too strong for human nature to resist. The corn is plucked up before it is ripe, or secreted in unfair proportions; and the whole black train of vices that belong to falsehood are immediately

diately generated. Provisions no longer flow in for the support of a mother with a large family. The children are sickly from insufficient food. The rosy flush of health gives place to the pallid cheek and hollow eye of misery. Benevolence, yet lingering in a few bosoms, makes some faint expiring struggles, till at length self-love resumes his wonted empire, and lords it triumphant over the world.

No human institutions here existed, to the perverseness of which Mr. Godwin ascribes the original sin of the worst men<sup>a</sup>. No opposition had been produced by them between public and private good. No monopoly had been created of those advantages which reason directs to be left in common. No man had been goaded to the breach of order by unjust laws. Benevolence had established her reign in all hearts. And yet in so short a period as fifty years, violence, oppression, falsehood, misery, every hateful vice and every form of distress, which degrade and sadden the present state of society, seem to have been

<sup>a</sup> Polit. Justice, b. viii. c. iii. p. 340.

generated

generated by the most imperious circumstances, by laws inherent in the nature of man, and absolutely independent of all human regulations.

If we be not yet too well convinced of the reality of this melancholy picture, let us but look for a moment into the next period of twenty-five years, and we shall see that according to the natural increase of population 44 millions of human beings would be without the means of support; and at the conclusion of the first century, the population would have had the power of increasing to 176 millions, while the food was only sufficient for 55 millions, leaving 121 millions unprovided for: and yet all this time we are supposing the produce of the earth absolutely unlimited, and the yearly increase greater than the boldest speculator can imagine.

This is undoubtedly a very different view of the difficulty arising from the principle of population from that which Mr. Godwin gives, when he says, “Myriads of centuries of still increasing population may pass away, and the earth be still

“ found sufficient for the subsistence of its  
 “ inhabitants.”

I am sufficiently aware that the redundant millions which I have mentioned could never have existed. It is a perfectly just observation of Mr. Godwin, that  
 “ there is a principle in human society  
 “ by which population is perpetually kept  
 “ down to the level of the means of sub-  
 “ sistence.” The sole question is, what is this principle? Is it some obscure and occult cause? Is it some mysterious interference of Heaven, which at a certain period strikes the men with impotence, and the women with barrenness? Or is it a cause open to our researches within our view; a cause which has constantly been observed to operate, though with varied force, in every state in which man has been placed? Is it not misery, and the fear of misery, the necessary and inevitable results of the laws of nature in the present stage of man's existence, which human institutions, so far from aggravating, have tended considerably to mitigate, though they can never remove?

It

It may be curious to observe, in the case that we have been supposing, how some of the principal laws, which at present govern civilized society, would be successively dictated by the most imperious necessity. As man, according to Mr. Godwin, is the creature of the impressions to which he is subject, the goadings of want could not continue long, before some violations of public or private stock would necessarily take place. As these violations increased in number and extent, the more active and comprehensive intellects of the society would soon perceive that, while the population was fast increasing, the yearly produce of the country would shortly begin to diminish. The urgency of the case would suggest the necessity of some immediate measures being taken for the general safety. Some kind of convention would be then called, and the dangerous situation of the country stated in the strongest terms. It would be observed that while they lived in the midst of plenty it was of little consequence who laboured

the least, or who possessed the least, as every man was perfectly willing and ready to supply the wants of his neighbour. But that the question was no longer, whether one man should give to another that which he did not use himself; but whether he should give to his neighbour the food which was absolutely necessary to his own existence. It would be represented that the number of those who were in want very greatly exceeded the number and means of those who should supply them; that these pressing wants, which from the state of the produce of the country could not all be gratified, had occasioned some flagrant violations of justice; that these violations had already checked the increase of food, and would, if they were not by some means or other prevented, throw the whole community into confusion; that imperious necessity seemed to dictate that a yearly increase of produce should, if possible, be obtained at all events; that in order to effect this first great and indispensable purpose, it would be advisable to make a more  
complete



complete division of land, and to secure every man's property against violation by the most powerful sanctions.

It might be urged perhaps by some objectors, that as the fertility of the land increased, and various accidents occurred, the shares of some men might be much more than sufficient for their support; and that when the reign of self-love was once established, they would not distribute their surplus produce without some compensation in return. It would be observed in answer, that this was an inconvenience greatly to be lamented; but that it was an evil which would bear no comparison to the black train of distresses inevitably occasioned by the insecurity of property; that the quantity of food, which one man could consume, was necessarily limited by the narrow capacity of the human stomach; that it was certainly not probable that he should throw away the rest; and if he exchanged his surplus produce for the labour of others, this would be better than that these others should absolutely starve.

It seems highly probable therefore that

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an administration of property, not very different from that which prevails in civilized states at present, would be established as the best (though inadequate) remedy for the evils which were pressing on the society.

The next subject which would come under discussion, intimately connected with the preceding, is the commerce of the sexes. It would be urged by those who had turned their attention to the true cause of the difficulties under which the community laboured, that while every man felt secure that all his children would be well provided for by general benevolence, the powers of the earth would be absolutely inadequate to produce food for the population which would ensue ; that even if the whole attention and labour of the society were directed to this sole point, and if by the most perfect security of property, and every other encouragement that could be thought of, the greatest possible increase of produce were yearly obtained, yet still the increase of food would by no means keep pace with the much more rapid increase of population ; that some check to population there-  
fore

fore was imperiously called for ; that the most natural and obvious check seemed to be, to make every man provide for his own children ; that this would operate in some respect as a measure and a guide in the increase of population, as it might be expected that no man would bring beings into the world for whom he could not find the means of support ; that, where this notwithstanding was the case, it seemed necessary for the example of others, that the disgrace and inconvenience attending such a conduct should fall upon that individual, who had thus inconsiderately plunged himself and his innocent children into want and misery.

The institution of marriage, or at least of some express or implied obligation on every man to support his own children, seems to be the natural result of these reasonings in a community under the difficulties that we have supposed.

The view of these difficulties presents us with a very natural reason, why the disgrace which attends a breach of chastity should be greater in a woman than in a man.

man. It could not be expected that women should have resources sufficient to support their own children. When therefore a woman had lived with a man who had entered into no compact to maintain her children, and aware of the inconveniences that he might bring upon himself, had deserted her, these children must necessarily fall upon the society for support, or starve. And to prevent the frequent recurrence of such an inconvenience, as it would be highly unjust to punish so natural a fault by personal restraint or infliction, the men might agree to punish it with disgrace. The offence is besides more obvious and conspicuous in the woman, and less liable to any mistake. The father of a child may not always be known; but the same uncertainty cannot easily exist with regard to the mother. Where the evidence of the offence was most complete, and the inconvenience to the society, at the same time, the greatest, there it was agreed that the largest share of blame should fall. The obligation on every man to support his children the society would enforce by positive

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tive laws ; and the greater degree of inconvenience or labour, to which a family would necessarily subject him, added to some portion of disgrace which every human being must incur who leads another into unhappiness, might be considered as a sufficient punishment for the man.

That a woman should at present be almost driven from society for an offence, which men commit nearly with impunity, seems undoubtedly to be a breach of natural justice. But the origin of the custom, as the most obvious and effectual method of preventing the frequent recurrence of a serious inconvenience to the community, appears to be natural, though not perhaps perfectly justifiable. This origin however is now lost in the new train of ideas that the custom has since generated. What at first might be dictated by state necessity is now supported by female delicacy ; and operates with the greatest force on that part of the society, where, if the original intention of the custom were preserved, there is the least real occasion for it.

When these two fundamental laws of  
society,

society, the security of property, and the institution of marriage, were once established, inequality of conditions must necessarily follow. Those who were born after the division of property would come into a world already possessed. If their parents, from having too large a family, were unable to give them sufficient for their support, what could they do in a world where every thing was appropriated? We have seen the fatal effects that would result to society, if every man had a valid claim to an equal share of the produce of the earth. The members of a family, which was grown too large for the original division of land appropriated to it, could not then demand a part of the surplus produce of others as a debt of justice. It has appeared that from the inevitable laws of human nature some human beings will be exposed to want. These are the unhappy persons, who in the great lottery of life have drawn a blank. The number of these persons would soon exceed the ability of the surplus produce to supply. Moral merit is a very difficult criterion, except in  
extreme

extreme cases. The owners of surplus produce would in general seek some more obvious mark of distinction; and it seems to be both natural and just, that, except upon particular occasions, their choice should fall upon those who were able, and professed themselves willing, to exert their strength in procuring a further surplus produce, which would at once benefit the community and enable the proprietors to afford assistance to greater numbers. All who were in want of food would be urged by necessity to offer their labour in exchange for this article so absolutely necessary to existence. The fund appropriated to the maintenance of labour would be the aggregate quantity of food possessed by the owners of land beyond their own consumption. When the demands upon this fund were great and numerous it would naturally be divided into very small shares. Labour would be ill paid. Men would offer to work for a bare subsistence; and the rearing of families would be checked by sickness and misery. On the contrary, when this fund was increasing fast; when  
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it was great in proportion to the number of claimants, it would be divided in much larger shares. No man would exchange his labour without receiving an ample quantity of food in return. Labourers would live in ease and comfort, and would consequently be able to rear a numerous and vigorous offspring.

On the state of this fund, the happiness, or the degree of misery, prevailing among the lower classes of people in every known state at present, chiefly depends; and on this happiness or degree of misery, depends principally the increase, stationariness, or decrease of population.

And thus it appears that a society constituted according to the most beautiful form that imagination can conceive, with benevolence for its moving principle instead of self-love, and with every evil disposition in all its members corrected by reason, not force, would from the inevitable laws of nature, and not from any fault in human institutions, degenerate in a very short period into a society constructed upon a plan not essentially different from that  
which



which prevails in every known state at present; a society, divided into a class of proprietors and a class of labourers, and with self-love for the mainspring of the great machine.

In the supposition which I have made, I have undoubtedly taken the increase of population smaller, and the increase of produce greater, than they really would be. No reason can be assigned why, under the circumstances supposed, population should not increase faster than in any known instance. If then we were to take the period of doubling at fifteen years instead of twenty-five years, and reflect upon the labour necessary to double the produce in so short a time, even if we allow it possible; we may venture to pronounce with certainty, that, if Mr. Godwin's system of society were established in its utmost perfection, instead of myriads of centuries, not thirty years could elapse before its utter destruction from the simple principle of population.

I have taken no notice of emigration in this place, for obvious reasons. If such societies

societies were instituted in other parts of Europe, these countries would be under the same difficulties with regard to population, and could admit no fresh members into their bosoms. If this beautiful society were confined to our island, it must have degenerated strangely from its original purity, and administer but a very small portion of the happiness it proposed, before any of its members would voluntarily consent to leave it, and live under such governments as at present exist in Europe, or submit to the extreme hardships of first settlers in new regions.

## CHAP. III.

*Of Systems of Equality (continued).*

IT was suggested to me some years since by persons for whose judgment I have a high respect, that it might be advisable, in a new edition, to throw out the matter relative to systems of equality, to Wallace, Condorcet and Godwin, as having in a considerable degree lost its interest, and as not being strictly connected with the main subject of the Essay, which is an explanation and illustration of the theory of population. But independently of its being natural for me to have some little partiality for that part of the work which led to those inquiries on which the main subject rests; I really think that there should be somewhere on record an answer to systems of equality founded on the principle of population; and perhaps such an answer is as appropriately placed, and is likely to have as much effect, among the illustrations and applications

tions of the principle of population, as in any other situation to which it could be assigned.

The appearances in all human societies, particularly in all those which are the furthest advanced in civilization and improvement, will ever be such, as to inspire superficial observers with a belief that a prodigious change for the better might be effected by the introduction of a system of equality and of common property. They see abundance in some quarters, and want in others; and the natural and obvious remedy seems to be an equal division of the produce. They see a prodigious quantity of human exertion wasted upon trivial, useless, and sometimes pernicious objects, which might either be wholly saved or more effectively employed. They see invention after invention in machinery brought forward, which is seemingly calculated, in the most marked manner, to abate the sum of human toil. Yet with these apparent means of giving plenty, leisure and happiness to all, they still see the labours of the great mass of society undiminished, and their condition, if  
not

not deteriorated, in no very striking and palpable manner improved.

Under these circumstances, it cannot be a matter of wonder that proposals for systems of equality should be continually reviving. After periods when the subject has undergone a thorough discussion, or when some great experiment in improvement has failed, it is likely that the question should lie dormant for a time, and that the opinions of the advocates of equality should be ranked among those errors which had passed away to be heard of no more. But it is probable that if the world were to last for any number of thousand years, systems of equality would be among those errors, which like the tunes of a barrel organ, to use the illustration of Dugald Stewart<sup>a</sup>, will never cease to return at certain intervals.

I am induced to make these remarks, and to add a little to what I have already said on systems of equality, instead of leaving out the whole discussion, by a tendency to a revival of this kind at the present moment.

<sup>a</sup> Preliminary Dissertation to Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica, p. 121.

A gentleman, for whom I have a very sincere respect, Mr. Owen, of Lanark, has lately published a work entitled *A New View of Society*, which is intended to prepare the public mind for the introduction of a system involving a community of labour and of goods. It is also generally known that an idea has lately prevailed among some of the lower classes of society, that the land is the people's farm, the rent of which ought to be equally divided among them; and that they have been deprived of the benefits which belong to them from this their natural inheritance, by the injustice and oppression of their stewards, the landlords.

Mr. Owen is, I believe, a man of real benevolence, who has done much good; and every friend to humanity must heartily wish him success in his endeavours to procure an Act of Parliament for limiting the hours of working among the children in the cotton manufactories, and preventing them from being employed at too early an age. He is further entitled to great attention on all subjects relating to education, from the experience and knowledge which he must have

have gained in an intercourse of many years with two thousand manufacturers, and from the success which is said to have resulted from his modes of management. A theory professed to be founded on such experience is no doubt worthy of much more consideration than one formed in a closet.

The claims to attention possessed by the author of the new doctrines relating to land are certainly very slender; and the doctrines themselves indicate a very great degree of ignorance; but the errors of the labouring classes of society are always entitled to great indulgence and consideration. They are the natural and pardonable results of their liability to be deceived by first appearances, and by the arts of designing men, owing to the nature of their situation, and the scanty knowledge which in general falls to their share. And, except in extreme cases, it must always be the wish of those who are better informed, that they should be brought to a sense of the truth, rather by patience and the gradual diffusion of education and knowledge, than by any harsher methods.

After what I have already said on systems of equality in the preceding chapters, I shall not think it necessary to enter into a long and elaborate refutation of these doctrines. I merely mean to give an additional reason for leaving on record an answer to systems of equality, founded on the principle of population, together with a concise restatement of this answer for practical application.

Of the two decisive arguments against such systems, one is, the unsuitableness of a state of equality, both according to experience and theory, to the production of those stimulants to exertion which can alone overcome the natural indolence of man, and prompt him to the proper cultivation of the earth and the fabrication of those conveniences and comforts which are necessary to his happiness.

And the other, the inevitable and necessary poverty and misery in which every system of equality must shortly terminate from the acknowledged tendency of the human race to increase faster than the means of subsistence, unless such increase be prevented



vented by means infinitely more cruel than those which result from the laws of private property, and the moral obligation imposed on every man by the commands of God and nature to support his own children.

The first of these arguments has, I confess, always appeared to my own mind sufficiently conclusive. A state, in which an inequality of conditions offers the natural rewards of good conduct, and inspires widely and generally the hopes of rising and the fears of falling in society, is unquestionably the best calculated to develop the energies and faculties of man, and the best suited to the exercise and improvement of human virtue<sup>a</sup>. And history, in every case of equality that has yet occurred, has uniformly borne witness to the depressing and deadening effects which arise from the want of this stimulus. But still perhaps it may be true that neither experience nor theory on this subject is quite so decisive as to preclude all plausible ar-

<sup>a</sup> See this subject very ably treated in a work on the Records of the Creation, and the Moral Attributes of the Creator, by the Rev. John Bird Sumner, not long since published; a work of very great merit, which I hope soon to see in as extensive circulation as it deserves.

guments on the other side. It may be said that the instances which history records of systems of equality really carried into execution are so few, and those in societies so little advanced from a state of barbarism, as to afford no fair conclusions relative to periods of great civilization and improvement; that in other instances in ancient times, where approaches were made toward a tolerable equality of conditions, examples of considerable energy of character in some lines of exertion are not unfrequent; and that in modern times some societies, particularly of Moravians, are known to have had much of their property in common without occasioning the destruction of their industry. It may be said that, allowing the stimulus of inequality of conditions to have been necessary, in order to raise man from the indolence and apathy of the savage to the activity and intelligence of civilized life, it does not follow that the continuance of the same stimulus should be necessary when this activity and energy of mind has been once gained. It may *then* be allowable quietly to enjoy the benefit of a regimen

gimen which, like many other stimulants, having produced its proper effect at a certain point must be left off, or exhaustion, disease and death will follow.

'These observations are certainly not of a nature to produce conviction in those who have studied the human character ; but they are to a certain degree plausible, and do not admit of so definite and decisive an answer as to make the proposal for an experiment in modern times utterly absurd and unreasonable.

'The peculiar advantage of the other argument against systems of equality, that which is founded on the principle of population, is, that it is not only still more generally and uniformly confirmed by experience, in every age and in every part of the world, but it is so pre-eminently clear in theory, that no tolerably plausible answer can be given to it ; and consequently no decent pretence can be brought forward for an experiment. 'The affair is a matter of the most simple calculation applied to the known properties of land, and the proportion of births to deaths which takes place  
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in almost every country village. There are many parishes in England, where, notwithstanding the actual difficulties attending the support of a family which must *necessarily* occur in every well-peopled country, and making no allowances for omissions in the registers, the births are to the deaths in the proportion of 2 to 1. This proportion, with the usual rate of mortality in country places, of about 1 in 50, would continue doubling the population in 41 years, if there were no emigrations from the parish. But in any system of equality, either such as that proposed by Mr. Owen, or in parochial partnerships in land, not only would there be no means of emigration to other parishes with any prospect of relief, but the rate of increase at first would of course be much greater than in the present state of society. What then, I would ask, is to prevent the division of the produce of the soil to each individual from becoming every year less and less, till the whole society and every individual member of it are pressed down by want and misery<sup>a</sup>? This

<sup>a</sup> In the Spencean system, as published by the secretary  
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This is a very simple and intelligible question. And surely no man ought to propose or support a system of equality, who is not able to give a rational answer to it, at least in theory. But even in theory, I have never yet heard any thing approaching to a rational answer to it.

It is a very superficial observation which has sometimes been made, that it is a contradiction to lay great stress upon the efficacy of moral restraint in an improved and improving state of society, according

of the Society of Spencean Philanthropists, it unfortunately happens, that after the *proposed* allowances have been made for the expenses of the government, and of the other bodies in the state which are intended to be supported, there would be absolutely no remainder; and the people would not derive a single sixpence from their estate, even at first, and on the supposition of the national debt being entirely abolished, without the slightest compensation to the national creditors.

The annual rent of the land, houses, mines and fisheries, is estimated at 150 millions, about three times its real amount; yet, even upon this extravagant estimate, it is calculated that the division would only come to about four pounds a head, not more than is sometimes given to individuals from the poor's rates; a miserable provision! and yet constantly diminishing.

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to the present structure of it, and yet to suppose that it would not act with sufficient force in a system of equality, which almost always presupposes a great diffusion of information, and a great improvement of the human mind. Those who have made this observation do not see that the encouragement and motive to moral restraint are at once destroyed in a system of equality, and community of goods.

Let us suppose that in a system of equality, in spite of the best exertions to procure more food, the population is pressing hard against the limits of subsistence, and all are becoming very poor. It is evidently necessary under these circumstances, in order to prevent the society from starving, that the rate at which the population increases, should be retarded. But who are the persons that are to exercise the restraint thus called for, and either to marry late or not at all? It does not seem to be a necessary consequence of a system of equality that all the human passions should be at once extinguished by it; but if not, those who might wish to marry would feel it hard that they should be among  
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the number forced to restrain their inclinations. As all would be equal, and in similar circumstances, there would be no reason whatever why one individual should think himself obliged to practise the duty of restraint more than another. The thing however must be done, with any hope of avoiding universal misery ; and in a state of equality, the necessary restraint could only be effected by some general law. But how is this law to be supported, and how are the violations of it to be punished ? Is the man who marries early to be pointed at with the finger of scorn ? is he to be whipped at the cart's tail ? is he to be confined for years in a prison ? is he to have his children exposed ? Are not all direct punishments for an offence of this kind shocking and unnatural to the last degree ? And yet, if it be absolutely necessary, in order to prevent the most overwhelming wretchedness, that there should be some restraint on the tendency to early marriages, when the resources of the country are only sufficient to support a slow rate of increase, can the most fertile imagination conceive  
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one at once so natural, so just, so consonant to the laws of God and to the best laws framed by the most enlightened men, as that each individual should be responsible for the maintenance of his own children ; that is, that he should be subjected to the natural inconveniences and difficulties arising from the indulgence of his inclinations, and to no other whatever ?

That this natural check to early marriages arising from a view of the difficulty attending the support of a large family operates very widely throughout all classes of society in every civilized state, and may be expected to be still more effective, as the lower classes of people continue to improve in knowledge and prudence, cannot admit of the slightest doubt. But the operation of this natural check depends exclusively upon the existence of the laws of property, and succession ; and in a state of equality and community of property could only be replaced by some artificial regulation of a very different stamp, and a much more unnatural character. Of this Mr. Owen is fully sensible, and has in consequence  
taxed



taxed his ingenuity to the utmost to invent some mode, by which the difficulties arising from the progress of population could be got rid of, in the state of society to which he looks forward. His absolute inability to suggest any mode of accomplishing this object that is not unnatural, immoral, or cruel in a high degree, together with the same want of success in every other person, ancient<sup>a</sup> or modern, who has made a similar attempt, seem to shew that the argument against systems of equality founded on the principle of population does not admit of a plausible answer, even in theory. The fact of the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence may be seen in almost every register of a country parish in the kingdom. The unavoidable effect of this tendency to depress the whole body of the people in want and misery, unless the progress of the population be somehow or other retarded, is equally obvious; and the impossibility of checking

<sup>a</sup> The reader has already seen in ch. xiii. bk. i. the detestable means of checking population proposed by some ancient lawgivers in order to support their systems of equality.

the rate of increase in a state of equality, without resorting to regulations that are unnatural, immoral or cruel, forms an argument at once conclusive against every such system.

## CHAP. IV.

*Of Emigration.*

ALTHOUGH the resource of emigration seems to be excluded from such perfect societies as the advocates of equality generally contemplate ; yet in that imperfect state of improvement, which alone can rationally be expected, it may fairly enter into our consideration. And as it is not probable that human industry should begin to receive its best direction throughout all the nations of the earth at the same time, it may be said that, in the case of a redundant population in the more cultivated parts of the world, the natural and obvious remedy which presents itself is emigration to those parts that are uncultivated. As these parts are of great extent, and very thinly peopled, this resource might appear, on a first view of the subject, an adequate remedy, or at least of a nature calculated to remove the evil to a distant

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tant period : but when we advert to experience and the actual state of the uncivilized parts of the globe, instead of any thing like an adequate remedy, it will appear but a slight palliative.

In the accounts which we have received of the peopling of new countries, the dangers, difficulties and hardships, with which the first settlers have had to struggle, appear to be even greater than we can well imagine they could be exposed to in their parent state. The endeavour to avoid that degree of unhappiness which arises from the difficulty of supporting a family might long have left the new world of America unpeopled by Europeans, if those more powerful passions, the thirst of gain, the spirit of adventure, and religious enthusiasm, had not directed and animated the enterprise. These passions enabled the first adventurers to triumph over every obstacle ; but in many instances, in a way to make humanity shudder, and to defeat the true end of emigration. Whatever may be the character of the Spanish inhabitants of Mexico and Peru at the present moment,  
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we cannot read the accounts of the first conquests of these countries, without feeling strongly, that the race destroyed was in moral worth as well as numbers superior to the race of their destroyers.

The parts of America settled by the English, from being thinly peopled, were better adapted to the establishment of new colonies ; yet even here, the most formidable difficulties presented themselves. In the settlement of Virginia, begun by Sir Walter Raleigh and established by Lord Delaware, three attempts completely failed. Nearly half of the first colony was destroyed by the savages, and the rest, consumed and worn down by fatigue and famine, deserted the country, and returned home in despair. The second colony was cut off to a man in a manner unknown ; but they were supposed to be destroyed by the Indians. The third experienced the same dismal fate ; and the remains of the fourth, after it had been reduced by famine and disease in the course of six months from 500 to 60 persons, were returning in a famishing and desperate condition to England, when they

were met in the mouth of the Chesapeak bay by Lord Delaware, with a squadron loaded with provisions, and every thing for their relief and defence <sup>a</sup>.

The first puritan settlers in New England were few in number. They landed in a bad season, and were only supported by their private funds. The winter was premature and terribly cold ; the country was covered with wood, and afforded very little for the refreshment of persons sickly with such a voyage, or for the sustenance of an infant people. Nearly half of them perished by the scurvy, by want, and the severity of the climate ; yet those who survived were not dispirited by their hardships, but, supported by their energy of character, and the satisfaction of finding themselves out of the reach of the spiritual arm, reduced this savage country by degrees to yield a comfortable subsistence <sup>b</sup>.

Even the plantation of Barbadoes, which increased afterwards with such extraordi-

<sup>a</sup> Burke's *America*, vol. ii. p. 219. Robertson, b. ix. p. 83, 86.

<sup>b</sup> Burke's *America*, vol. ii. p. 144.

nary rapidity, had at first to contend with a country utterly desolate, an extreme want of provisions, a difficulty in clearing the ground unusually great from the uncommon size and hardness of the trees, a most disheartening scantiness and poverty in their first crops, and a slow and precarious supply of provisions from England <sup>a</sup>.

The attempt of the French in 1663, to form at once a powerful colony in Guiana, was attended with the most disastrous consequences. Twelve thousand men were landed in the rainy season, and placed under tents and miserable sheds. In this situation, inactive, weary of existence, and in want of all necessaries; exposed to contagious distempers, which are always occasioned by bad provisions, and to all the irregularities which idleness produces among the lower classes of society, almost the whole of them ended their lives in all the horrors of despair. The attempt was completely abortive. Two thousand men, whose robust constitutions had enabled them to resist the inclemency of the climate,

<sup>a</sup> Burke's *America*, vol. ii. p. 85.

and the miseries to which they had been exposed, were brought back to France; and the 26,000,000 of livres, which had been expended in the expedition, were totally lost<sup>a</sup>.

In the late settlements at Port Jackson in New Holland, a melancholy and affecting picture is drawn by Collins of the extreme hardships, with which, for some years, the infant colony had to struggle, before the produce was equal to its support. These distresses were undoubtedly aggravated by the character of the settlers; but those which were caused by the unhealthiness of a newly cleared country, the failure of first crops, and the uncertainty of supplies from so distant a mother country, were of themselves sufficiently disheartening, to place in a strong point of view the necessity of great resources, as well as unconquerable perseverance, in the colonization of savage countries.

The establishment of colonies in the more thinly peopled regions of Europe and Asia

<sup>a</sup> Raynal, *Hist. des Indes*, tom. vii. liv. xiii. p. 43. 10 vols. Svo. 1795.

would



would evidently require still greater resources. From the power and warlike character of the inhabitants of these countries, a considerable military force would be necessary, to prevent their utter and immediate destruction. Even the frontier provinces of the most powerful states are defended with considerable difficulty from such restless neighbours ; and the peaceful labours of the cultivator are continually interrupted by their predatory incursions. The late Empress Catharine of Russia found it necessary to protect by regular fortresses the colonies which she had established in the districts near the Wolga ; and the calamities which her subjects suffered by the incursions of the Crim Tartars furnished a pretext, and perhaps a just one, for taking possession of the whole of the Crimea, and expelling the greatest part of these turbulent neighbours, and reducing the rest to a more tranquil mode of life.

The difficulties attending a first establishment from soil, climate and the want of proper conveniences, are of course nearly the same in these regions as in America.

Mr. Eton,

Mr. Eton, in his Account of the Turkish Empire, says that 75,000 Christians were obliged by Russia to emigrate from the Crimea, and sent to inhabit the country abandoned by the Nogai Tartars; but the winter coming on before the houses built for them were ready, a great part of them had no other shelter from the cold than what was afforded them by holes dug in the ground, covered with what they could procure, and the greatest part of them perished. Only seven thousand remained a few years afterwards. Another colony from Italy to the banks of the Borysthenes had, he says, no better fate, owing to the bad management of those, who were commissioned to provide for them.

It is needless to add to these instances, as the accounts given of the difficulties experienced in new settlements are all nearly similar. It has been justly observed by a correspondent of Dr. Franklin, that one of the reasons why we have seen so many fruitless attempts to settle colonies at an immense public and private expense by several of the powers of Europe is, that the  
moral

moral and mechanical habits adapted to the mother country are frequently not so to the new-settled one, and to external events, many of which are unforeseen ; and that it is to be remarked that none of the English colonies became any way considerable, till the necessary manners were born and grew up in the country. Pallas particularly notices the want of proper habits in the colonies established by Russia, as one of the causes why they did not increase so fast as might have been expected.

In addition to this, it may be observed, that the first establishment of a new colony generally presents an instance of a country peopled considerably beyond its actual produce ; and the natural consequence seems to be, that this population, if not amply supplied by the mother country, should at the commencement be diminished to the level of the first scanty productions, and not begin permanently to increase, till the remaining numbers had so far cultivated the soil, as to make it yield a quantity of food more than sufficient for their own support ; and which consequently  
they

they could divide with a family. The frequent failures in the establishment of new colonies tend strongly to shew the order of precedence between food and population.

It must be acknowledged then, that the class of people, on whom the distress arising from a too rapidly increasing population would principally fall, could not possibly begin a new colony in a distant country. From the nature of their situation, they must necessarily be deficient in those resources, which alone could ensure success; and unless they could find leaders among the higher classes urged by the spirit of avarice or enterprise, or of religious or political discontent; or were furnished with means and support by government; whatever degree of misery they might suffer in their own country from the scarcity of subsistence, they would be absolutely unable to take possession of any of those uncultivated regions, of which there is such an extent on the earth.

When new colonies have been once securely established, the difficulty of emigration

gration is indeed very considerably diminished ; yet, even then, some resources are necessary to provide vessels for the voyage, and support and assistance till the emigrants can settle themselves, and find employment in their adopted country. How far it is incumbent upon a government to furnish these resources may be a question ; but whatever be its duty in this particular, perhaps it is too much to expect that, except where any particular colonial advantages are proposed, emigration should be actively assisted.

The necessary resources for transport and maintenance are however frequently furnished by individuals or private companies. For many years before the American war, and for some few since, the facilities of emigration to this new world, and the probable advantages in view, were unusually great ; and it must be considered undoubtedly as a very happy circumstance for any country, to have so comfortable an asylum for its redundant population. But I would ask whether, even during these periods, the distress among the common  
people

people in this country was little or nothing ; and whether every man felt secure before he ventured on marriage, that, however large his family might be, he should find no difficulty in supporting it without parish assistance. The answer, I fear, could not be in the affirmative.

It will be said that, when an opportunity of advantageous emigration is offered, it is the fault of the people themselves, if instead of accepting it they prefer a life of celibacy or extreme poverty in their own country. Is it then a fault for a man to feel an attachment to his native soil, to love the parents that nurtured him, his kindred, his friends and the companions of his early years ? Or is it no evil that he suffers, because he consents to bear it rather than snap these cords which nature has wound in close and intricate folds round the human heart ? The great plan of Providence seems to require, indeed, that these ties should sometimes be broken ; but the separation does not, on that account, give less pain ; and though the general good may be promoted by it, it does not cease to be an individual

individual evil. Besides, doubts and uncertainty must ever attend all distant emigrations, particularly in the apprehensions of the lower classes of people. They cannot feel quite secure, that the representations made to them of the high price of labour or the cheapness of land, are accurately true. They are placing themselves in the power of the persons who are to furnish them with the means of transport and maintenance, who may perhaps have an interest in deceiving them; and the sea which they are to pass, appears to them like the separation of death from all their former connexions, and in a manner to preclude the possibility of return in case of failure, as they cannot expect the offer of the same means to bring them back. We cannot be surprised then, that, except where a spirit of enterprise is added to the uneasiness of poverty, the consideration of these circumstances should frequently

“ Make them rather bear the ills they suffer,

“ Than fly to others which they know not of.”

If a tract of rich land as large as this island were suddenly annexed to it, and  
sold

sold in small lots, or let out in small farms, the case would be very different, and the melioration of the state of the common people would be sudden and striking ; though the rich would be continually complaining of the high price of labour, the pride of the lower classes and the difficulty of getting work done. These, I understand, are not unfrequent complaints among the men of property in America.

Every resource however from emigration, if used effectually, as this would be, must be of short duration. There is scarcely a state in Europe, except perhaps Russia, the inhabitants of which do not often endeavour to better their condition by removing to other countries. As these states therefore have nearly all rather a redundant than deficient population, in proportion to their produce, they cannot be supposed to afford any effectual resources of emigration to each other. Let us suppose for a moment, that in this more enlightened part of the globe, the internal economy of each state were so admirably regulated, that no checks existed to population,



lation, and that the different governments provided every facility for emigration. Taking the population of Europe, excluding Russia, at a hundred millions, and allowing a greater increase of produce than is probable, or even possible, in the mother countries, the redundancy of parent stock in a single century would be eleven hundred millions, which, added to the natural increase of the colonies during the same time, would more than double what has been supposed to be the present population of the whole earth.

Can we imagine, that in the uncultivated parts of Asia, Africa or America, the greatest exertions and the best-directed endeavours could, in so short a period, prepare a quantity of land sufficient for the support of such a population? If any sanguine person should feel a doubt upon the subject, let him only add 25 or 50 years more, and every doubt must be crushed in overwhelming conviction.

It is evident therefore, that the reason why the resource of emigration has so long continued to be held out as a remedy to  
redundant

redundant population is, because, from the natural unwillingness of people to desert their native country, and the difficulty of clearing and cultivating fresh soil, it never is or can be adequately adopted. If this remedy were indeed really effectual, and had power so far to relieve the disorders of vice and misery in old states, as to place them in the condition of the most prosperous new colonies, we should soon see the phial exhausted; and when the disorders returned with increased virulence, every hope from this quarter would be forever closed.

It is clear therefore, that with any view of making room for an unrestricted increase of population, emigration is perfectly inadequate; but as a partial and temporary expedient, and with a view to the more general cultivation of the earth, and the wider extension of civilization, it seems to be both useful and proper; and if it cannot be proved that governments are bound actively to encourage it, it is not only strikingly unjust, but in the highest degree impolitic in them to prevent it. There are  
no

no fears so totally ill-grounded as the fears of depopulation from emigration. The *vis inertiae* of the great body of the people, and their attachment to their homes, are qualities so strong and general, that we may rest assured they will not emigrate unless, from political discontents or extreme poverty, they are in such a state, as will make it as much for the advantage of their country as of themselves, that they should go out of it. The complaints of high wages in consequence of emigrations are of all others the most unreasonable, and ought the least to be attended to. If the wages of labour in any country be such as to enable the lower classes of people to live with tolerable comfort, we may be quite certain that they will not emigrate; and if they be not such, it is cruelty and injustice to detain them.

In all countries the progress of wealth must depend mainly upon the industry, skill and success of individuals, and upon the state and demands of other countries. Consequently, in all countries, great variations may take place at different times in the rate at which wealth increases, and in the

the demand for labour. But though the progress of population is mainly regulated by the effective demand for labour, it is obvious that the number of people cannot conform itself immediately to the state of this demand. Some time is required to bring more labour into the market when it is wanted; and some time to check the supply when it is flowing in with too great rapidity. If these variations amount to no more than that natural sort of oscillation noticed in an early part of this work, which seems almost always to accompany the progress of population and food, they should be submitted to as a part of the usual course of things. But circumstances may occasionally give them great force, and then, during the period that the supply of labour is increasing faster than the demand, the labouring classes are subject to the most severe distress. If, for instance, from a combination of external and internal causes, a very great stimulus should be given to the population of a country for ten or twelve years together, and it should then comparatively cease, it is clear that labour will  
continue

continue flowing into the market, with almost undiminished rapidity, while the means of employing and paying it have been essentially contracted. It is precisely under these circumstances that emigration is most useful as a temporary relief; and it is in these circumstances that Great Britain finds herself placed at present<sup>a</sup>. Though no emigration should take place, the population will by degrees conform itself to the state of the demand for labour; but the interval must be marked by the most severe distress, the amount of which can scarcely be reduced by any human efforts; because, though it may be mitigated at particular periods, and as it affects particular classes, it will be proportionably extended over a larger space of time and a greater number of people. The only real relief in such a case is emigration; and the subject at the present moment is well worthy the attention of the government, both as a matter of humanity and policy.

<sup>a</sup> 1816 and 1817.

## CHAP. V.

*Of Poor-Laws.*

TO remedy the frequent distresses of the poor, laws to enforce their relief have been instituted; and in the establishment of a general system of this kind England has particularly distinguished herself. But it is to be feared, that, though it may have alleviated a little the intensity of individual misfortune, it has spread the evil over a much larger surface.

It is a subject often started in conversation, and mentioned always as a matter of great surprise, that, notwithstanding the immense sum which is annually collected for the poor in this country, there is still so much distress among them. Some think that the money must be embezzled for private use; others, that the churchwardens and overseers consume the greatest part of it in feasting. All agree that somehow or  
other

other it must be very ill managed. In short, the fact, that even before the late scarcities three millions were collected annually for the poor, and yet that their distresses were not removed, is the subject of continual astonishment. But a man who looks a little below the surface of things would be much more astonished, if the fact were otherwise than it is observed to be; or even if a collection universally of eighteen shillings in the pound, instead of four, were materially to alter it.

Suppose, that by a subscription of the rich the eighteen pence or two shillings, which men earn now, were made up five shillings: it might be imagined, perhaps, that they would then be able to live comfortably, and have a piece of meat every day for their dinner. But this would be a very false conclusion. The transfer of three additional shillings a day to each labourer would not increase the quantity of meat in the country. There is not at present enough for all to have a moderate share. What would then be the consequence? the competition among the buyers in the market of

meat would rapidly raise the price from eight pence or nine pence to two or three shillings in the pound, and the commodity would not be divided among many more than it is at present. When an article is scarce, and cannot be distributed to all, he that can shew the most valid patent, that is, he that offers the most money, becomes the possessor. If we can suppose the competition among the buyers of meat to continue long enough for a greater number of cattle to be reared annually, this could only be done at the expense of the corn, which would be a very disadvantageous exchange; for it is well known, that the country could not then support the same population; and when subsistence is scarce in proportion to the number of people, it is of little consequence, whether the lowest members of the society possess two shillings or five. They must, at all events, be reduced to live upon the hardest fare, and in the smallest quantity.

It might be said, perhaps, that the increased number of purchasers in every article would give a spur to productive industry,



try, and that the whole produce of the island would be increased. But the spur that these fancied riches would give to population, would more than counterbalance it; and the increased produce would be to be divided among a more than proportionably increased number of people.

A collection from the rich of eighteen shillings in the pound, even if distributed in the most judicious manner, would have an effect similar to that resulting from the supposition which I have just made; and no possible sacrifices of the rich, particularly in money, could for any time prevent the recurrence of distress among the lower members of society, whoever they were. Great changes might indeed be made. The rich might become poor, and some of the poor rich: but while the present proportion between population and food continues, a part of the society must necessarily find it difficult to support a family, and this difficulty will naturally fall on the least fortunate members.

It may at first appear strange, but I believe it is true, that I cannot by means of  
money

money raise the condition of a poor man, and enable him to live much better than he did before, without proportionably depressing others in the same class. If I retrench the quantity of food consumed in my house, and give him what I have cut off, I then benefit him without depressing any but myself and family, who perhaps may be well able to bear it. If I turn up a piece of uncultivated land, and give him the produce, I then benefit both him and all the members of society, because what he before consumed is thrown into the common stock, and probably some of the new produce with it. But if I only give him money, supposing the produce of the country to remain the same, I give him a title to a larger share of that produce than formerly, which share he cannot receive without diminishing the shares of others. It is evident that this effect in individual instances must be so small as to be totally imperceptible; but still it must exist, as many other effects do, which, like some of the insects that people the air, elude our grosser perceptions.

Supposing the quantity of food in any  
country

country to remain the same for many years together, it is evident that this food must be divided according to the value of each man's patent, or the sum of money which he can afford to spend in this commodity so universally in request. It is a demonstrative truth, therefore, that the patents of one set of men could not be increased in value without diminishing the value of the patents of some other set of men. If the rich were to subscribe and give five shillings a day to five hundred thousand men, without retrenching their own tables, no doubt can exist, that as these men would live more at their ease, and consume a greater quantity of provisions, there would be less food remaining to divide among the rest; and consequently each man's patent would be diminished in value, or the same number of pieces of silver would purchase a smaller quantity of subsistence, and the price of provisions would universally rise.

These general reasonings have been strikingly confirmed during the late scarcities<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> The scarcities referred to in this chapter were those of 1800 and 1801.

The supposition which I have made of a collection from the rich of eighteen shillings in the pound has been nearly realized; and the effect has been such as might have been expected. If the same distribution had been made when no scarcity existed, a considerable advance in the price of provisions would have been a necessary consequence; but following as it did a scarcity, its effect must have been doubly powerful. No person, I believe, will venture to doubt, that if we were to give three additional shillings a day to every labouring man in the kingdom, as I before supposed, in order that he might have meat for his dinner, the price of meat would rise in the most rapid and unexampled manner. But surely, in a deficiency of corn, which renders it impossible for every man to have his usual share, if we still continue to furnish each person with the means of purchasing the same quantity as before, the effect must be in every respect similar.

It seems in great measure to have escaped observation, that the price of corn in a scarcity will depend much more upon the obstinacy

stinacy with which the same degree of consumption is persevered in, than on the degree of the actual deficiency. A deficiency of one half of a crop, if the people could immediately consent to consume only one half of what they did before, would produce little or no effect on the price of corn. A deficiency of one-twelfth, if exactly the same consumption were to continue for ten or eleven months, might raise the price of corn to almost any height. The more is given in parish assistance, the more power is furnished of persevering in the same consumption, and of course the higher will the price rise, before the necessary diminution of consumption is effected.

It has been asserted by some people, that high prices do not diminish consumption. If this were really true, we should see the price of a bushel of corn at a hundred pounds or more, in every deficiency, which could not be fully and completely remedied by importation. But the fact is, that high prices do ultimately diminish consumption; but on account of the riches of the country, the unwillingness of the people

people to resort to substitutes, and the immense sums which are distributed by parishes, this object cannot be attained, till the prices become excessive, and force even the middle classes of society, or at least those immediately above the poor, to save in the article of bread from the actual inability of purchasing it in the usual quantity. The poor who were assisted by their parishes, had no reason whatever to complain of the high price of grain; because it was the excessiveness of this price, and this alone, which by enforcing such a saving left a greater quantity of corn for the consumption of the lowest classes, which corn the parish allowances enabled them to command. The greatest sufferers in the scarcity were undoubtedly the classes immediately above the poor; and these were in the most marked manner depressed by the excessive bounties given to those below them. Almost all poverty is relative; and I much doubt whether these people would have been rendered so poor, if a sum equal to half of these bounties had been taken directly out of their pockets, as they were,  
by

by that new distribution of the money of the society which actually took place<sup>a</sup>. This distribution, by giving to the poorer classes a command of food so much greater, than that to which their degree of skill and industry entitled them, in the actual circumstances of the country, diminished exactly in the same proportion that command over the necessaries of life, which the classes above them, by their superior skill and industry, would naturally possess; and it may be a question, whether the degree of

<sup>a</sup> Supposing the lower classes to earn on an average ten shillings a week, and the classes just above them twenty, it is not to be doubted, that in a scarcity these latter would be more straightened in their power of commanding the necessaries of life, by a donation of ten shillings a week to those below them, than by the subtraction of five shillings a week from their own earnings. In the one case, they would be all reduced to a level; the price of provisions would rise in an extraordinary manner from the greatness of the competition; and all would be straightened for subsistence. In the other case, the classes above the poor would still maintain a considerable part of their relative superiority; the price of provisions would by no means rise in the same degree; and their remaining fifteen shillings would purchase much more than their twenty shillings in the former case.

assistance

assistance which the poor received, and which prevented them from resorting to the use of those substitutes, which in every other country on such occasions the great law of necessity teaches, was not more than overbalanced by the severity of the pressure on so large a body of people from the extreme high prices, and the permanent evil which must result from forcing so many persons on the parish, who before thought themselves almost out of the reach of want.

If we were to double the fortunes of all those who possess above a hundred a year, the effect on the price of grain would be slow and inconsiderable ; but if we were to double the price of labour throughout the kingdom, the effect in raising the price of grain would be rapid and great. The general principles on this subject will not admit of dispute ; and that, in the particular case which we have been considering, the bounties to the poor were of a magnitude to operate very powerfully in this manner will sufficiently appear, if we recollect that before the late scarcities the sum collected for the poor was estimated

at



at three millions, and that during the year 1801 it was said to be ten millions. An additional seven millions acting at the bottom of the scale<sup>a</sup>, and employed exclusively in the purchase of provisions, joined to a considerable advance in the price of wages in many parts of the kingdom, and increased by a prodigious sum expended in voluntary charity, must have had a most powerful effect in raising the price of the necessaries of life, if any reliance can be placed on the clearest general principles confirmed as much as possible by appearances. A man with a family has received, to my knowledge, fourteen shillings a week from the parish. His common earnings

<sup>a</sup> See a small pamphlet published in November 1800, entitled, *An Investigation of the Cause of the present high Price of Provisions*. This pamphlet was mistaken by some for an inquiry into the cause of the scarcity, and as such it would naturally appear to be incomplete, adverting, as it does, principally to a single cause. But the sole object of the pamphlet was to give the principal reason for the extreme high price of provisions, in proportion to the degree of the scarcity, admitting the deficiency of one-fourth, as stated in the Duke of Portland's letter; which, I am much inclined to think, was very near the truth.

were ten shillings a week, and his weekly revenue, therefore, twenty-four. Before the scarcity he had been in the habit of purchasing a bushel of flour a week with eight shillings perhaps, and consequently had two shillings out of his ten, to spare for other necessities. During the scarcity he was enabled to purchase the same quantity at nearly three times the price. He paid twenty-two shillings for his bushel of flour, and had as before two shillings remaining for other wants. Such instances could not possibly have been universal, without raising the price of wheat very much higher than it really was during any part of the dearth. But similar instances were by no means unfrequent; and the system itself of measuring the relief given by the price of grain was general.

If the circulation of the country had consisted entirely of specie, which could not have been immediately increased, it would have been impossible to give such an additional sum as seven millions to the poor without embarrassing to a great degree the operations of commerce. On the commencement

mencement therefore of this extensive relief, which would necessarily occasion a proportionate expenditure in provisions throughout all the ranks of society, a great demand would be felt for an increased circulating medium. The nature of the medium then principally in use was such, that it could be created immediately on demand. From the accounts of the bank of England, as laid before Parliament, it appeared, that no very great additional issues of paper took place from this quarter. The three millions and a half added to its former average issues were not probably much above what was sufficient to supply the quantity of specie that had been withdrawn from the circulation. If this supposition be true, (and the small quantity of gold which made its appearance at that time furnishes the strongest reason for believing that nearly as much as this must have been withdrawn), it would follow that the part of the circulation originating in the bank of England, though changed in its nature, had not been much increased in its quantity; and with regard to the effect of the circulating medium

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dium on the prices of all commodities it cannot be doubted that it would be precisely the same, whether this medium were made up principally of guineas, or of pound-notes and shillings which would pass current for guineas.

b. The demand therefore for an increased circulating medium was left to be supplied principally by the country banks, and it could not be expected that they should hesitate in taking advantage of so profitable an opportunity. The paper issues of a country bank are, as I conceive, measured by the quantity of its notes which will remain in circulation; and this quantity is again measured, supposing a confidence to be established, by the sum of what is wanted to carry on all the money transactions of the neighbourhood. From the high price of provisions, all these transactions became more expensive. In the single article of the weekly payment of labourers' wages, including the parish allowances, it is evident that a very great addition to the circulating medium of the neighbourhood would be wanted. Had the country banks attempted

attempted to issue the same quantity of paper without such a particular demand for it, they would quickly have been admonished of their error by its rapid and pressing return upon them ; but at this time it was wanted for immediate and daily use, and was therefore eagerly absorbed into the circulation.

It may even admit of a question, whether under similar circumstances the country banks would not have issued nearly the same quantity of paper, if the bank of England had not been restricted from payment in specie. Before this event the issues of the country banks in paper were regulated by the quantity that the circulation would take up ; and after, as well as before, they were obliged to pay the notes which returned upon them in bank of England circulation. The difference in the two cases would arise principally from the pernicious custom, adopted since the restriction of the bank, of issuing one and two pound notes, and from the little preference that many people might feel, if they could not get gold, be-

tween country bank paper and bank of England paper.

The very great issue of country bank paper during the years 1800 and 1801 was evidently therefore, in its origin, rather a consequence than a cause of the high price of provisions; but being once absorbed into the circulation, it must necessarily affect the price of all commodities, and throw very great obstacles in the way of returning cheapness. This is the great mischief of the system. During the scarcity, it is not to be doubted that the increased circulation, by preventing the embarrassments which commerce and speculation must otherwise have felt, enabled the country to continue all the branches of its trade with less interruption, and to import a much greater quantity of grain, than it could have done otherwise; but to overbalance these temporary advantages, a lasting evil might be entailed upon the community, and the prices of a time of scarcity might become permanent, from the difficulty of reabsorbing this increased circulation.

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In this respect, however, it is much better that the great issue of paper should have come from the country banks than from the bank of England. During the restriction of payment in specie, there is no possibility of forcing the bank to retake its notes when too abundant; but with regard to the country banks, as soon as their notes are not wanted in the circulation, they will be returned; and if the bank of England notes be not increased, the whole circulating medium will thus be diminished.

We may consider ourselves as peculiarly fortunate, that the two years of scarcity were succeeded by two events the best calculated to restore plenty and cheapness—an abundant harvest and a peace; which together produced a general conviction of plenty, in the minds both of buyers and sellers; and by rendering the first slow to purchase, and the others eager to sell, occasioned a glut in the market, and a consequent rapid fall of price, which has enabled parishes to take off their allowances to the poor, and thus to prevent a return of high

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prices,

prices, when the alarm among the sellers was over.

If the two years of scarcity had been succeeded merely by years of average crops, I am strongly disposed to believe, that, as no glut would have taken place in the market, the price of grain would have fallen only in a comparatively inconsiderable degree, the parish allowances could not have been resumed, the increased quantity of paper would still have been wanted, and the price of all commodities might by degrees have been regulated permanently according to the increased circulating medium.

If instead of giving the temporary assistance of parish allowances, which might be withdrawn on the first fall of price, we had raised universally the wages of labour, it is evident, that the obstacles to a diminution of the circulation and to returning cheapness would have been still farther increased; and the high price of labour would have become permanent, without any advantage whatever to the labourer.

There is no one that more ardently desires



sires to see a real advance in the price of labour than myself; but the attempt to effect this object by forcibly raising the nominal price, which was practised to a certain degree, and recommended almost universally during the late scarcities, every thinking man must reprobate as puerile and ineffectual.

The price of labour, when left to find its natural level, is a most important political barometer, expressing the relation between the supply of provisions, and the demand for them; between the quantity to be consumed and the number of consumers; and taken on the average, independently of accidental circumstances, it further expresses clearly the wants of the society respecting population; that is, whatever may be the number of children to a marriage necessary to maintain exactly the present population, the price of labour will be just sufficient to support this number, or be above it, or below it, according to the state of the real funds for the maintenance of labour, whether stationary, progressive or retrograde. Instead, however, of considering  
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ing it in this light, we consider it as something which we may raise or depress at pleasure, something which depends principally upon His Majesty's justices of the peace. When an advance in the price of provisions already expresses that the demand is too great for the supply, in order to put the labourer in the same condition as before, we raise the price of labour, that is, we increase the demand, and are then much surprised that the price of provisions continues rising. In this we act much in the same manner as if, when the quicksilver in the common weather-glass stood at *stormy*, we were to raise it by some mechanical pressure to *settled fair*, and then be greatly astonished that it continued raining.

Dr. Smith has clearly shown, that the natural tendency of a year of scarcity is either to throw a number of labourers out of employment, or to oblige them to work for less than they did before, from the inability of masters to employ the same number at the same price. The raising of the price of wages tends necessarily to throw  
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more out employment, and completely to prevent the good effects, which, he says, sometimes arise from a year of moderate scarcity, that of making the lower classes of people do more work, and become more careful and industrious. The number of servants out of place, and of manufacturers wanting employment during the late scarcities, were melancholy proofs of the truth of these reasonings. If a general rise in the wages of labour had taken place proportioned to the price of provisions, none but farmers and a few gentlemen could have afforded to employ the same number of workmen as before. Additional crowds of servants and manufacturers would have been turned off; and those who were thus thrown out of employment would of course have no other refuge than the parish. In the natural order of things a scarcity must tend to lower, instead of to raise, the price of labour.

After the publication and general circulation of such a work as Adam Smith's, I confess it appears to me strange, that so many men, who would yet aspire to be  
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thought political economists, should still think that it is in the power of the justices of the peace, or even of the omnipotence of parliament, to alter by a *fiat* the whole circumstances of the country ; and when the demand for provisions is greater than the supply, by publishing a particular edict, to make the supply at once equal to or greater than the demand. Many men, who would shrink at the proposal of a maximum, would propose themselves, that the price of labour should be proportioned to the price of provisions, and do not seem to be aware that the two proposals are very nearly of the same nature, and that both tend directly to famine. It matters not whether we enable the labourer to purchase the same quantity of provisions which he did before, by fixing their price, or by raising in proportion the price of labour. The only advantage on the side of raising the price of labour is, that the rise in the price of provisions, which necessarily follows it, encourages importation : but putting importation out of the question, which might possibly be prevented by war,

or

or other circumstances, a universal rise of wages in proportion to the price of provisions, aided by adequate parish allowances to those who were thrown out of work, would, by preventing any kind of saving, in the same manner as a maximum, cause the whole crop to be consumed in nine months, which ought to have lasted twelve, and thus produce a famine. At the same time we must not forget, that both humanity and true policy imperiously require, that we should give every assistance to the poor on these occasions, that the nature of the case will admit. If provisions were to continue at the price of scarcity, the wages of labour must necessarily rise, or sickness and famine would quickly diminish the number of labourers; and the supply of labour being unequal to the demand, its price would soon rise in a still greater proportion than the price of provisions. But even one or two years of scarcity, if the poor were left entirely to shift for themselves, might produce some effect of this kind, and consequently it is our interest, as well as our duty, to give them

them temporary aid in such seasons of distress. It is on such occasions that every cheap substitute for bread, and every mode of economizing food should be resorted to. Nor should we be too ready to complain of that high price of corn, which by encouraging importation increases the supply.

As the inefficacy of poor laws, and of attempts forcibly to raise the price of labour, is most conspicuous in a scarcity, I have thought myself justified in considering them under this view ; and as these causes of increased price received great additional force during the late scarcity from the increase of the circulating medium, I trust, that the few observations which I have made on this subject will be considered as an allowable digression.

## CHAP. VI.

*Of Poor-Laws, continued.*

INDEPENDENTLY of any considerations respecting a year of deficient crops, it is evident, that an increase of population, without a proportional increase of food, must lower the value of each man's earnings. The food must necessarily be distributed in smaller quantities, and consequently a day's labour will purchase a smaller quantity of provisions. An increase in the price of provisions will arise either from an increase of population faster than the means of subsistence, or from a different distribution of the money of the society. The food of a country which has been long peopled, if it be increasing, increases slowly and regularly, and cannot be made to answer any sudden demands ; but variations in the distribution of the money of the society are not unfrequently occurring,  
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and are undoubtedly among the causes which occasion the continual variations in the prices of provisions.

The poor laws of England tend to depress the general condition of the poor in these two ways. Their first obvious tendency is to increase population without increasing the food for its support. A poor man may marry with little or no prospect of being able to support a family without parish assistance. They may be said, therefore, to create the poor which they maintain ; and as the provisions of the country must, in consequence of the increased population, be distributed to every man in smaller proportions, it is evident that the labour of those who are not supported by parish assistance will purchase a smaller quantity of provisions than before, and consequently more of them must be driven to apply for assistance.

Secondly ; the quantity of provisions consumed in workhouses, upon a part of the society that cannot in general be considered as the most valuable part, diminishes the shares that would otherwise belong to more



more industrious and more worthy members, and thus, in the same manner, forces more to become dependent. If the poor in the workhouses were to live better than they do now, this new distribution of the money of the society would tend more conspicuously to depress the condition of those out of the workhouses by occasioning an advance in the price of provisions.

Fortunately for England, a spirit of independence still remains among the peasantry. The poor laws are strongly calculated to eradicate this spirit. They have succeeded in part ; but had they succeeded as completely as might have been expected, their pernicious tendency would not have been so long concealed.

Hard as it may appear in individual instances, dependent poverty ought to be held disgraceful. Such a stimulus seems to be absolutely necessary to promote the happiness of the great mass of mankind ; and every general attempt to weaken this stimulus, however benevolent its intention, will always defeat its own purpose. If men be induced to marry from the mere prospect  
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of parish provision, they are not only unjustly tempted to bring unhappiness and dependence upon themselves and children, but they are tempted, without knowing it, to injure all in the same class with themselves.

The poor laws of England appear to have contributed to raise the price of provisions, and to lower the real price of labour. They have therefore contributed to impoverish that class of people, whose only possession is their labour. It is also difficult to suppose that they have not powerfully contributed to generate that carelessness and want of frugality observable among the poor, so contrary to the disposition generally to be remarked among petty tradesmen and small farmers. The labouring poor, to use a vulgar expression, seem always to live from hand to mouth. Their present wants employ their whole attention; and they seldom think of the future. Even when they have an opportunity of saving, they seldom exercise it; but all that they earn beyond their present necessities goes, generally speaking, to the ale-house. The poor-laws may

may therefore be said to diminish both the power and the will to save, among the common people ; and thus to weaken one of the strongest incentives to sobriety and industry, and consequently to happiness. //

It is a general complaint among master manufacturers, that high wages ruin all their workmen; but it is difficult to conceive that these men would not save a part of their high wages for the future support of their families, instead of spending it in drunkenness and dissipation, if they did not rely on parish assistance for support in case of accidents. And that the poor employed in manufactures consider this assistance as a reason why they may spend all the wages which they earn, and enjoy themselves while they can, appears to be evident, from the number of families that, upon the failure of any great manufactory, immediately fall upon the parish; when perhaps the wages earned in this manufactory, while it flourished, were sufficiently above the price of common country labour, to have allowed them to save enough for their support, till they could find some other channel for their industry.

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A man who might not be deterred from going to the ale-house from the consideration that on his death or sickness he should leave his wife and family upon the parish, might yet hesitate in thus dissipating his earnings, if he were assured, that in either of these cases his family must starve, or be left to the support of casual bounty.

The mass of happiness among the common people cannot but be diminished, when one of the strongest checks to idleness and dissipation is thus removed; and positive institutions, which render dependent poverty so general, weaken that disgrace which, for the best and most humane reasons, ought to be attached to it.

The poor laws of England were undoubtedly instituted for the most benevolent purpose; but it is evident they have failed in attaining it. They certainly mitigate some cases of severe distress, which might otherwise occur; though the state of the poor who are supported by parishes, considered in all its circumstances, is very miserable. But one of the principal objections to the system is, that for the assistance which some of the  
poor

poor receive, in itself almost a doubtful blessing, the whole class of the common people of England is subjected to a set of grating, inconvenient and tyrannical laws, totally inconsistent with the genuine spirit of the constitution. The whole business of settlements, even in its present amended state, is contradictory to all ideas of freedom. The parish persecution of men whose families are likely to become chargeable, and of poor women who are near lying in, is a most disgraceful and disgusting tyranny. And the obstructions continually occasioned in the market of labour by these laws have a constant tendency to add to the difficulties of those, who are struggling to support themselves without assistance.

These evils attendant on the poor-laws seem to be irremediable. If assistance be to be distributed to a certain class of people, a power must be lodged somewhere of discriminating the proper objects, and of managing the concerns of the institutions that are necessary ; but any great interference with the affairs of other people is a species of tyranny, and in the common course of

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things, the exercise of this power may be expected to become grating to those who are driven to ask for support. The tyranny of churchwardens and overseers is a common complaint among the poor; but the fault does not lie so much in these persons, who probably before they were in power were not worse than other people, but in the nature of all such institutions.

I feel persuaded that if the poor-laws had never existed in this country, though there might have been a few more instances of very severe distress, the aggregate mass of happiness among the common people would have been much greater than it is at present.

The radical defect of all systems of the kind is that of tending to depress the condition of those that are not relieved by parishes, and to create more poor. If, indeed, we examine some of our statutes strictly with reference to the principle of population, we shall find that they attempt an absolute impossibility; and we cannot be surprised, therefore, that they should constantly fail in the attainment of their object.

The

The famous 43d of Elizabeth, which has been so often referred to and admired, enacts, that the overseers of the poor “ shall take order from time to time, by “ and with the consent of two or more justices, for setting to work the children of “ all such, whose parents shall not by the “ said persons be thought able to keep and “ maintain their children ; and also such “ persons married or unmarried, as, having “ no means to maintain them, use no ordinary and daily trade of life to get their “ living by ; and also to raise, weekly or “ otherwise, by taxation of every inhabitant, and every occupier of lands in the “ said parish, (in such competent sums as “ they shall think fit,) a convenient stock “ of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and “ other necessary ware and stuff, to set the “ poor to work.”

What is this but saying, that the funds for the maintenance of labour in this country may be increased at will, and without limit, by a *fiat* of government, or an assessment of the overseers ? Strictly speaking, this clause is as arrogant and as absurd, as

if it had enacted that two ears of wheat should in future grow where one only had grown before. Canute, when he commanded the waves not to wet his princely foot, did not in reality assume a greater power over the laws of nature. No directions are given to the overseers how to increase the funds for the maintenance of labour; the necessity of industry, economy and enlightened exertion, in the management of agricultural and commercial capital, is not insisted on for this purpose; but it is expected that a miraculous increase of these funds should immediately follow an edict of the government used at the discretion of some ignorant parish officers.

If this clause were really and *bonâ fide* put in execution, and the shame attending the receiving of parish assistance worn off, every labouring man might marry as early as he pleased, under the certain prospect of having all his children properly provided for; and as, according to the supposition, there would be no check to population from the consequences of poverty after marriage, the increase of people would be rapid



rapid beyond example in old states. After what has been said in the former parts of this work, it is submitted to the reader, whether the utmost exertions of the most enlightened government could, in this case, make the food keep pace with the population; much less a mere arbitrary edict, the tendency of which is certainly rather to diminish than to increase the funds for the maintenance of productive labour.

In the actual circumstances of every country, the prolific power of nature seems to be always ready to exert nearly its full force; but within the limit of possibility, there is nothing perhaps more improbable, or more out of the reach of any government to effect, than the direction of the industry of its subjects in such a manner, as to produce the greatest quantity of human sustenance that the earth could bear. It evidently could not be done without the most complete violation of the law of property; from which every thing that is valuable to man has hitherto arisen. Such is the disposition to marry, particularly in very young people, that, if the difficulties of providing  
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for a family were entirely removed, very few would remain single at twenty-two. But what statesman or rational government could propose that all animal food should be prohibited, that no horses should be used for business or pleasure, that all the people should live upon potatoes, and that the whole industry of the nation should be exerted in the production of them, except what was required for the mere necessities of clothing and houses? Could such a revolution be effected, would it be desirable? particularly as in a few years, notwithstanding all these exertions, want, with less resource than ever, would inevitably recur.

After a country has once ceased to be in the peculiar situation of a new colony, we shall always find that in the actual state of its cultivation, or in that state which may rationally be expected from the most enlightened government, the increase of its food can never allow for any length of time an unrestricted increase of population; and therefore the due execution of the clause in the 43d of Elizabeth, as a permanent law, is a physical impossibility.

It

It will be said, perhaps, that the fact contradicts the theory ; and that the clause in question has remained in force, and has been executed, during the last two hundred years. In answer to this, I should say without hesitation, that it has not really been executed ; and that it is merely owing to its incomplete execution, that it remains on our statute-book at present.

The scanty relief granted to persons in distress, the capricious and insulting manner in which it is sometimes distributed by the overseers, and the natural and becoming pride, not yet quite extinct among the peasantry of England, have deterred the more thinking and virtuous part of them from venturing on marriage, without some better prospect of maintaining their families than mere parish assistance. The desire of bettering our condition, and the fear of making it worse, like the *vis medicatrix naturæ* in physics, is the *vis medicatrix reipublicæ* in politics, and is continually counteracting the disorders arising from narrow human institutions. In spite of the prejudices in favour of population, and the direct encouragements

ragements to marriage from the poor-laws, it operates as a preventive check to increase; and happy for this country is it, that it does so. But besides that spirit of independence and prudence, which checks the frequency of marriage, notwithstanding the encouragements of the poor-laws, these laws themselves occasion a check of no inconsiderable magnitude, and thus counteract with one hand what they encourage with the other. As each parish is obliged to maintain its own poor, it is naturally fearful of increasing their number; and every landholder is in consequence more inclined to pull down than to build cottages, except when the demand for labourers is really urgent. This deficiency of cottages operates necessarily as a strong check to marriage; and this check is probably the principal reason why we have been able to continue the system of the poor-laws so long.

Those who are not prevented for a time from marrying by these causes, are either relieved very scantily at their own homes, where they suffer all the consequences  
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arising from squalid poverty ; or they are crowded together in close and unwholesome workhouses, where a great mortality almost universally takes place, particularly among the young children. The dreadful account given by Jonas Hanway of the treatment of parish children in London is well known ; and it appears from Mr. Howlett and other writers, that in some parts of the country their situation is not very much better. A great part of the redundant population occasioned by the poor-laws is thus taken off by the operation of the laws themselves, or at least by their ill execution. The remaining part which survives, by causing the funds for the maintenance of labour to be divided among a greater number than can be properly maintained by them, and by turning a considerable share from the support of the diligent and careful workman to the support of the idle and negligent, depresses the condition of all those who are out of the workhouses, forces more into them every year, and has ultimately produced the enormous evil, which we all so justly deplore ; that of the great and unnatural

natural proportion of the people which is now become dependent upon charity.

If this be a just representation of the manner in which the clause in question has been executed, and of the effects which it has produced, it must be allowed that we have practised an unpardonable deceit upon the poor, and have promised what we have been very far from performing.

The attempts to employ the poor on any great scale in manufactures have almost invariably failed, and the stock and materials have been wasted. In those few parishes which, by better management or larger funds, have been enabled to persevere in this system, the effect of these new manufactures in the market must have been to throw out of employment many independent workmen, who were before engaged in fabrications of a similar nature. This effect has been placed in a strong point of view by Daniel de Foe, in an address to parliament, entitled, *Giving Alms no Charity*. Speaking of the employment of parish children in manufactures, he says, "For every skein of worsted these poor children spin,  
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there must be a skein the less spun by some poor family that spun it before; and for every piece of baize so made in London, there must be a piece the less made at Colchester, or somewhere else<sup>a</sup>." Sir F. M. Eden, on the same subject, observes, that "whether mops and brooms are made by parish children or by private workmen, no more can be sold than the public is in want of<sup>b</sup>."

It will be said, perhaps, that the same reasoning might be applied to any new capital brought into competition in a par-

<sup>a</sup> See Extracts from Daniel de Foe, in Sir F. M. Eden's valuable Work on the poor, vol. i. p. 261.

<sup>b</sup> Sir F. M. Eden, speaking of the supposed right of the poor to be supplied with employment while able to work, and with a maintenance when incapacitated from labour, very justly remarks, "It may however be doubted, whether any right, the gratification of which seems to be impracticable, can be said to exist," vol. i. p. 447. No man has collected so many materials for forming a judgment on the effects of the poor-laws as Sir F. M. Eden, and the result he thus expresses: "Upon the whole therefore there seems to be just grounds for concluding, that the sum of good to be expected from a compulsory maintenance of the poor will be far outbalanced by the sum of evil which it will inevitably create," vol. i. p. 467.—I am happy to have the sanction of so practical an inquirer to my opinion of the poor-laws.

ticular trade or manufacture, which can rarely be done without injuring, in some degree, those that were engaged in it before. But there is a material difference in the two cases. In this the competition is perfectly fair, and what every man on entering into business must lay his account to. He may rest secure that he will not be supplanted, unless his competitor possess superior skill and industry. In the other case the competition is supported by a great bounty; by which means, notwithstanding very inferior skill and industry on the part of his competitors, the independent workman may be undersold, and unjustly excluded from the market. He himself perhaps is made to contribute to this competition against his own earnings; and the funds for the maintenance of labour are thus turned from the support of a trade which yields a proper profit, to one which cannot maintain itself without a bounty. It should be observed in general, that when a fund for the maintenance of labour is raised by assessment, the greatest part of it is not a new capital brought into trade, but an old one, which before was  
much



much more profitably employed, turned into a new channel. The farmer pays to the poor's rates, for the encouragement of a bad and unprofitable manufacture, what he would have employed on his land with infinitely more advantage to his country. In the one case, the funds for the maintenance of labour are daily diminished; in the other, daily increased. And this obvious tendency of assessments for the employment of the poor, to decrease the real funds for the maintenance of labour in any country, aggravates the absurdity of supposing that it is in the power of a government to find employment for all its subjects, however fast they may increase.

It is not intended that these reasonings should be applied against every mode of employing the poor on a limited scale, and with such restrictions as may not encourage at the same time their increase. I would never wish to push general principles too far; though I think that they ought always to be kept in view. In particular cases the individual good to be obtained may be so great, and the general evil so slight, that  
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the former may clearly overbalance the latter.

My intention is merely to shew that the poor-laws as a general system are founded on a gross error: and that the common declamation on the subject of the poor, which we see so often in print, and hear continually in conversation, namely, that the market price of labour ought always to be sufficient decently to support a family, and that employment ought to be found for all those who are willing to work, is in effect to say, that the funds for the maintenance of labour in this country are not only infinite, but not subject to variation; and that, whether the resources of a country be rapidly progressive, slowly progressive, stationary or declining, the power of giving full employment and good wages to the labouring classes must always remain exactly the same,—a conclusion which contradicts the plainest and most obvious principles of supply and demand, and involves the absurd position that a definite quantity of territory can maintain an infinite population.

CHAP.

## CHAP. VII.

*Of Poor-Laws, continued.*

THE remarks made in the last chapter on the nature and effects of the poor-laws have been in the most striking manner confirmed by the experience of the years 1815, 1816 and 1817. During these years, two points of the very highest importance have been established, so as no longer to admit of a doubt in the mind of any rational man.

The first is, that the country does not in point of fact fulfil the promise which it makes to the poor in the poor-laws, to maintain and find in employment, by means of parish assessments, those who are unable to support themselves or their families, either from want of work or any other cause.

And secondly, that with a very great increase of legal parish assessments, aided by the most liberal and praiseworthy contributions

butions of voluntary charity, the country has been wholly unable to find adequate employment for the numerous labourers and artificers who were able as well as willing to work.

It can no longer surely be contended that the poor-laws really perform what they promise, when it is known that many almost starving families have been found in London and other great towns, who are deterred from going on the parish by the crowded, unhealthy and horrible state of the workhouses into which they would be received, if indeed they could be received at all; when it is known that many parishes have been absolutely unable to raise the necessary assessments, the increase of which, according to the existing laws, have tended only to bring more and more persons upon the parish, and to make what was collected less and less effectual; and when it is known that there has been an almost universal cry from one end of the kingdom to the other for voluntary charity to come in aid of the parochial assessments.

These strong indications of the inefficiency

ciency of the poor-laws, may merely be considered, not only as incontrovertible proofs of the fact that they do not perform what they promise, but as affording the strongest presumption that they cannot do it. The best of all reasons for the breach of a promise, is, the absolute impossibility of executing it; indeed it is the only plea that can ever be considered as valid. But though it may be fairly pardonable not to execute an impossibility, it is unpardonable knowingly to promise one. And if it be still thought advisable to act upon these statutes as far as is practicable, it would surely be wise so to alter the terms in which they are expressed, and the general interpretation given to them, as not to convey to the poor a false notion of what really is within the range of practicability.

It has appeared further as a matter of fact, that very large voluntary contributions, combined with greatly increased parochial assessments, and aided by the most able and incessant exertions of individuals, have failed to give the necessary employment to those who have been thrown

out of work by the sudden falling off of demand which has occurred during the last two or three years.

It might perhaps have been foreseen that, as the great movements of society, the great causes which render a nation progressive, stationary or declining, for longer or shorter periods, cannot be supposed to depend much upon parochial assessments or the contributions of charity, it could not be expected that any efforts of this kind should have power to create in a stationary or declining state of things that effective demand for labour which only belongs to a progressive state. But to those who did not see this truth before, the melancholy experience of the last two years must have brought it home with an overpowering conviction.

It does not however by any means follow that the exertions which have been made to relieve the present distresses have been ill directed. On the contrary, they have not only been prompted by the most praiseworthy motives; they have not only fulfilled the great moral duty of assisting our fellow-

fellow-creatures in distress; but they have in point of fact done great good, or at least prevented great evil. Their partial failure does not necessarily indicate either a want of energy or a want of skill in those who have taken the lead in these efforts, but merely that a part only of what has been attempted is practicable.

It is practicable to mitigate the violence and relieve the severe pressure of the present distress, so as to carry the sufferers through to better times, though even this can only be done at the expense of some sacrifices, not merely of the rich, but of other classes of the poor. But it is impracticable by any exertions, either individual or national, to restore at once that brisk demand for commodities and labour which has been lost by events, that, however they may have originated, are now beyond the power of control.

The whole subject is surrounded on all sides by the most formidable difficulties, and in no state of things is it so necessary to recollect the saying of Daniel de Foe quoted in the last chapter. The manufac-

turers all over the country, and the Spital-fields weavers in particular, are in a state of the deepest distress, occasioned immediately and directly by the want of demand for the produce of their industry, and the consequent necessity felt by the masters of turning off many of their workmen, in order to proportion the supply to the contracted demand. It is proposed however, by some well-meaning people, to raise by subscription a fund for the express purpose of setting to work again those who have been turned off by their masters, the effect of which can only be to continue glutting a market, already much too fully supplied. This is most naturally and justly objected to by the masters, as it prevents them from withdrawing the supply, and taking the only course which can prevent the total destruction of their capitals, and the necessity of turning off all their men instead of a part.

On the other hand, some classes of merchants and manufacturers clamour very loudly for the prohibition of all foreign commodities which may enter into competition



tition with domestic products, and interfere, as they intimate, with the employment of British industry. But this is most naturally and most justly deprecated by other classes of British subjects, who are employed to a very great extent in preparing and manufacturing those commodities which are to purchase our imports from foreign countries. And it must be allowed to be perfectly true that a court-ball, at which only British stuffs are admitted, may be the means of throwing out of employment in one quarter of the country just as many persons as it furnishes with employment in another.

Still, it would be desirable if possible to employ those that are out of work, if it were merely to avoid the bad moral effects of idleness, and of the evil habits which might be generated by depending for a considerable time on mere alms. But the difficulties just stated will shew, that we ought to proceed in this part of the attempt with great caution, and that the kinds of employment which ought to be chosen are those, the results of which will

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not interfere with existing capitals. Such are public works of all descriptions, the making and repairing of roads, bridges, railways, canals, &c.; and now perhaps, since the great loss of agricultural capital, almost every sort of labour upon the land, which could be carried on by public subscription.

Yet even in this way of employing labour, the benefit to some must bring with it disadvantages to others. That portion of each person's revenue which might go in subscriptions of this kind, must of course be lost to the various sorts of labour which its expenditure in the usual channels would have supported; and the want of demand thus occasioned in these channels must cause the pressure of distress to be felt in quarters which might otherwise have escaped it. But this is an effect which, in such cases, it is impossible to avoid; and, as a temporary measure, it is not only charitable but just, to spread the evil over a larger surface, in order that its violence on particular parts may be so mitigated as to be made bearable by all.

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The great object to be kept in view, is to support the people through their present distresses, in the hope (and I trust a just one) of better times. The difficulty is without doubt considerably aggravated by the prodigious stimulus which has been given to the population of the country of late years, the effects of which cannot suddenly subside. But it will be seen probably, when the next returns of the population are made, that the marriages and births have diminished, and the deaths increased in a still greater degree than in 1800 and 1801; and the continuance of this effect to a certain degree for a few years will retard the progress of the population, and combined with the increasing wants of Europe and America from their increasing riches, and the adaptation of the supply of commodities at home to the new distribution of wealth occasioned by the alteration of the circulating medium, will again give life and energy to all our mercantile and agricultural transactions, and restore the labouring classes to full employment and good wages.

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"I still have a picture of the labouring class? full employment & good wages"

On the subject of the distresses of the poor, and particularly the increase of pauperism of late years, the most erroneous opinions have been circulated. During the progress of the war, the increase in the proportion of persons requiring parish assistance was attributed chiefly to the high price of the necessaries of life. We have seen these necessaries of life experience a great and sudden fall, and yet at the same time a still larger proportion of the population requiring parish assistance.

It is now said that taxation is the sole cause of their distresses, and of the extraordinary stagnation in the demand for labour; yet I feel the firmest conviction, that if the whole of the taxes were removed to-morrow, this stagnation, instead of being at an end, would be considerably aggravated. Such an event would cause another great and general rise in the value of the circulating medium, and bring with it that discouragement to industry with which such a convulsion in society must ever be attended. If, as has been represented, the labouring classes now pay more than half of what they

taxation!

they receive in taxes, he must know very little indeed of the principles on which the wages of labour are regulated, who can for a moment suppose that, when the commodities on which they are expended have fallen one half by the removal of taxes, these wages themselves would still continue of the same nominal value. Were they to remain but for a short time the same, while all commodities had fallen, and the circulating medium had been reduced in proportion, it would be quickly seen that multitudes of them would be at once thrown out of employment.

The effects of taxation are no doubt in many cases pernicious in a very high degree; but it may be laid down as a rule which has few exceptions, that the relief obtained by taking off a tax, is in no respect equal to the injury inflicted in laying it on; and generally it may be said that the specific evil of taxation consists in the check which it gives to production, rather than the diminution which it occasions in demand. With regard to all commodities indeed of home production and home demand,

mand, it is quite certain that the conversion of capital into revenue, which is the effect of loans, must necessarily increase the proportion of demand to the supply; and the conversion of the revenue of individuals into the revenue of the government, which is the effect of taxes properly imposed, however hard upon the individuals so taxed, can have no tendency to diminish the general amount of demand. It will of course diminish the demands of the persons taxed by diminishing their powers of purchasing; but to the exact amount that the powers of these persons are diminished, will the powers of the government and of those employed by it be increased. If an estate of five thousand a year has a mortgage upon it of two thousand, two families, both in very good circumstances, may be living upon the rents of it, and both have considerable demands for houses, furniture, carriages, broad cloth, silks, cottons, &c. The man who owns the estate is certainly much worse off than if the mortgage-deed was burnt, but the manufacturers and labourers who supply the silks, broad cloth, cottons,

tons, &c., are so far from being likely to be benefited by such burning, that it would be a considerable time before the new wants and tastes of the enriched owner had restored the former demand; and if he were to take a fancy to spend his additional income in horses, hounds and menial servants, which is probable, not only would the manufacturers and labourers who had before supplied their silks, cloths and cottons, be thrown out of employment, but the substituted demand would be very much less favourable to the increase of the capital and general resources of the country.

The foregoing illustration represents more nearly than may generally be imagined the effects of a national debt on the labouring classes of society, and the very great mistake of supposing that, because the demands of a considerable portion of the community would be increased by the extinction of the debt, these increased demands would not be balanced, and often more than balanced, by the loss of the demand from the fundholders and government.

It is by no means intended by these observations

servations to intimate that a national debt may not be so heavy as to be extremely prejudicial to a state. The division and distribution of property, which is so beneficial when carried only to a certain extent, is fatal to production when pushed to extremity. The division of an estate of five thousand a year will generally tend to increase demand, stimulate production and improve the structure of society ; but the division of an estate of eighty pounds a year will generally be attended with effects directly the reverse.

But, besides the probability that the division of property occasioned by a national debt may in many cases be pushed too far, the process of the division is effected by means which sometimes greatly embarrass production. This embarrassment must necessarily take place to a certain extent in almost every species of taxation ; but under favourable circumstances it is overcome by the stimulus given to demand. During the late war, from the prodigious increase of produce and population, it may fairly be presumed that the power of production  
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was not essentially impeded, notwithstanding the enormous amount of taxation ; but in the state of things which has occurred since the peace, and under a most extraordinary fall of the exchangeable value of the raw produce of the land, and a great consequent diminution of the circulating medium, the very sudden increase of the weight and pressure of taxation must greatly aggravate the other causes which discourage production. This effect has been felt to a considerable extent on the land ; but the distress in this quarter is already much mitigated ; and among the mercantile and manufacturing classes, where the greatest numbers are without employment, the evil obviously arises, not so much from the want of capital and the means of production, as the want of a market for the commodity when produced—a want, for which the removal of taxes, however proper, and indeed absolutely necessary as a permanent measure, is certainly not the immediate and specific remedy.

The principal causes of the increase of pauperism, independently of the present crisis,

crisis, are, first, the general increase of the manufacturing system and the unavoidable variations of manufacturing labour ; and secondly, and more particularly, the practice which has been adopted in some counties, and is now spreading pretty generally all over the kingdom, of paying a considerable portion of what ought to be the wages of labour out of the parish rates. During the war, when the demand for labour was great and increasing, it is quite certain that nothing but a practice of this kind could for any time have prevented the wages of labour from rising fully in proportion to the necessities of life, in whatever degree these necessities might have been raised by taxation. It was seen, consequently, that in those parts of Great Britain where this practice prevailed the least, the wages of labour rose the most. This was the case in Scotland, and some parts of the North of England, where the improvement in the condition of the labouring classes, and their increased command over the necessities and conveniences of life, were particularly remarkable. And if, in some other parts  
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of the country, where the practice did not greatly prevail, and especially in the towns, wages did not rise in the same degree, it was owing to the influx and competition of the cheaply raised population of the surrounding counties.

It is a just remark of Adam Smith, that the attempts of the legislature to raise the pay of curates had always been ineffectual, on account of the cheap and abundant supply of them, occasioned by the bounties given to young persons educated for the church at the universities. And it is equally true that no human efforts can keep up the price of day-labour so as to enable a man to support on his earnings a family of a moderate size, so long as those who have more than two children are considered as having a valid claim to parish assistance.

If this system were to become universal, and I own it appears to me that the poor-laws naturally lead to it, there is no reason whatever why parish assistance should not by degrees begin earlier and earlier ; and I do not hesitate to assert that, if the government and constitution of the country were  
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in all other respects as perfect as the wildest visionary thinks he could make them ; if parliaments were annual, suffrage universal, wars, taxes and pensions unknown, and the civil list fifteen hundred a year, the great body of the community might still be a collection of paupers.

I have been accused of proposing a law to prohibit the poor from marrying. This is not true. So far from proposing such a law, I have distinctly said that, if any person chooses to marry without having a prospect of being able to maintain a family, he ought to have the most perfect liberty so to do ; and whenever any prohibitory propositions have been suggested to me as advisable by persons who have drawn wrong inferences from what I have said, I have steadily and uniformly reprobated them. I am indeed most decidedly of opinion that any positive law to limit the age of marriage would be both unjust and immoral ; and my greatest objection to a system of equality and the system of the poor-laws (two systems which, however different in their outset, are of a nature  
calculated

calculated to produce the same results) is, that the society in which they are effectively carried into execution, will ultimately be reduced to the miserable alternative of choosing between universal want and the enactment of *direct* laws against marriage.

What I have really proposed is a very different measure. It is the *gradual* and *very gradual* abolition of the poor-laws<sup>a</sup>. And the reason why I have ventured to suggest a proposition of this kind for consideration is my firm conviction, that they have lowered very decidedly the wages of the labouring classes, and made their general condition essentially worse than it would have been if these laws had never existed. Their operation is every where depressing; but it falls peculiarly hard upon the labouring classes in great towns. In country parishes the poor do really receive some compensation for their low wages; their children, beyond a certain number, are really supported by the parish; and though it must be a most grating reflection to a labouring man, that

<sup>a</sup> So gradual as not to affect any individuals at present alive, or who will be born within the next two years.

it is scarcely possible for him to marry without becoming the father of paupers; yet if he can reconcile himself to this prospect, the compensation, such as it is, is no doubt made to him. But in London and all the great towns of the kingdom, the evil is suffered without the compensation. The population raised by bounties in the country naturally and necessarily flows into the towns, and as naturally and necessarily tends to lower wages in them; while in point of fact, those who marry in towns, and have large families, receive no assistance from their parishes, unless they are actually starving; and altogether the assistance which the manufacturing classes obtain for the support of their families, in aid of their lowered wages, is perfectly inconsiderable.

To remedy the effects of this competition from the country, the artificers and manufacturers in towns have been apt to combine, with a view to keep up the price of labour and to prevent persons from working below a certain rate. But such combinations are not only illegal, but irrational and ineffectual; and if the supply of workmen in any particular

particular branch of trade be such as would naturally lower wages, the keeping them up forcibly must have the effect of throwing so many out of employment, as to make the expense of their support fully equal to the gain acquired by the higher wages, and thus render these higher wages in reference to the whole body perfectly futile.

It may be distinctly stated to be an *absolute impossibility* that all the different classes of society should be both well paid and fully employed, if the supply of labour on the whole exceed the demand; and as the poor-laws tend in the most marked manner to make the supply of labour exceed the demand for it, their effect must be, either to lower universally all wages, or, if some are kept up artificially, to throw great numbers of workmen out of employment, and thus constantly to increase the poverty and distress of the labouring classes of society.

If these things be so (and I am firmly convinced that they are) it cannot but be a subject of the deepest regret to those who are anxious for the happiness of the great mass of the community, that the writers

which are now most extensively read among the common people should have selected for the subject of reprobation exactly that line of conduct which can alone generally improve their condition, and for the subject of approbation that system which must inevitably depress them in poverty and wretchedness.

'They are taught that there is no occasion whatever for them to put any sort of restraint upon their inclinations, or exercise any degree of prudence in the affair of marriage; because the parish is bound to provide for all that are born. They are taught that there is as little occasion to cultivate habits of economy, and make use of the means afforded them by saving banks, to lay by their earnings while they are single, in order to furnish a cottage when they marry, and enable them to set out in life with decency and comfort; because, I suppose, the parish is bound to cover their nakedness, and to find them a bed and a chair in a work-house.

They are taught that any endeavour on the part of the higher classes of society to inculcate



inculcate the duties of prudence and economy can only arise from a desire to save the money which they pay in poor-rates ; although it is absolutely certain that the *only* mode consistent with the laws of morality and religion of giving to the poor the largest share of the property of the rich, without sinking the whole community in misery, is the exercise on the part of the poor of prudence in marriage, and of economy both before and after it.

They are taught that the command of the Creator to increase and multiply is meant to contradict those laws which he has himself appointed for the increase and multiplication of the human race ; and that it is equally the duty of a person to marry early, when, from the impossibility of adding to the food of the country in which he lives, the greater part of his offspring must die prematurely, and consequently no multiplication follow from it, as when the children of such marriages can all be well maintained, and there is room and food for a great and rapid increase of population.

They are taught that, in relation to the  
condition

condition of the labouring classes, there is no other difference between such a country as England, which has been long well peopled, and where the land, which is not yet taken into cultivation, is comparatively barren, and such a country as America, where millions and millions of acres of fine land are yet to be had for a trifle, except what arises from taxation.

And they are taught, O monstrous absurdity! that the only reason why the American labourer earns a dollar a day, and the English labourer earns two shillings, is that the English labourer pays a great part of these two shillings in taxes.

Some of these doctrines are so grossly absurd that I have no doubt they are rejected at once by the common sense of many of the labouring classes. It cannot but strike them that, if their main dependence for the support of their children is to be on the parish, they can only expect parish fare, parish clothing, parish furniture, a parish house and parish government, and they must know that persons living in this way cannot possibly be in a happy and prosperous state. It

It can scarcely escape the notice of the common mechanic, that the scarcer workmen are upon any occasion, the greater share do they retain of the value of what they produce for their masters; and it is a most natural inference, that prudence in marriage, which is the only moral means of preventing an excess of workmen above the demand, can be the only mode of giving to the poor permanently a large share of all that is produced in the country.

A common man, who has read his Bible, must be convinced that a command given to a rational being by a merciful God cannot be intended so to be interpreted as to produce only disease and death instead of multiplication; and a plain sound understanding would make him to see that, if, in a country in which little or no increase of food is to be obtained, every man were to marry at eighteen or twenty, when he generally feels most inclined to it,<sup>1</sup> the consequence must be increased poverty, increased disease and increased mortality, and not increased numbers,<sup>2</sup> as long at least as it continues to be true (which he will hardly

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*But if the number of children be increased, the number of the poor will be increased, and the number of the poor will be increased.*

be disposed to doubt) that additional numbers cannot live without additional food.

A moderately shrewd judgment would prompt any labourer acquainted with the nature of land to suspect that there must be some great difference, quite independent of taxation, between a country such as America, which might easily be made to support fifty times as many inhabitants as it contains at present, and a country such as England, which could not without extraordinary exertions be made to support two or three times as many. He would at least see that there would be a prodigious difference in the power of maintaining an additional number of cattle, between a small farm already well stocked, and a very large one which had not the fiftieth part of what it might be made to maintain; and as he would know that both rich and poor must live upon the produce of the earth as well as all other animals, he would be disposed to conclude that what was so obviously true in one case, could not be false in the other. These considerations might make him think it natural and probable that in those

those countries where there was a great want of people, the wages of labour would be such as to encourage early marriages and large families, for the best of all possible reasons, because all that are born may be very easily and comfortably supported; but that in those countries which were already nearly full, the wages of labour cannot be such as to give the same encouragement to early marriages, for a reason surely not much worse, because the persons so brought into the world cannot be properly supported.

There are few of our mechanics and labourers who have not heard of the high prices of bread, meat and labour in this country compared with the nations of the continent, and they have generally heard at the same time that these high prices were chiefly occasioned by taxation, which, though it had raised among other things the money wages of labour, had done harm rather than good to the labourer, because it had before raised the price of the bread and beer and other articles in which he spent his earnings. With this amount of information,

information, the meanest understanding would revolt at the idea that the very same cause which had kept the money price of labour in all the nations of Europe much lower than in England, namely, the absence of taxation, had been the means of raising it to more than double in America. He would feel quite convinced that, whatever might be the cause of the high money wages of labour in America, which he might not perhaps readily understand, it must be something very different indeed from the mere absence of taxation, which could only have an effect exactly opposite.

With regard to the improved condition of the lower classes of people in France since the revolution, which has also been much insisted upon; if the circumstances accompanying it were told at the same time, it would afford the strongest presumption against the doctrines which have been lately promulgated. The improved condition of the labouring classes in France since the revolution has been accompanied by a greatly diminished proportion of births, which has had its natural and necessary

cessary effect in giving to these classes a greater share of the produce of the country, and has kept up the advantage arising from the sale of the church lands and other national domains, which would otherwise have been lost in a short time. The effect of the revolution in France has been, to make every person depend more upon himself and less upon others. The labouring classes are therefore become more industrious, more saving and more prudent in marriage than formerly; and it is quite certain that without these effects the revolution would have done nothing for them. An improved government has, no doubt, a natural tendency to produce these effects, and thus to improve the condition of the poor. But if an extensive system of parochial relief, and such doctrines as have lately been inculcated, counteract them, and prevent the labouring classes from depending upon their own prudence and industry, then any change for the better in other respects becomes comparatively a matter of very little importance; and, under the best form of government imaginable, there

there may be thousands on thousands out of employment and half starved.

If it be taught that all who are born have a *right* to support on the land, whatever be their number, and that there is no occasion to exercise any prudence in the affair of marriage so as to check this number, the temptations, according to all the known principles of human nature, will inevitably be yielded to, and more and more will gradually become dependent on parish assistance. There cannot therefore be a greater inconsistency and contradiction than that those who maintain these doctrines respecting the poor, should still complain of the number of paupers. Such doctrines and a crowd of paupers are unavoidably united ; and it is utterly beyond the power of any revolution or change of government to separate them.



## CHAP. VIII.

*Of the Agricultural System.*

AS it is the nature of agriculture to produce subsistence for a greater number of families than can be employed in the business of cultivation, it might perhaps be supposed that a nation which strictly pursued an agricultural system would always have more food than was necessary for its inhabitants, and that its population could never be checked from the want of the means of subsistence.

It is indeed obviously true that the increase of such a country is not immediately checked, either by the want of power to produce, or even by the deficiency of the actual produce of the soil compared with the population. Yet if we examine the condition of its labouring classes, we shall find that the real wages of their labour are such as essentially to check and regulate their

their increase, by checking and regulating their command over the means of subsistence.

A country under certain circumstances of soil and situation, and with a deficient capital, may find it advantageous to purchase foreign commodities with its raw produce rather than manufacture them at home: and in this case it will necessarily grow more raw produce than it consumes. But this state of things is very little connected either with the permanent condition of the lower classes of the society or the rate of their increase; and in a country where the agricultural system entirely predominates, and the great mass of its industry is directed towards the land, the condition of the people is subject to almost every degree of variation.

Under the agricultural system perhaps are to be found the two extremes in the condition of the poor; instances where they are in the best state, and instances where they are in the worst state of any of which we have accounts.

In a country where there is an abundance

dance of good land, where there are no difficulties in the way of its purchase and distribution, and where there is an easy foreign vent for raw produce, both the profits of stock and the wages of labour will be high. These high profits and high wages, if habits of economy pretty generally prevail, will furnish the means of a rapid accumulation of capital and a great and continued demand for labour, while the rapid increase of population which will ensue will maintain undiminished the demand for produce, and check the fall of profits.] If the extent of territory be considerable, and the population comparatively inconsiderable, the land may remain understocked both with capital and people for some length of time, notwithstanding a rapid increase of both ; and it is under these circumstances of the agricultural system that labour is able to command the greatest portion of the necessaries of life, and that the condition of the labouring classes of society is the best.

The only drawback to the wealth of the labouring classes under these circumstances is

is the relatively low value of the raw produce.

If a considerable part of the manufactured commodities used in such a country be purchased by the export of its raw produce, it follows as a necessary consequence that the relative value of its raw produce will be lower, and of its manufactured produce higher, than in the countries with which such a trade is carried on. But where a given portion of raw produce will not command so much of manufactured and foreign commodities as in other countries, the condition of the labourer cannot be exactly measured by the quantity of raw produce which falls to his share. If, for instance, in one country the yearly earnings of a labourer amount in money value to fifteen quarters of wheat, and in another to nine, it would be incorrect to infer that their relative condition, and the comforts which they enjoy, were in the same proportion, because the whole of a labourer's earnings are not spent in food; and if that part which is not so spent will, in the country where the value of fifteen  
quarters

quarters is earned, not go near so far in the purchase of clothes and other conveniences as in the countries where the value of nine quarters is earned, it is clear that altogether the situation of the labourer in the latter country may approach nearer to that of the labourer in the former than might at first be supposed.

At the same time it should be recollected that *quantity* always tends powerfully to counterbalance any deficiency of value; and the labourer who earns the greatest number of quarters may still command the greatest quantity of necessaries and conveniences combined, though not to the extent implied by the proportions of the raw produce.

✱ America affords a practical instance of the agricultural system in a state the most favourable to the condition of the labouring classes. The nature of the country has been such as to make it answer to employ a very large proportion of its capital in agriculture; and the consequence has been a very rapid increase of stock. This rapid increase of stock has kept up a steady and

continued demand for labour. The labouring classes have in consequence been peculiarly well paid. They have been able to command an unusual quantity of the necessaries of life, and the progress of population has been unusually rapid.

Yet even here, some little drawback has been felt from the relative cheapness of corn. As America till the late war imported the greatest part of its manufactures from England, and as England imported flour and wheat from America, the value of food in America compared with manufactures must have been decidedly less than in England. Nor would this effect take place merely with relation to the foreign commodities imported into America, but also to those of its home manufactures, in which it has no particular advantage. In agriculture, the abundance of good land would counterbalance the high wages of labour and high profits of stock, and keep the price of corn moderate, notwithstanding the great expense of these two elements of price. But in the production of manufactured commodities they must necessarily

necessarily tell, without any particular advantage to counterbalance them, and must in general occasion in home goods, as well as foreign, a high price compared with food.

Under these circumstances, the condition of the labouring classes of society cannot in point of conveniences and comforts be so much better than that of the labourers of other countries as the relative quantity of food which they earn might seem to indicate ; and this conclusion is sufficiently confirmed by experience. In some very intelligent Travels through a great part of England, written in 1810 and 1811 by Mr. Simond, a French gentleman, who had resided above twenty years in America, the author seems to have been evidently much struck with the air of convenience and comfort in the houses of our peasantry, and the neatness and cleanliness of their dress. In some parts of his tour he saw so many neat cottages, so much good clothing, and so little appearance of poverty and distress, that he could not help wondering where the poor of England and their dwellings were concealed. These observations

coming from an able, accurate and apparently most impartial observer, just landed from America and visiting England for the first time, are curious and instructive; and the facts which they notice, though they may arise in part from the different habits and modes of life prevailing in the two countries, must be occasioned in a considerable degree by the causes above mentioned.

A very striking instance of the disadvantageous effect of a low relative price of food on the condition of the poor may be observed in Ireland. In Ireland the funds for the maintenance of labour have increased so rapidly during the last century, and so large a portion of that sort of food which forms the principal support of the lower classes of society has been awarded to them, that the increase of population has been more rapid than in almost any known country, except America. The Irish labourer paid in potatoes has earned perhaps the means of subsistence for double the number of persons that could be supported by the earnings of an English labourer paid in wheat;



wheat; and the increase of population in the two countries during the last century has been nearly in proportion to the relative quantity of the customary food awarded to the labourers in each. But their general condition with respect to conveniences and comforts are very far indeed from being in a similar proportion. The great quantity of food which land will bear when planted with potatoes, and the consequent cheapness of the labour supported by them, tends rather to raise than to lower the rents of land, and as far as rent goes, to keep up the price of the materials of manufactures and all other sorts of raw produce, except potatoes. In the raw materials of home manufactures, therefore, a great relative disadvantage will be suffered, and a still greater both in the raw and manufactured produce of foreign countries. The exchangeable value of the food which the Irish labourer earns above what he and his family consume will go but a very little way in the purchase of clothing, lodging and other conveniences; and the consequence is that his condition in these respects

respects is extremely miserable, at the same time that his means of subsistence, such as they are, may be comparatively abundant.

In Ireland the money price of labour is not much more than the half of what it is in England. The quantity of food earned by no means makes up for its deficient value. A certain portion therefore of the Irish labourer's wages (a fourth or a fifth for instance) will go but a very little way in the purchase of manufactures and foreign produce. In America, on the other hand, even the money wages of labour are nearly double those of England. Though the American labourer therefore cannot purchase manufactures and foreign produce with the food that he earns so cheap as the English labourer, yet the greater quantity of this food makes up for its deficiency of relative value. His condition compared with the labouring classes of England, though it may not be so much superior as their relative means of subsistence might indicate, must still on the whole have decidedly the advantage; and altogether, perhaps,

haps, America may be produced as an instance of the agricultural system in which the condition of the labouring classes is the best of any that we know.

The instances where, under the agricultural system, the condition of the lower classes of society is very wretched, are more frequent. When the accumulation of capital stops, whatever may be the cause, the population, before it comes to a stand, will always be pressed on as near to the limits of the actual means of subsistence, as the habits of the lower classes of the society will allow; that is, the real wages of labour will sink, till they are only just sufficient to maintain a stationary population. Should this happen, as it frequently does, while land is still in abundance and capital scarce, the profits of stock will naturally be high; but corn will be very cheap, owing to the goodness and plenty of the land, and the stationary demand for it, notwithstanding the high profits of stock; while these high profits, together with the usual want of skill and proper division of labour, which attend a scanty capital, will render  
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all domestic manufactured commodities comparatively very dear. This state of things will naturally be unfavourable to the generation of those habits of prudential restraint which most frequently arise from the custom of enjoying conveniences and comforts, and it is to be expected that the population will not stop till the wages of labour, estimated even in food, are very low. But in a country where the wages of labour estimated in food are low, and that food is relatively of a very low value, both with regard to domestic and foreign manufactures, the condition of the labouring classes of society must be the worst possible.

Poland, and some parts of Russia, Siberia and European Turkey, afford instances of this kind. In Poland the population seems to be almost stationary or very slowly progressive; and as both the population and produce are scanty, compared with the extent of territory, we may infer with certainty that its capital is scanty, and yet slowly progressive. It follows, therefore, that the demand for labour increases very slowly, and that the real wages of labour, or the

the command of the labouring classes over the necessaries and conveniences of life, are such as to keep the population down to the level of the slowly increasing quantity that is awarded to them. And as from the state of the country the peasantry cannot have been much accustomed to conveniences and comforts, the checks to its population are more likely to be of the positive than of the preventive kind.

Yet here corn is in abundance, and great quantities of it are yearly exported. But it appears clearly that it is not either the power of the country to produce food, or even what it actually produces, that limits and regulates the progress of population, but the quantity which in the actual state of things is awarded to the labourer, and the rate at which the funds so appropriated increase.

In the present case the demand for labour is very small; and though the population is inconsiderable, it is greater than the scanty capital of the country can fully employ; the condition of the labourer therefore is depressed by his being able to  
command

command only such a quantity of food as will maintain a stationary or very slowly increasing population. It is further depressed by the low relative value of the food that he earns, which gives to any surplus he may possess a very small power in the purchase of manufactured commodities or foreign produce.

Under these circumstances, we cannot be surprised that all accounts of Poland should represent the condition of the lower classes of society as extremely miserable; and the other parts of Europe, which resemble Poland in the state of their land and capital, resemble it in the condition of their people.

In justice however to the agricultural system, it should be observed that the premature check to the capital and the demand for labour, which occurs in some of the countries of Europe, while land continues in considerable plenty, is not occasioned by the particular direction of their industry, but by the vices of the government and the structure of the society, which prevent its full and fair development in that direction.

Poland

Poland is continually brought forward as an example of the miserable effects of the agricultural system. But nothing surely can be less fair. The misery of Poland does not arise from its directing its industry chiefly to agriculture, but from the little encouragement given to industry of any kind, owing to the state of property and the servile condition of the people. While the land is cultivated by boors, the produce of whose exertions belongs entirely to their masters, and the whole society consists mainly of these degraded beings and the lords and owners of great tracts of territory, there will evidently be no class of persons possessed of the means either of furnishing an adequate demand at home for the surplus produce of the soil, or of accumulating fresh capital and increasing the demand for labour. In this miserable state of things, the best remedy would unquestionably be the introduction of manufactures and commerce; because the introduction of manufactures and commerce could alone liberate the mass of the people from slavery and give the necessary stimulus to industry and accumulation. But were the people already free and industrious, and landed property easily

easily divisible and alienable, it might still answer to such a country as Poland to purchase its finer manufactures from foreign countries by means of its raw products, and thus to continue essentially agricultural, for many years. Under these new circumstances however, it would present a totally different picture from that which it exhibits at present; and the condition of the people would more resemble that of the inhabitants of the United States of America than of the inhabitants of the unimproved countries of Europe. Indeed America is perhaps the only modern instance of the fair operation of the agricultural system. In every country of Europe, and in most of its colonies in other parts of the world, formidable obstacles still exist to the employment of capital upon the land, arising from the remains of the feudal system. But these obstacles which have essentially impeded cultivation have been very far indeed from proportionably encouraging other branches of industry. Commerce and manufactures are necessary to agriculture; but agriculture is still more necessary to commerce and manufactures. It must



must ever be true that the surplus produce of the cultivators, taken in its most enlarged sense, measures and limits the growth of that part of the society which is not employed upon the land. Throughout the whole world the number of manufacturers, of merchants, of proprietors and of persons engaged in the various civil and military professions, must be exactly proportioned to this surplus produce, and cannot in the nature of things increase beyond it. If the earth had been so niggardly of her produce as to oblige all her inhabitants to labour for it, no manufacturers or idle persons could ever have existed. But her first intercourse with man was a voluntary present, not very large indeed, but sufficient as a fund for his subsistence till he could procure a greater. And the power to procure a greater was given to him in that quality of the earth by which it may be made to yield a much larger quantity of food, and of the materials of clothing and lodging, than is necessary to feed, clothe and lodge the persons employed in the cultivation of the soil. This quality is the foundation of that  
surplus

surplus produce which peculiarly distinguishes the industry employed upon the land. In proportion as the labour and ingenuity of man exercised upon the land have increased this surplus produce, leisure has been given to a greater number of persons to employ themselves in all the inventions which embellish civilized life; while the desire to profit by these inventions has continued to stimulate the cultivators to increase their surplus produce. This desire indeed may be considered as almost absolutely necessary to give it its proper value, and to encourage its further extension; but still the order of precedence is, strictly speaking, the surplus produce; because the funds for the subsistence of the manufacturer must be advanced to him before he can complete his work; and no step can be taken in any other sort of industry unless the cultivators obtain from the soil more than they themselves consume.

If in asserting the peculiar productiveness of the labour employed upon the land, we look only to the clear monied rent yielded to a certain number of proprietors, we undoubtedly

doubtedly consider the subject in a very contracted point of view. In the advanced stages of society, this rent forms indeed the most prominent portion of the surplus produce here meant; but it may exist equally in the shape of high wages and profits during the earlier periods of cultivation, when there is little or no rent. The labourer who earns a value equal to fifteen quarters of corn in the year may have only a family of three or four children, and not consume in kind above five or six quarters; and the owner of the farming stock, which yields high profits, may consume but a very moderate proportion of them in food and raw materials. All the rest, whether in the shape of wages and profits, or of rents, may be considered as a surplus produce from the soil, which affords the means of subsistence and the materials of clothing and lodging to a certain number of people according to its extent, some of whom may live without manual exertions, and others employ themselves in modifying the raw materials obtained from the earth into  
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the forms best suited to the gratification of man.

It will depend of course entirely upon its answering to a country to exchange a part of the surplus produce for foreign commodities, instead of consuming it at home, whether it is to be considered as mainly agricultural or otherwise. And such an exchange of raw produce for manufactures, or peculiar foreign products, may for a period of some extent suit a state, which might resemble Poland in scarcely any other feature but that of exporting corn.

It appears then, that countries in which the industry of the inhabitants is principally directed towards the land, and in which corn continues to be exported, may enjoy great abundance or experience great want, according to the particular circumstances in which they are placed. They will in general not be much exposed to the temporary evils of scarcity arising from the variations of the seasons; but the quantity of food permanently awarded to the labourer

bourer may be such as not to allow of an increase of population ; and their state, in respect to their being progressive, stationary or declining, will depend upon other causes than that of directing their attention principally to agriculture.

## CHAP. IX.

*Of the Commercial System.*

A COUNTRY which excels in commerce and manufactures, may purchase corn from a great variety of others; and it may be supposed, perhaps, that, proceeding upon this system, it may continue to purchase an increasing quantity, and to maintain a rapidly increasing population, till the lands of all the nations with which it trades are fully cultivated. As this is an event necessarily at a great distance, it may appear that the population of such a country will not be checked from the difficulty of procuring subsistence till after the lapse of a great number of ages.

There are, however, causes constantly in operation, which will occasion the pressure of this difficulty, long before the event here contemplated has taken place, and while the means of raising food in the surrounding countries

countries may still be comparatively abundant.

In the first place, advantages which depend exclusively upon capital and skill, and the present possession of particular channels of commerce, cannot in their nature be permanent. We know how difficult it is to confine improvements in machinery to a single spot; we know that it is the constant object, both of individuals and countries, to increase their capital; and we know, from the past history of commercial states, that the channels of trade are not unfrequently taking a different direction. It is unreasonable therefore to expect that any one country, merely by the force of skill and capital, should remain in possession of markets uninterrupted by foreign competition. But, when a powerful foreign competition takes place, the exportable commodities of the country in question must soon fall to prices which will essentially reduce profits; and the fall of profits will diminish both the power and the will to save. Under these circumstances the accumulation of capital will be

slow, and the demand for labour proportionably slow, till it comes nearly to a stand; while, perhaps, the new competitors, either by raising their own raw materials or by some other advantages, may still be increasing their capitals and population with some degree of rapidity.

But, secondly, even if it were possible for a considerable time to exclude any formidable foreign competition, it is found that domestic competition produces almost unavoidably the same effects. If a machine be invented in a particular country, by the aid of which one man can do the work of ten, the possessors of it will of course at first make very unusual profits; but, as soon as the invention is generally known, so much capital and industry will be brought into this new and profitable employment, as to make its products greatly exceed both the foreign and domestic demand at the old prices. These prices, therefore, will continue to fall, till the stock and labour employed in this direction cease to yield unusual profits. In this case it is evident that; though in an early period  
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of such a manufacture, the product of the industry of one man for a day might have been exchanged for such a portion of food as would support forty or fifty persons; yet, at a subsequent period, the product of the same industry might not purchase the support of ten.

In the cotton trade of this country, which has extended itself so wonderfully during the last twenty-five years, very little effect has hitherto been produced by foreign competition<sup>a</sup>. The very great fall which has taken place in the prices of cotton goods has been almost exclusively owing to domestic competition; and this competition has so glutted both the home and foreign markets, that the present capitals employed in the trade, notwithstanding the very peculiar advantages which they possess from the saving of labour, have ceased to possess any advantage whatever in the general rate of their profits. Although, by means of the admirable machinery used in the spinning of cotton, one boy or girl can now do as much as many grown persons could do

<sup>a</sup> 1816.

formerly

formerly ; yet neither the wages of the labourer, nor the profits of his master, are higher than in those employments where no machinery is used, and no saving of labour accomplished.

The country has, however, in the mean time, been very greatly benefitted. Not only have all its inhabitants been enabled to obtain a superior fabric for clothing, at a less expense of labour and property, which must be considered as a great and permanent advantage ; but the high temporary profits of the trade have occasioned a great accumulation of capital, and consequently a great demand for labour ; while the extending markets abroad and the new values thrown into the market at home, have created such a demand for the products of every species of industry, agricultural and colonial, as well as commercial and manufacturing, as to prevent a fall of profits.

This country, from the extent of its lands, and its rich colonial possessions, has a large *arena* for the employment of an increasing capital ; and the general rate of its profits are not as it appears, very easily and rapidly reduced

reduced by accumulation. But a country, such as we are considering, engaged principally in manufactures, and unable to direct its industry to the same variety of pursuits, would sooner find its rate of profits diminished by an increase of capital, and no ingenuity in machinery could save it, after a certain period, from low profits and low wages, and their natural consequences, a check to population.

Thirdly, a country which is obliged to purchase both the raw materials of its manufactures and the means of subsistence for its population from foreign countries, is almost entirely dependent for the increase of its wealth and population on the increasing wealth and demands of the countries with which it trades.

It has been sometimes said—that a manufacturing country is no more dependent upon the country which supplies it with food and raw materials, than the agricultural country is on that which manufactures for it; but this is really an abuse of terms. A country with great resources in land may find it decidedly for its advantage to employ

ploy the main part of its capital in cultivation and to import its manufactures. In so doing, it will often employ the whole of its industry most productively, and most rapidly increase its stock. But, if the slackness of its neighbours in manufacturing, or any other cause, should either considerably check or altogether prevent the importation of manufactures, a country with food and raw materials provided at home cannot be long at a loss. For a time it would not certainly be so well supplied; but manufacturers and artisans would soon be found, and would soon acquire tolerable skill<sup>a</sup>; and though the capital and population of the country might not, under the new circumstances in which it was placed, increase so rapidly as before, it would still have the power of increasing in both to a great and almost undefinable extent.

On the other hand, if food and raw materials were denied to a nation merely manufacturing, it is obvious that it could not longer exist. But not only does the ab-

This has been fully exemplified in America (1816).

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solute existence of such a nation, on an extreme supposition, depend upon its foreign commerce, but its progress in wealth must be almost entirely measured by the progress and demand of the countries which deal with it. However skilful, industrious and saving such a nation might be, if its customers, from indolence and want of accumulation, would not or could not take off a yearly increasing value of its commodities, the effects of its skill and machinery would be but of very short duration.

That the cheapness of manufactured commodities, occasioned by skill and machinery in one country, is calculated to encourage an increase of raw produce in others, no person can doubt ; but we know at the same time that high profits may continue for a considerable period in an indolent and ill-governed state, without producing an increase of wealth ; yet, unless such an increase of wealth and demand were produced in the surrounding countries, the increasing ingenuity and exertions of the manufacturing and commercial state would be lost in continually falling prices.

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It would not only be obliged, as its skill and capital increased, to give a larger quantity of manufactured produce for the raw produce which it received in return ; but it might be unable, even with the temptation of reduced prices, to stimulate its customers to such purchases as would allow of an increasing importation of food and raw materials ; and without such an increasing importation, it is quite obvious that the population must become stationary.

It would come to the same thing, whether this inability to obtain an increasing quantity of food were occasioned by the advancing money price of corn or the falling money price of manufactures. In either case the effect would be the same ; and it is certain that this effect might take place in either way, from increasing competition and accumulation in the manufacturing nation, and the want of them in the agricultural, long before any essential increase of difficulty had occurred in the production of corn.

Fourthly. A nation which is obliged to purchase from others nearly the whole of  
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its raw materials, and the means of its subsistence, is not only dependent entirely upon the demands of its customers, as they may be variously affected by indolence, industry or caprice, but it is subjected to a necessary and unavoidable diminution of demand in the natural progress of these countries towards that proportion of skill and capital which they may reasonably be expected after a certain time to possess. It is generally an accidental and temporary, not a natural and permanent, division of labour, which constitutes one state the manufacturer and the carrier of others. While, in these landed nations, agricultural profits continue very high, it may fully answer to them to pay others as their manufacturers and carriers; but when the profits on land fall, or the tenures on which it can be held are not such as to encourage the investment of an accumulating capital, the owner of this capital will naturally look towards commerce and manufactures for its employment; and, according to the just reasoning of Adam Smith and the Economists, finding at home both the materials  
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of manufactures, the means of subsistence, and the power of carrying on their own trade with foreign countries, they will probably be able to conduct the business of manufacturing and carrying for themselves at a cheaper rate than if they allowed it to continue in the hands of others. As long as the agricultural nations continued to apply their increasing capital principally to the land, this increase of capital would be of the greatest possible advantage to the manufacturing and commercial nation. It would be indeed the main cause and great regulator of its progress in wealth and population. But after they had turned their attention to manufactures and commerce, their further increase of capital would be the signal of decay and destruction to the manufactures and commerce which they had before supported. And thus, in the natural progress of national improvement, and without the competition of superior skill and capital, a purely commercial state must be undersold and driven out of the markets by those who possess the advantage of land.

In the distribution of wealth during the  
progress



progress of improvement, the interests of an independent state are essentially different from those of a province, a point which has not been sufficiently attended to. If agricultural capital increases and agricultural profits diminish in Sussex, the overflowing stock will go to London, Manchester, Liverpool, or some other place where it can probably be engaged in manufactures or commerce more advantageously than at home. But if Sussex were an independent kingdom, this could not take place; and the corn which is now sent to London must be withdrawn to support manufacturers and traders living within its confines. If England therefore had continued to be separated into the seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy, London could not possibly have been what it is; and that distribution of wealth and population which takes place at present, and which we may fairly presume is the most beneficial to the whole of the realm, would have been essentially changed, if the object had been to accumulate the greatest quantity of wealth and population in particular districts instead

stead of the whole island. But at all times the interest of each independent state is to accumulate the greatest quantity of wealth within its limits. Consequently, the interest of an independent state, with regard to the countries with which it trades, can rarely be the same as the interest of a province with regard to the empire to which it belongs; and the accumulation of capital which would occasion the withdrawing of the exports of corn in the one case, would leave them perfectly undisturbed in the other.

If, from the operation of one or more of the causes above enumerated, the importation of corn into a manufacturing and commercial country should be essentially checked, and should either actually decrease, or be prevented from increasing, it is quite evident that its population must be checked nearly in the same proportion.

Venice presents a striking instance of a commercial state, at once stopped in its progress to wealth and population by foreign competition. The discovery made by the Portuguese of a passage to India by the  
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the Cape of Good Hope completely turned the channel of the Indian trade. The high profits of the Venetians, which had been the foundation of their rapidly increasing wealth and of their extraordinary preponderance as a naval and commercial power, were not only suddenly reduced; but the trade itself, on which these high profits had been made, was almost annihilated, and their power and wealth were shortly contracted to those more confined limits which suited their natural resources.

In the middle of the 15th century, Bruges in Flanders was the great *entrepôt* of the trade between the north and the south of Europe. Early in the 16th century its commerce began to decline under the competition of Antwerp. Many English and foreign merchants in consequence left the declining city, to settle in that which was rapidly increasing in commerce and wealth. About the middle of the 16th century Antwerp was at the zenith of its power. It contained above a hundred thousand inhabitants, and was universally allowed to be the most illustrious mercantile city, and to carry

carry on the most extensive and richest commerce, of any in the north of Europe.

The rising greatness of Amsterdam was favoured by the unfortunate siege and capture of Antwerp by the duke of Parma; and the competition of the extraordinary industry and persevering exertions of the Hollanders not only prevented Antwerp from recovering her commerce, but gave a severe blow to the foreign trade of almost all the other Hanse Towns.

The subsequent decline of the trade of Amsterdam itself was caused partly by the low profits arising from home competition and abundance of capital; partly by excessive taxation, which raised the price of the necessaries of life; but more than either perhaps, by the progress of other nations possessing greater natural advantages, and being able, even with inferior skill, industry and capital, beneficially to carry on much of that trade which had before fallen almost exclusively into the hands of the Dutch.

As early as 1669 and 1670, when Sir William Temple was in Holland, the effects of abundance of capital and domestic competition

petition were such, that most of the foreign trades were losing ones, except the Indian, and that none of them gave a profit of more than two or three per cent<sup>a</sup>. In such a state of things both the power and the will to save must be greatly diminished. The accumulation of capital must have been either stationary or declining, or at the best very slowly progressive. In fact, Sir William Temple gives it as his opinion that the trade of Holland had for some years passed its meridian, and begun sensibly to decay<sup>b</sup>. Subsequently, when the progress of other nations was still more marked, it appeared from undoubted documents that most of the trades of Holland, as well as its fisheries, had decidedly fallen off, and that no branch of its commerce had retained its former vigour, except the American and African trades, and that of the Rhine and Maese, which are independent of foreign power and competition.

In 1669, the whole population of Holland and West Friesland was estimated by John de Witt at 2,400,000<sup>c</sup>. In 1778, the

<sup>a</sup> Temple's Works, vol. i. p. 69, fol.      <sup>b</sup> Id. p. 67.

<sup>c</sup> Interest of Holland, vol. i. p. 9.

population of the seven provinces was estimated only at 2,000,000<sup>a</sup>; and thus, in the course of above a hundred years, the population, instead of increasing, as is usual, had greatly diminished.

In all these cases of commercial states, the progress of wealth and population seems to have been checked by one or more of the causes above mentioned, which must necessarily affect more or less the power of commanding the means of subsistence.

Universally it may be observed, that if, from any cause or causes whatever, the funds for the maintenance of labour in any country cease to be progressive, the effective demand for labour will also cease to be progressive; and wages will be reduced to that sum, which, under the existing prices of provisions, and the existing habits of the people, will just keep up, and no more than keep up, a stationary population. A state so circumstanced is under a moral impossibility of increasing, whatever may be the plenty of corn, or however high may be the profits

<sup>a</sup> *Richesse de la Hollande*, vol. ii. p. 349.

of stock in other countries<sup>a</sup>. It may indeed at a subsequent period, and under new circumstances, begin to increase again. If by some happy invention in mechanics, the discovery of some new channel of trade, or an unusual increase of agricultural wealth and population in the surrounding countries, its exports, of whatever kind, were to become unusually in demand, it might again import an increasing quantity of corn, and might again increase its population. But as long as it is unable to make yearly additions to its imports of food, it will evidently be unable to furnish the means of support to an increasing population; and it will necessarily experience this inability, when, from the state of its commercial transactions, the funds for the maintenance of its labour become stationary, or begin to decline.

<sup>a</sup> It is a curious fact, that among the causes of the decline of the Dutch trade, Sir William Temple reckons the cheapness of corn, which, he says, "has been for these dozen years, or more, general in these parts of Europe." (vol. i. p. 69.) This cheapness, he says, impeded the vent of spices and other Indian commodities among the Baltic nations, by diminishing their power of purchasing.

## CHAP. X.

*Of Systems of Agriculture and Commerce combined.*

IN a country the most exclusively confined to agriculture, some of its raw materials will always be worked up for domestic use. In the most commercial state, not absolutely confined to the walls of a town, some part of the food of its inhabitants, or of its cattle, will be drawn from the small territory in its neighbourhood. But, in speaking of systems of agriculture and commerce combined, something much further than this kind of combination is intended; and it is meant to refer to countries, where the resources in land, and the capitals employed in commerce and manufactures, are both considerable, and neither preponderating greatly over the other.

A country so circumstanced possesses the advantages of both systems, while at the same time it is free from the peculiar evils



evils which belong to each, taken separately.

The prosperity of manufactures and commerce in any state implies at once that it has freed itself from the worst parts of the feudal system. It shews that the great body of the people are not in a state of servitude ; that they have both the power and the will to save ; that when capital accumulates it can find the means of secure employment, and consequently that the government is such as to afford the necessary protection to property. Under these circumstances, it is scarcely possible that it should ever experience that premature stagnation in the demand for labour, and the produce of the soil, which at times has marked the history of most of the nations of Europe. In a country in which manufactures and commerce flourish, the produce of the soil will always find a ready market at home ; and such a market is peculiarly favourable to the progressive increase of capital. But the progressive increase of capital, and of the funds for the maintenance of labour, is the great cause  
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of a demand for labour, and of high corn wages, while the high relative price of corn, occasioned by the improved machinery and extended capital employed in manufactures, together with the prosperity of foreign commerce, enables the labourer to exchange any given portion of his earnings in corn for a large proportion both of domestic and foreign conveniences and luxuries. Even when the effective demand for labour begins to slacken, and the corn wages to be reduced, still the high relative value of corn keeps up comparatively the condition of the labouring classes; and though their increase is checked, yet a very considerable body of them may still be well lodged and well cloathed, and able to indulge themselves in the conveniences and luxuries of foreign produce. Nor can they ever be reduced to the miserable condition of the poor in those countries, where, at the same time that the demand for labour is stationary, the value of corn, compared with manufactures and foreign commodities, is extremely low.

All the peculiar disadvantages therefore  
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of a purely agricultural country are avoided by the growth and prosperity of manufactures and commerce.

In the same manner it will be found that the peculiar disadvantages attending states merely manufacturing and commercial will be avoided by the possession of resources in land.

A country which raises its own food cannot by any sort of foreign competition be reduced at once to a necessarily declining population. If the exports of a merely commercial country be essentially diminished by foreign competition, it may lose, in a very short time, its power of supporting the same number of people ; but if the exports of a country which has resources in land be diminished, it will merely lose some of its foreign conveniences and luxuries ; and the great and most important of all trades, the domestic trade carried on between the towns and the country, will remain comparatively undisturbed. It may indeed be checked in the rate of its progress for a time by the want of the same stimulus ; but there is no reason for its becoming retrograde ;

grade ; and there is no doubt that the capital thrown out of employment by the loss of foreign trade will not lie idle. It will find some channel in which it can be employed with advantage, though not with the same advantage as before ; and will be able to maintain an increasing population, though not increasing at the same rate as under the stimulus of a prosperous foreign trade.

The effects of home competition will in like manner be very different in the two states we are comparing.

In a state merely manufacturing and commercial, home competition and abundance of capital may so reduce the price of manufactured compared with raw produce, that the increased capital employed in manufactures may not procure in exchange an increased quantity of food. In a country where there are resources in land this cannot happen ; and though from improvements in machinery and the decreasing fertility of the new land taken into cultivation, a greater quantity of manufactures will be given for raw produce, yet the mass of manufactures can never fall in value,  
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owing to a competition of capital in this species of industry, unaccompanied by a correspondent competition of capital on land.

It should also be observed that in a state, the revenue of which consists solely in profits and wages, the diminution of profits and wages may greatly impair its disposable income. The increase in the amount of capital and in the number of labourers may in many cases not be sufficient to make up for the diminished rate of profits and wages. But where the revenue of the country consists of rents as well as profits and wages, a great part of what is lost in profits and wages is gained in rents, and the disposable income remains comparatively unimpaired.

Another eminent advantage possessed by a nation which is rich in land, as well as in commerce and manufactures, is, that the progress of its wealth and population is in a comparatively slight degree dependent upon the state and progress of other countries. A nation, whose wealth depends exclusively on manufactures and commerce, cannot increase without an increase in the raw products of the countries with which it trades ;

or

or taking away a share of what they have been in the habit of actually consuming, which will rarely be parted with ; and thus the ignorance and indolence of others may not only be prejudicial, but fatal to its progress.

A country with resources in land can never be exposed to these inconveniences ; and if its industry, ingenuity and economy increase, its wealth and population will increase, whatever may be the situation and conduct of the nations with which it trades. When its manufacturing capital becomes redundant, and manufactured commodities are too cheap, it will have no occasion to wait for the increasing raw products of its neighbours. The transfer of its own redundant capital to its own land will raise fresh products, against which its manufactures may be exchanged, and by the double operation of diminishing comparatively the supply, and increasing the demand, enhance their price. A similar operation, when raw produce is too abundant, will restore the level between the profits of agriculture and manufactures. And upon  
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the same principle the stock of the country will be distributed through its various and distant provinces, according to the advantages presented by each situation for the employment, either of agricultural or manufacturing capital.

A country, in which in this manner agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, and all the different parts of a large territory, act and re-act upon each other in turn, might evidently go on increasing in riches and strength, although surrounded by Bishop Berkely's wall of brass. Such a country would naturally make the most of its foreign commerce, whatever might be the actual state of it; and its increase or decrease would be the addition or removal of a powerful stimulus to its own produce; but still the increase of this produce, to a very considerable extent, would be independent of foreign countries; and though it might be retarded by a failure of foreign commerce, it could not either be stopped or be made retrograde.

A fourth advantage derived from the union of agriculture and manufactures, particularly

particularly when they are nearly balanced, is that the capital and population of such a country can never be forced to make a retrograde movement, merely by the natural progress of other countries to that state of improvement to which they are all constantly tending.

According to all general principles, it will finally answer to most landed nations, both to manufacture for themselves, and to conduct their own commerce. That raw cottons should be shipped in America, carried some thousands of miles to another country, unshipped there, to be manufactured and shipped again for the American market, is a state of things which cannot be permanent. That it may last for some time, there can be no doubt; and I am very far from meaning to insinuate that an advantage, while it lasts, should not be used, merely because it will not continue for ever. But if the advantage be in its nature temporary, it is surely prudent to have this in view, and to use it in such a way, that when it ceases, it may not have been productive, on the whole, of more evil than good.

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If a country, owing to temporary advantages of this kind, should have its commerce and manufactures so greatly preponderate as to make it necessary to support a large portion of its people on foreign corn, it is certain that the progressive improvement of foreign countries in manufactures and commerce might, after a time, subject it to a period of poverty and of retrograde movements in capital and population, which might more than counterbalance the temporary benefits before enjoyed. While a nation in which the commercial and manufacturing population continued to be supported by its agriculture, might receive a very considerable stimulus to both, from such temporary advantages, without being exposed to any essential evil on their ceasing.

The countries which thus unite great landed resources with a prosperous state of commerce and manufactures, and in which the commercial part of the population never essentially exceeds the agricultural part, are eminently secure from sudden reverses. Their increasing wealth seems to be

be out of the reach of all common accidents ; and there is no reason to say that they might not go on increasing in riches and population for hundreds, nay almost thousands of years.

We must not however imagine that there is no limit to this progress though it is distant, and has certainly not been attained by any large landed nation yet known.

We have already seen that the limit to the population of commercial nations is the period when, from the actual state of foreign markets, they are unable regularly to import an increasing quantity of food. And the limit to the population of a nation which raises the whole of its food on its own territory is, when the land has been so fully occupied and worked, that the employment of another labourer on it will not on an average raise an additional quantity of food sufficient to support a family of such a size as will admit of an increase of population.

This is evidently the extreme practical limit to the progress of population, which no nation has ever yet reached, nor indeed ever will ; since no allowance has been here  
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made either for other necessities besides food, or for the profits of stock, both of which, however low, must always be something not inconsiderable.

Yet even this limit is very far short of what the earth is capable of producing, if all were employed upon it who were not employed in the production of other necessities; that is, if soldiers, sailors, menial servants and all the artificers of luxuries, were made to labour upon the land. They would not indeed produce the support of a family, and ultimately not even of themselves; but till the earth absolutely refused to yield any more, they would continue to add something to the common stock; and by increasing the means of subsistence, would afford the means of supporting an increasing population. The whole people of a country might thus be employed during their whole time in the production of mere necessities, and no leisure be left for other pursuits of any kind. But this state of things could only be effected by the forced direction of the national industry into one channel by public authority. Upon the  
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the principle of private property, which it may be fairly presumed will always prevail in society, it could never happen. With a view to the individual interest either of a landlord or farmer, no labourer can ever be employed on the soil, who does not produce more than the value of his wages ; and if these wages be not on an average sufficient to maintain a wife, and rear two children to the age of marriage, it is evident that both the population and produce must come to a stand. Consequently, at the most extreme practical limit of population, the state of the land must be such as to enable the last employed labourers to produce the maintenance of as many, probably, as four persons.

And it is happy for mankind that such are the laws of nature. If the competition for the necessaries of life, in the progress of population, could reduce the whole human race to the necessity of incessant labour for them, man would be continually tending to a state of degradation ; and all the improvements which had marked the middle stages of his career would be completely

pletely lost at the end of it; but in reality, and according to the universal principle of private property, at the period when it will cease to answer to employ more labour upon the land, the excess of raw produce, not actually consumed by the cultivators, will, in the shape of rents, profits, and wages, particularly the first, bear nearly as great a proportion to the whole as at any previous period, and, at all events, sufficient to support a large part of the society living either without manual labour, or employing themselves in modifying the raw materials of the land into the forms best suited to the gratification of man.

When we refer therefore to the practical limits of population, it is of great importance to recollect that they must be always very far short of the utmost power of the earth to produce food.

It is also of great importance to recollect that long before this practical limit is attained in any country the rate of the increase of population will gradually diminish. When the capital of a country becomes stationary from bad government, indolence,

extravagance, or a sudden shock to commerce, it is just possible that the check to population may in some degree be sudden, though in that case it cannot take place without a considerable convulsion. But when the capital of a country comes to a stop from the continued progress of accumulation and the exhaustion of the cultivable land, both the profits of stock and the wages of labour must have been gradually diminishing for a long period, till they are both ultimately so low as to afford no further encouragement to an increase of stock, and no further means for the support of an increasing population. If we could suppose that the capital employed upon the land was at all times as great as could possibly be applied with the same profit, and there were no agricultural improvements to save labour, it is obvious that, as accumulation proceeded, profits and wages would regularly fall, and the diminished rate in the progress of population would be quite regular. But practically this can never happen; and various causes, both natural and artificial, will concur to prevent this regularity,

gularity, and occasion great variations at different times in the rate at which the population proceeds towards its final limit.

In the first place, land is practically almost always understocked with capital. This arises partly, from the usual tenures on which farms are held, which, by discouraging the transfer of capital from commerce and manufactures, leaves it principally to be generated on the land; and partly, from the very nature of much of the soil of almost all large countries, which is such that the employment of a small capital upon it may be little productive, while the employment of a large capital in draining, or in changing the character of the soil by a sufficient quantity of natural and artificial manures, may be productive in a high degree; and partly also, from the circumstance that after every fall of profits and wages there will often be room for the employment of a much greater capital upon the land than is at the command of those, who, by being in the actual occupation of farms, can alone so employ it.

Secondly; improvements in agriculture.

If new and superior modes of cultivation be invented, by which not only the land is better managed, but is worked with less labour, it is obvious that inferior land may be cultivated at higher profits than could be obtained from richer land before; and an improved system of culture, with the use of better instruments, may for a long period more than counterbalance the tendency of an extended cultivation and a great increase of capital to yield smaller proportionate returns.

Thirdly; improvements in manufactures. When by increased skill and the invention of improved machinery in manufactures one man becomes capable of doing as much as eight or ten could before, it is well known that, from the principle of home competition and the consequent great increase of quantity, the prices of such manufactures will greatly fall; and, as far as they include the necessities and accustomed conveniences of labourers and farmers, they must tend to diminish that portion of the value of the whole produce which is consumed necessarily on the land, and leave a larger remainder.



mainder. From this larger remainder may be drawn a higher rate of profits, notwithstanding the increase of capital and extension of cultivation.

Fourthly ; the prosperity of foreign commerce. If from a prosperous foreign commerce our labour and domestic commodities rise considerably in price, while foreign commodities are advanced comparatively very little, an event which is very common, it is evident that the farmer or labourer will be able to obtain the tea, sugar, cottons, linens, leather, tallow, timber, &c., which he stands in need of, for a smaller quantity of corn or labour than before ; and this increased power of purchasing foreign commodities will have precisely the same effect, in allowing the means of an extended cultivation without a fall of profits, as the improvements in manufactures just referred to.

Fifthly ; a temporary increase in the relative price of raw produce from increased demand. Allowing, what is certainly not true, that a rise in the price of raw produce, will after a certain number of years,

years, occasion a proportionate rise in labour<sup>a</sup> and other commodities, yet, during the time that the price of raw produce takes the lead, it is obvious that the profits of cultivation may increase under an extended agriculture, and a continued accumulation of capital. And these intervals, it should be observed, must be of infinite importance in the progress of the wealth of a landed nation, particularly with reference to the causes of deficient capital upon the land before mentioned. If the land for the most part generates the new capital which is employed in extending its cultivation; and if the employment of a considerable capital for a certain period will often put land in such a state, that it can be cultivated afterwards at comparatively little expense; a period of high agricultural profits, though it may last only

\* A rise, which is occasioned exclusively by the increased quantity of labour which may be required in the progress of society to raise a given quantity of corn on the last land taken into cultivation, must of course be peculiar to raw produce, and will not be communicated to those commodities, in the production of which there is no increase of labour.

eight or ten years, may often be the means of giving to a country what is equivalent to a fresh quantity of land.

Though it is unquestionably and necessarily true, therefore, that the *tendency* of a continually increasing capital and extending cultivation is to occasion a progressive fall both of profits and wages ; yet the causes above enumerated are evidently sufficient to account for great and long irregularities in this progress.

We see in consequence, in all the states of Europe, great variations at different periods in the progress of their capital and population. After slumbering for years in a state almost stationary, some countries have made a sudden start, and have begun increasing at a rate almost approaching to new colonies. Russia and parts of Prussia have afforded instances of this kind, and have continued this rate of progress after the accumulation of capital and the extension of cultivation had been proceeding with great rapidity for many years.

From the operation of the same causes

we

we have seen similar variations in our own country. About the middle of last century the interest of money was at 3 per cent. ; and we may conclude that the profits of stock were nearly in proportion. At that time, as far as can be collected from the births and marriages, the population was increasing but slowly. From 1720 to 1750, a period of 30 years, the increase is calculated to have been only about 900,000 on a population of 5,565,000<sup>a</sup>. Since this period it cannot be doubted that the capital of the country has been prodigiously enlarged, and its cultivation very greatly extended ; yet, during the last twenty years, we have seen the interest of money at above 5 per cent., with profits in proportion ; and, from 1800 to 1811, an increase of population equal to 1,200,000 on 9,287,000, a rate of increase about two and a half times as great as at the former period.

But, notwithstanding these causes of irregularity in the progress of capital and population, it is quite certain that they can-

<sup>a</sup> Population Abstracts, Preliminary Observations, table, p. xxv.

not reach their necessary practical limit but by a very gradual process. Before the accumulation of capital comes to a stop from *necessity*, the profits of stock must for a long time have been so low as to afford scarcely any encouragement to an excess of saving above expenditure; and before the progress of population is finally stopped, the real wages of labour must have been gradually diminishing, till, under the existing habits of the people, they could only support such families as would just keep up, and no more than keep up, the actual population.

It appears then, that it is the union of the agricultural and commercial systems, and not either of them taken separately, that is calculated to produce the greatest national prosperity; that a country with an extensive and rich territory, the cultivation of which is stimulated by improvements in agriculture, manufactures and foreign commerce, has such various and abundant resources, that it is extremely difficult to say when they will reach their limits. That there is, however, a limit which, if the capital and population of a country

country continue increasing, they must ultimately reach, and cannot pass; and that this limit, upon the principle of private property, must be far short of the utmost power of the earth to produce food.

## CHAP. XI.

*Of Corn-Laws. Bounties upon Exportation.*

IT has been observed that some countries, with great resources in land, and an evident power of supporting a greatly increased population from their own soil, have yet been in the habit of importing large quantities of foreign corn, and have become dependent upon other states for a great part of their supplies.

The causes which may lead to this state of things seem to be chiefly the following :

First; any obstacles which the laws, constitutions and customs of a country present to the accumulation of capital on the land, which do not apply with equal force to the increasing employment of capital in commerce and manufactures.

In every state in which the feudal system has prevailed, there are laws and customs of this kind, which prevent the free division and alienation of land like other property,

perty, and render the preparations for an extension of cultivation often both very difficult and very expensive. Improvements in such countries are chiefly carried on by tenants, a large part of whom have not leases, or at least leases of any length; and though their wealth and respectability have of late years very greatly increased, yet it is not possible to put them on a footing with enterprising owners, and to give them the same independence, and the same encouragement to employ their capitals with spirit, as merchants and manufacturers.

Secondly; a system of direct or indirect taxation, of such a nature as to throw a weight upon the agriculture of a country, which is either unequal, or, from peculiar circumstances, can be better borne by commerce and manufactures.

It is universally allowed that a direct tax on corn grown at home, if not counterbalanced by a corresponding tax on the importation of it, might be such as to destroy at once the cultivation of grain, and make a country import the whole of its consumption; and a partial effect of the  
same



same kind would follow, if, by a system of indirect taxation, the general price of labour were raised and yet by means of drawbacks on home and foreign commodities, by an abundance of colonial produce, and by those peculiar articles<sup>a</sup>, the demand for which abroad would not be much affected by the increase of price, the value of the whole of the exports, though not the quantity, might admit of increase.

Thirdly ; improved machinery, combined with extensive capital and a very advantageous division of labour.

If in any country, by means of capital and machinery, one man be enabled to do the work of ten, it is quite obvious that before the same advantages are extended to other countries, a rise in the price of labour will but very little interfere with the power of selling those sorts of commodities, in the production of which the capital and machinery are so effectively applied. It is quite true that an advance in the necessary wages of labour, which increases the ex-

<sup>a</sup> A rise in the price of labour in China would certainly increase the returns which it receives for its teas.

pense of raising corn, may have the same effect upon many commodities besides corn ; and if there were no others, no encouragement would be given to the importation of foreign grain, as there might be no means by which it could be purchased cheaper abroad. But a large class of the exportable commodities of a commercial country are of a different description. They are either articles in a considerable degree peculiar to the country and its dependencies, or such as have been produced by superior capital and machinery, the prices of which are determined rather by domestic than foreign competition. All commodities of this kind will evidently be able to support without essential injury an advance in the price of labour, some permanently, and others for a considerable time. The rise in the price of the commodity so occasioned, or rather the prevention of that fall which would otherwise have taken place, may always indeed have the effect of decreasing in some degree the *quantity* of the commodity exported ; but it by no means follows that it will diminish the whole of its bullion value in the foreign country, which is precisely .

precisely what determines the bullion value, and generally the quantity of the returns. If cottons in this country were now to fall to half their present price, we should undoubtedly export a greater quantity than we do at present ; but I very much doubt whether we should export double the quantity, and yet we must do this to enable us to command as much foreign produce as before. In this case, as in numerous others of the same kind, quantity and value go together to a certain point, though not at an equal pace ; but, beyond this point, a further increase of quantity only diminishes the whole value produced, and the amount of the returns that can be obtained for it.

It is obvious then that a country, notwithstanding a high comparative price of labour and of materials, may easily stand a competition with foreigners in those commodities to which it can apply a superior capital and machinery with great effect ; although such a price of labour and materials might give an undisputed advantage to foreigners in agriculture and some other sorts of produce, where the same saving of labour

labour cannot take place. Consequently such a country may find it cheaper to purchase a considerable part of its supplies of grain from abroad with its manufactures and peculiar products, than to grow the whole at home.

If, from all or any of these causes, a nation becomes habitually dependent on foreign countries for the support of a considerable portion of its population, it must evidently be subjected, while such dependence lasts, to some of those evils which belong to a nation purely manufacturing and commercial. In one respect, indeed, it will still continue to have a great superiority. It will possess resources in land, which may be resorted to when its manufactures and commerce, either from foreign competition, or any other causes, begin to fail. But, to balance this advantage, it will be subjected, during the time that large importations are necessary, to much greater fluctuations in its supplies of corn, than countries wholly manufacturing and commercial. The demands of Holland and Hamburgh may be known with considerable  
accuracy

accuracy by the merchants who supply them. If they increase, they increase gradually; and, not being subject from year to year to any great and sudden variations, it might be safe and practicable to make regular contracts for the average quantity wanted. But it is otherwise with such countries as England and Spain. Their wants are necessarily very variable, from the variableness of the seasons; and if the merchants were to contract with exporting countries for the quantity required in average years, two or three abundant seasons might ruin them. They must necessarily wait to see the state of the crops in each year, in order safely to regulate their proceedings; and though it is certainly true that it is only the deficiency from the average crop, and not the whole deficiency, which may be considered altogether in the light of a new demand in Europe; yet the largeness and previous uncertainty of this whole deficiency, the danger of making contracts for a stated quantity annually, and the greater chance of hostile combinations against large and warlike states, must greatly aggravate

the difficulties of procuring a steady supply; and if it be true that unfavourable seasons are not unfrequently general, it is impossible to conceive that they should not occasionally be subject to great variations of price.

It has been sometimes stated that scarcities are partial, not general, and that a deficiency in one country is always compensated by a plentiful supply in others. But this seems to be quite an unfounded supposition. In the evidence brought before the Committee of the House of Commons in 1814, relating to the corn-laws, one of the corn merchants being asked whether it frequently happened that crops in the countries bordering upon the Baltic failed, when they failed here, replied, "When crops  
" are unfavourable in one part of Europe,  
" it generally happens that they are more  
" or less so in another<sup>a</sup>." If any person will take the trouble to examine the contemporaneous prices of corn in the different countries of Europe for some length of time, he will be convinced that the answer

<sup>a</sup> Report, p. 93.

here given is perfectly just. In the last hundred and fifty years, above twenty will be found in which the rise of prices is common to France and England, although there was seldom much intercourse between them in the trade of corn: and Spain and the Baltic nations, as far as their prices have been collected, appear frequently to have shared in the same general deficiency. Even within the last five years, two have occurred, the years 1811-12, and 1816-17, in which, with extraordinary high prices in this country, the imports have been comparatively inconsiderable; which can only have arisen from those scarcities having been general over the greatest part of Europe.

Under these circumstances let us suppose that two million quarters of foreign grain were the average quantity annually wanted in this country, and suppose, at the same time, that a million quarters were deficient from a bad season; the whole deficiency to be supplied would then be three millions.

If the scarcity were general in Europe, it may fairly be concluded, that some states would prohibit the export of their corn

entirely, and others tax it very highly ; and if we could obtain a million or fifteen hundred thousand quarters, it is probably as much as we could reasonably expect. We should then, however, be two millions or fifteen hundred thousand quarters deficient. On the other hand, if we had habitually grown our own consumption, and were deficient a million of quarters from a bad season, it is scarcely probable that, notwithstanding a general scarcity, we should not be able to obtain three or four hundred thousand quarters in consequence of our advanced prices ; particularly if the usual prices of our corn and labour were higher than in the rest of Europe. And in this case the sum of our whole deficiency would only be six or seven hundred thousand quarters, instead of fifteen hundred thousand or two millions of quarters. If the present year (1816-17) had found us in a state in which our growth of corn had been habitually far short of our consumption, the distresses of the country would have been dreadfully aggravated.

To provide against accidents of this kind, and to secure a more abundant and, at the  
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time, a more steady supply of grain, a system of corn-laws has been recommended the object of which is to discourage by duties or prohibitions the importation of foreign corn, and encourage by bounties the exportation of corn of home growth.

A system of this kind was completed in our own country in 1688<sup>a</sup>, the policy of which has been treated of at some length by Adam Smith.

In whatever way the general question may be finally decided, it must be allowed by all those who acknowledge the efficacy of the great principle of supply and demand that the line of argument taken by the author of the *Wealth of Nations* against the system is essentially erroneous.

He first states that, whatever extension of the foreign market can be occasioned by the bounty, must in every particular year be altogether at the expense of the home

\* Though the object here stated may not have been the specific object of the law of 1688, it is certainly the object for which the system has been subsequently recommended.

market,

market, as every bushel of corn which is exported by means of the bounty, and which would not have been exported without the bounty, would have remained in the home market to increase the consumption, and to lower the price of that commodity<sup>a</sup>.

In this observation he evidently misapplies the term market. Because, by selling a commodity lower, it is easy to get rid of a greater quantity of it, in any particular market, than would have gone off otherwise, it cannot justly be said that by this process such a market is proportionally extended. Though the removal of the two taxes mentioned by Adam Smith as paid on account of the bounty would certainly increase the power of the lower classes to purchase, yet in each particular year the consumption must ultimately be limited by the population, and the increase of consumption from the removal of these taxes would by no means be sufficient to give the same encouragement to cultivation as the addition of the foreign demand. If

<sup>a</sup> Vol. ii. b. iv. c. 5.

the price of British corn in the home market rise in consequence of the bounty, before the price of production is increased (and an immediate rise is distinctly acknowledged by Adam Smith), it is an unanswerable proof that the effectual demand for British corn is extended by it; and that the diminution of demand at home, whatever it may be, is more than counterbalanced by the extension of demand abroad.

Adam Smith goes on to say that the two taxes paid by the people on account of the bounty, namely, the one to the government to pay this bounty, and the other paid in the advanced price of the commodity, must either reduce the subsistence of the labouring poor, or occasion an augmentation in their pecuniary wages proportioned to that in the pecuniary price of their subsistence. So far as it operates in the one way it must reduce the ability of the labouring poor to educate and bring up their children, and must so far tend to restrain the population of the country. So far as it operates in the other, it must reduce the ability of the employers of the poor to  
employ

employ so great a number as they otherwise might do, and must so far tend to restrain the industry of the country.

It will be readily allowed that the tax occasioned by the bounty will have the one or the other of the effects here contemplated; but it cannot be allowed that it will have both. Yet it is observed, that though the tax, which that institution imposes upon the whole body of the people, be very burdensome to those who pay it, it is of very little advantage to those who receive it. This is surely a contradiction. If the price of labour rise in proportion to the price of wheat, as is subsequently asserted, how is the labourer rendered less competent to support a family? If the price of labour do not rise in proportion to the price of wheat, how is it possible to maintain that the landlords and farmers are not able to employ more labourers on their land? Yet in this contradiction the author of the *Wealth of Nations* has had respectable followers; and some of those who have agreed with him in his opinion that corn regulates the prices of labour, and of all other

other commodities, still insist on the injury done to the labouring classes of society by a rise in the price of corn, and the benefit they would derive from a fall.

The main argument however which Adam Smith adduces against the bounty is, that as the money price of corn regulates that of all other home-made commodities, the advantage to the proprietor from the increase of money price is merely apparent, and not real; since what he gains in his sales he must lose in his purchases.

This position, though true to a certain extent, is by no means true to the extent of preventing the movement of capital to or from the land, which is the precise point in question. The money price of corn in a particular country is undoubtedly by far the most powerful ingredient in regulating the price of labour, and of all other commodities; but it is not enough for Adam Smith's position that it should be the most powerful ingredient; it must be shewn that, other causes remaining the same, the price of every article will rise and fall exactly in proportion to the price of corn, and this is  
very

very far from being the case. Adam Smith himself excepts all foreign commodities ; but when we reflect upon the vast amount of our imports, and the quantity of foreign articles used in our manufactures, this exception alone is of the greatest importance. Wool and raw hides, two most important materials of home growth, do not, according to Adam Smith's own reasonings, (Book I. c. xi. p. 363, et seq.) depend much upon the price of corn and the rent of land ; and the prices of flax, tallow, and leather, are of course greatly influenced by the quantity we import. But woollen cloths, cotton and linen goods, leather, soap, candles, tea, sugar &c., which are comprehended in the above-named articles, form almost the whole of the clothing and luxuries of the industrious classes of society.

It should be further observed that in all countries, the industry of which is greatly assisted by fixed capital, the part of the price of the wrought commodity which pays the profits of such capital will not necessarily rise in consequence of an advance in the price of corn, except as it requires

quires gradual renovation ; and the advantage derived from machinery which has been constructed before the advance in the price of labour will naturally last for some years.

In the case also of great and numerous taxes on consumption, a rise or fall in the price of corn, though it would increase or decrease that part of the wages of labour which resolves itself into food, evidently would not increase or decrease that part which is destined for the payment of taxes.

It cannot then be admitted as a general position that the money price of corn in any country is a just measure of the real value of silver in that country. But all these considerations, though of great weight to the owners of land, will not influence the farmers beyond the present leases. At the expiration of a lease, any particular advantage which a farmer had received from a favourable proportion between the price of corn and of labour would be taken from him, and any disadvantage from an unfavourable proportion be made up to him. The sole cause which would deter-  
mine

mine the proportion of capital employed in agriculture, would be the extent of the effectual demand for corn; and if the bounty had really enlarged this demand, which it certainly would have done, it is impossible to suppose that more capital would not be employed upon the land.

When Adam Smith says that the nature of things has stamped upon corn a real value, which cannot be altered by merely altering the money price, and that no bounty upon exportation, no monopoly of the home market, can raise that value, nor the freest competition lower it, it is obvious that he changes the question from the profits of the growers of corn, or of the proprietors of the land, to the physical and absolute value of corn itself. I certainly do not mean to say that the bounty alters the physical value of corn, and makes a bushel of it support equally well a greater number of labourers than it did before; but I certainly do mean to say that the bounty to the British cultivator does, in the actual state of things, really increase the demand for British corn, and thus encourage



rage him to sow more than he otherwise would do, and enables him in consequence to employ more bushels of corn in the maintenance of a greater number of labourers.

If Adam Smith's theory were true, and the real price of corn were unchangeable, or not capable of experiencing a relative increase or decrease of value compared with labour and other commodities, agriculture would indeed be in an unfortunate situation. It would be at once excluded from the operation of that principle so beautifully explained in the *Wealth of Nations*, by which capital flows from one employment to another, according to the various and necessarily fluctuating wants of society. But surely we cannot doubt that the real price of corn varies, though it may not vary so much as the real price of other commodities ; and that there are periods when all wrought commodities are cheaper, and periods when they are dearer, in proportion to the price of corn ; and in the one case capital flows from manufactures to agriculture, and in the other from agriculture

culture to manufactures. To overlook these periods, or consider them of slight importance, is not allowable ; because in every branch of trade these periods form the grand encouragement to an increase of supply. Undoubtedly the profits of trade in any particular branch of industry can never long remain higher than in others ; but how are they lowered except by the influx of capital occasioned by these high profits ? It never can be a national object permanently to increase the profits of any particular set of dealers. The national object is the increase of supply ; but this object cannot be attained except by previously increasing the profits of these dealers, and thus determining a greater quantity of capital to this particular employment. The ship-owners and sailors of Great Britain do not make greater profits now than they did before the Navigation Act ; but the object of the nation was not to increase the profits of ship-owners and sailors, but the quantity of shipping and seamen ; and this could not be done but by a law, which, by increasing the demand for them, raised the profits

profits of the capital before employed in this way, and determined a greater quantity to flow into the same channel. The object of a nation in the establishment of a bounty is, not to increase the profits of the farmers or the rents of the landlords, but to determine a greater quantity of the national capital to the land, and consequently to increase supply ; and though, in the case of an advance in the price of corn from an increased demand, the rise of wages, the rise of rents and the fall of silver tend, in some degree, to obscure our view of the subject ; yet we cannot refuse to acknowledge that the real price of corn varies during periods sufficiently long to affect the determination of capital, or we shall be reduced to the dilemma of owning that no possible degree of demand can encourage the growth of corn.

It must be allowed then that the peculiar argument relating to the nature of corn brought forward by Adam Smith upon this occasion cannot be maintained ; and that a bounty upon the exportation of corn must enlarge the demand for it and encourage its

its production in the same manner, if not in the same degree, as a bounty upon the exportation of any other commodity.

But it has been urged further that this increased production of corn must necessarily occasion permanent cheapness; and a period of considerable length, during the first 64 years of the last century, while a bounty was in full operation in this country, has been advanced as a proof of it. In this conclusion, however, it may be reasonably suspected that an effect, in its nature temporary, though it may be of some duration, has been mistaken for one which is necessarily permanent.

According to the theory of demand and supply, the bounty might be expected to operate in the following manner :

It is frequently stated in the *Wealth of Nations* that a great demand is followed by a great supply ; a great scarcity by a great plenty ; an unusual dearth by an unusual cheapness. A great and indefinite demand is indeed generally found to produce a supply more than proportioned to it. This supply as naturally occasions unusual cheapness ;

cheapness ; but this cheapness, when it comes, must in its turn check the production of the commodity ; and this check, upon the same principle, is apt to continue longer than necessary, and again to occasion a return to high prices.

This appears to be the manner in which a bounty upon the exportation of corn, if granted under circumstances favourable to its efficiency, might be expected to operate, and this seems to have been the manner in which it really did operate in the only instance where it has been fairly tried.

Without meaning to deny the concurrence of other causes, or attempting to estimate the relative efficiency of the bounty, it is impossible not to acknowledge that when the growing price of corn was, according to Adam Smith, only 28 shillings a quarter, and the corn-markets of England were as low as those of the continent, a premium of five shillings a quarter upon exportation must have occasioned an increase of real price, and given encouragement to the cultivation of grain. But the changes produced in the direction of capital to or

from the land will always be slow. Those who have been in the habit of employing their stock in mercantile concerns do not readily turn it into the channel of agriculture ; and it is a still more difficult and slower operation to withdraw capital from the soil, to employ it in commerce. For the first 25 years after the establishment of the bounty in this country the price of corn rose 2 or 3 shillings in the quarter ; but owing probably to the wars of William and Anne, to bad seasons, and a scarcity of money, capital seems to have accumulated slowly on the land, and no great surplus growth was effected. It was not till after the peace of Utrecht that the capital of the country began in a marked manner to increase ; and it is impossible that the bounty should not gradually have directed a larger portion of this accumulation to the land than would otherwise have gone to it. A surplus growth, and a fall of price for thirty or forty years, followed.

It will be said that this period of low prices was too long to be occasioned by a bounty, even according to the theory  
just

just laid down. This is perhaps true, and in all probability the period would have been shorter if the bounty alone had operated ; but in this case other causes powerfully combined with it.

The fall in the price of British corn was accompanied by a fall of prices on the continent. Whatever were the general causes which produced this effect in foreign countries, it is probable that they were not wholly inoperative in England. At all events nothing could be so powerfully calculated to produce cheapness, and to occasion a slow return to high prices, as a considerable surplus growth, which was unwillingly received, and only at low prices, by other nations. When such a surplus growth had been obtained, some time would necessarily be required to destroy it by cheapness, particularly as the moral stimulus of the bounty would probably continue to act long after the fall of prices had commenced. If to these causes we add that a marked fall in the rate of interest, about the same time, evinced an abundance of capital, and a consequent

difficulty of finding a profitable employment for it; and consider further the natural obstacles to the moving of capital from the land; we shall see sufficient reason why even a long period might elapse without any essential alteration in the comparative abundance and cheapness of corn.

Adam Smith attributes this cheapness to a rise in the value of silver. The fall in the price of corn which took place in France and some other countries about the same time might give some countenance to the conjecture. But the accounts we have lately had of the produce of the mines during the period in question does not sufficiently support it; and it is much more probable that it arose from the comparative state of peace in which Europe was placed after the termination of the wars of Louis XIV., which facilitated the accumulation of capital on the land, and encouraged agricultural improvements.

With regard to this country, indeed, it is observed by Adam Smith himself, that labour and other articles were rising; a fact very unfavourable to the supposition of an  
increased



increased value of the precious metals. Not only the money price of corn fell, but its value relative to other articles was lowered, and this fall of relative value, together with great exportations, clearly pointed to a relative abundance of corn, in whatever way it might be occasioned, as the main cause of the facts observed, rather than a scarcity of silver. This great fall in the British corn-market, particularly during the ten years from 1740 to 1750, accompanied by a great fall in the continental markets, owing in some degree perhaps to the great exportations of British corn, especially during the years 1748, 1749, and 1750, must necessarily have given some check to its cultivation, while the increase of the real price of labour must at the same time have given a stimulus to the increase of population. The united operation of these two causes is exactly calculated first to diminish and ultimately to destroy a surplus of corn; and as, after 1764, the wealth and manufacturing population of Great Britain increased more rapidly than those of her neighbours,

neighbours, the returning stimulus to agriculture, considerable as it was, arising almost exclusively from a home demand, was incapable of producing a surplus ; and not being confined as before to British cultivation, owing to the alteration in the corn-laws, was inadequate even to effect an independent supply. Had the old corn-laws remained in full force, we should still probably have lost our surplus growth, owing to the causes above mentioned, although from their restrictive clauses we should certainly have been nearer the growth of an independent supply immediately previous to the scarcity of 1800.

It is not therefore necessary, in order to object to the bounty, to say with Adam Smith that the fall in the price of corn which took place during the first half of the last century must have happened in spite of the bounty, and could not possibly have happened in consequence of it. We may allow, on the contrary, what I think we ought to allow according to all general principles, that the bounty, when granted under favourable circumstances, is really  
calculated,

calculated, after going through a period of dearness, to produce the surplus and the cheapness which its advocates promise<sup>a</sup>; but according to the same general principles we must allow that this surplus and cheapness, from their operating at once as a check to produce and an encouragement to population, cannot be for any great length of time maintained.

The objection then to a bounty on corn, independently of the objections to bounties in general, is, that when imposed under the most favourable circumstances it cannot produce permanent cheapness : and if it be imposed under unfavourable circumstances ; that is, if an attempt be made to force exportation by an adequate bounty at a time when the country does not fully grow its own consumption ; it is obvious not only that the

<sup>a</sup> As far as the bounty might tend to force the cultivation of poorer land, so far no doubt it would have a tendency to raise the price of corn ; but we know from experience that the rise of price naturally occasioned in this way is continually counteracted by improvements in agriculture. As a matter of fact it must be allowed, that, during the period of the last century when corn was falling, more land must have been taken into cultivation,

tax necessary for the purpose must be a very heavy one, but that the effect will be absolutely prejudicial to the population, and the surplus growth will be purchased by a sacrifice very far beyond its worth.

But notwithstanding the strong objections to bounties on general grounds, and their inapplicability in cases which are not unfrequent, it must be acknowledged that while they are operative; that is, while they produce an exportation which would not otherwise have taken place, they unquestionably encourage an increased growth of corn in the countries in which they are established, or maintain it at a point to which it would not otherwise have attained.

Under peculiar and favourable circumstances a country might maintain a considerable surplus growth for a great length of time, with an inconsiderable increase of the growing price of corn; and perhaps little or no increase of the average price, including years of scarcity<sup>a</sup>. If from any period during

<sup>a</sup> The average price is different from the growing price. Years of scarcity, which must occasionally occur, essentially affect the average price; and the growth of a surplus quantity of corn, which tends to prevent scarcity, will tend to lower this average, and make it approach nearer to the growing price.

the last century, when an average excess of growth for exportation had been obtained by the stimulus of a bounty, the foreign demand for our corn had increased at the same rate as the domestic demand, our surplus growth might have become permanent. After the bounty had ceased to stimulate to fresh exertions, its influence would by no means be lost. For some years it would have given the British grower an absolute advantage over the foreign grower. This advantage would of course gradually diminish; because it is the nature of all effectual demand to be ultimately supplied, and oblige the producers to sell at the lowest price they can afford consistently with the general rate of profits. But, after having experienced a period of decided encouragement, the British grower would find himself in the habit of supplying a larger market than his own upon equal terms with his competitors. And if the foreign and British markets continued to extend themselves equally, he would continue to proportion his supplies to both; because, unless a particular in-

crease

crease of demand were to take place at home, he could never withdraw his foreign supply without lowering the price of his whole crop ; and the nation would thus be in possession of a constant store for years of scarcity.

But even supposing that by a bounty, combined with the most favourable state of prices in other countries, a particular state could maintain permanently an average excess of growth for exportation, it must not of course be imagined that its population would not still be checked by the difficulty of procuring subsistence. It would indeed be less exposed to the particular pressure arising from years of scarcity ; but in other respects it would be subject to the same checks as those already described in the preceding chapters ; and whether there was an habitual exportation or not, the population would be regulated by the real wages of labour, and would come to a stand when the necessaries which these wages could command were not sufficient, under the actual habits of the people, to encourage an increase of numbers.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XII.

*Of Corn-Laws. Restrictions upon Importation.*

THE laws which prohibit the importation of foreign grain, though by no means unobjectionable, are not open to the same objections as bounties, and must be allowed to be adequate to the object they have in view,—the maintenance of an independent supply. A country, with landed resources, which determines never to import corn but when the price indicates an approach towards a scarcity, will necessarily, in average years, supply its own wants. Though we may reasonably therefore object to restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn, on the grounds of their tending to prevent the most profitable employment of the national capital and industry, to check population, and to discourage the export of our manufactures; yet we cannot deny their tendency to encourage the growth of corn  
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at home, and to procure and maintain an independent supply. A bounty, it has appeared, sufficient to make it answer its purpose in forcing a surplus growth, would, in many cases, require so very heavy a direct tax, and would bear so large a proportion to the whole price of the corn, as to make it in some countries next to impracticable. Restrictions upon importation impose no direct tax upon the people. On the contrary, they might be made, if it were thought adviseable, sources of revenue to the government, and they can always, without difficulty, be put in execution, and be made infallibly to answer their express purpose of securing, in average years, a sufficient growth of corn for the actual population.

We have considered, in the preceding chapters, the peculiar disadvantages which attend a system either almost exclusively agricultural or exclusively commercial, and the peculiar advantages which attend a system in which they are united, and flourish together. It has further appeared that, in a country with great landed resources, the



the commercial population may, from particular causes, so far predominate, as to subject it to some of the evils which belong to a state purely commercial and manufacturing, and to a degree of fluctuation in the price of corn greater than is found to take place in such a state. It is obviously possible, by restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn, to maintain a balance between the agricultural and commercial classes. The question is not a question of the efficiency or inefficiency of the measure proposed, but of its policy or impolicy. The object can certainly be accomplished, but it may be purchased too dear; and to those who do not at once reject all inquiries on points of this kind, as impeaching a principle which they hold sacred, the question, whether a balance between the agricultural and commercial classes of society, which would not take place naturally, ought, under certain circumstances, to be maintained artificially, must appear to be the most important practical question in the whole compass of political economy.

One of the objections to the admission of  
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the doctrine that restrictions upon importation are advantageous is, that it cannot possibly be laid down as a general rule that every state ought to raise its own corn. There are some states so circumstanced that the rule is clearly and obviously inapplicable to them.

In the first place there are many states which have made some figure in history, the territories of which have been perfectly inconsiderable compared with their main town or towns, and utterly incompetent to supply the actual population with food. In such communities, what is called the principal internal trade of a large state, the trade which is carried on between the towns and the country, must necessarily be a foreign trade, and the importation of foreign corn is absolutely necessary to their existence. They may be said to be born without the advantage of land, and, to whatever risks and disadvantages a system merely commercial and manufacturing may be exposed, they have no power of choosing any other. All that they can do is to make the most of their own situation, compared with

with the situation of their neighbours, and to endeavour by superior industry, skill, and capital, to make up for so important a deficiency. In these efforts some states of which we have accounts have been wonderfully successful; but the reverses to which they have been subject have been almost as conspicuous as the degree of their prosperity compared with the scantiness of their natural resources.

Secondly, restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn are evidently not applicable to a country which, from its soil and climate, is subject to very great and sudden variations in its home supplies, from the variations of the seasons. A country so circumstanced will unquestionably increase its chance of a steady supply of grain by opening as many markets for importation and exportation as possible, and this will probably be true, even though other countries occasionally prohibit or tax the exports of their grain. The peculiar evil to which such a country is subject can only be mitigated by encouraging the freest possible foreign trade in corn.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, restrictions upon importation are not applicable to a country which has a very barren territory, although it may be of some extent. An attempt fully to cultivate and improve such a territory by forcibly directing capital to it would probably, under any circumstances, fail; and the actual produce obtained in this way might be purchased by sacrifices which the capital and industry of the nation could not possibly continue to support. Whatever advantages those countries may enjoy, which possess the means of supporting a considerable population from their own soil, such advantages are not within the reach of a state so circumstanced. It must either consent to be a poor and inconsiderable community, or it must place its chief dependence on other resources than those of land. It resembles in many respects those states which have a very small territory; and its policy, with regard to the importation of corn, must of course be nearly the same.

In all these cases there can be no doubt of the impolicy of attempting to maintain  
a balance

a balance between the agricultural and commercial classes of society which would not take place naturally.

Under other and opposite circumstances, however, this impolicy is by no means so clear.

If a nation possesses a large territory consisting of land of an average quality, it may without difficulty support from its own soil a population fully sufficient to maintain its rank in wealth and power among the countries with which it has relations either of commerce or of war. Territories of a certain extent must ultimately in the main support their own population. As each exporting country approaches towards that complement of wealth and population to which it is naturally tending, it will gradually withdraw the corn which for a time it had spared to its more manufacturing and commercial neighbours, and leave them to subsist on their own resources. The peculiar products of each soil and climate are objects of foreign trade, which can never, under any circumstances, fail. But food is not a peculiar product ;

and the country which produces it in the greatest abundance, may, according to the laws which govern the progress of population, have nothing to spare for others. An extensive foreign trade in corn beyond what arises from the variableness of the seasons in different countries is rather a temporary and incidental trade, depending chiefly upon the different stages of improvement which different countries may have reached, and on other accidental circumstances, than a trade which is in its nature permanent, and the stimulus to which will remain in the progress of society unabated. In the wildness of speculation it has been suggested (of course more in jest than in earnest), that Europe ought to grow its corn in America, and devote itself solely to manufactures and commerce, as the best sort of division of the labour of the globe. But even on the extravagant supposition that the natural course of things might lead to such a division of labour for a time, and that by such means Europe could raise a population greater than its lands could possibly

possibly support, the consequences ought justly to be dreaded. It is an unquestionable truth that it must answer to every territorial state, in its natural progress to wealth, to manufacture for itself, unless the countries from which it had purchased its manufactures possess some advantages peculiar to them besides capital and skill. But when upon this principle America began to withdraw its corn from Europe, and the agricultural exertions of Europe were inadequate to make up for the deficiency, it would certainly be felt that the temporary advantages of a greater degree of wealth and population (supposing them to have been really attained) had been very dearly purchased by a long period of retrograde movements and misery.

If then a country be of such a size that it may fairly be expected finally to supply its own population with food; if the population which it can thus support from its own resources in land be such as to enable it to maintain its rank and power among other nations; and further, if there be reason to fear not only the final with-

drawing of foreign corn used for a certain time, which might be a distant event, but the immediate effects that attend a great predominance of a manufacturing population, such as increased unhealthiness, increased turbulence, increased fluctuations in the price of corn, and increased variableness in the wages of labour; it may not appear impolitic artificially to maintain a more equal balance between the agricultural and commercial classes by restricting the importation of foreign corn, and making agriculture keep pace with manufactures.

Thirdly, if a country be possessed of such a soil and climate, that the variations in its annual growth of corn are less than in most other countries, this may be an additional reason for admitting the policy of restricting the importation of foreign corn. Countries are very different in the degree of variableness to which their annual supplies are subject; and though it is unquestionably true that if all were nearly equal in this respect, and the trade in corn *really* free, the steadiness of price in a particular state would



would increase with an increase in the number of the nations connected with it by the commerce of grain ; yet it by no means follows that the same conclusion will hold good when the premises are essentially different ; that is, when some of the countries taken into the circle of trade are subject to very great comparative variations in their supplies of grain, and when this defect is aggravated by the acknowledged want of real freedom in the foreign trade of corn.

Suppose, for instance, that the extreme variations above and below the average quantity of corn grown, were in England  $\frac{1}{4}$  and in France  $\frac{1}{3}$ , a free intercourse between the two countries would probably increase the variableness of the English markets. And if, in addition to England and France, such a country as Bengal could be brought near, and admitted into the circle—a country in which, according to Sir George Colebrook, rice is sometimes sold four times as cheap in one year as in the succeeding without famine or scarcity <sup>a</sup> ;

<sup>a</sup> Husbandry of Bengal, p. 108. Note. He observes in the text of the same page that the price of corn fluctuates much more than in Europe.

and

and where, notwithstanding the frequency of abundant harvests, deficiencies sometimes occur of such extent as necessarily to destroy a considerable portion of the population ; it is quite certain that the supplies both of England and France would become very much more variable than before the accession.

In point of fact, there is reason to believe that the British isles, owing to the nature of their soil and climate, are peculiarly free from great variations in their annual produce of grain. If we compare the prices of corn in England and France from the period of the commencement of the Eaton tables to the beginning of the revolutionary war, we shall find that in England the highest price of the quarter of wheat of 8 bushels during the whole of that time was 3*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.* <sup>$\frac{3}{4}$</sup> . (in 1648), and the lowest price 1*l.* 2*s.* 1*d.* (in 1743), while in France the highest price of the septier was 62 francs 78 centimes (in 1662), and the lowest price 8 francs 89 centimes (in 1718)<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Garnier's Edition of the *Wealth of Nations* vol. ii. Table, p. 188.

In the one case the difference is a little above  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times, and in the other very nearly 7 times. In the English tables, during periods of ten or twelve years, only two instances occur of a variation amounting to as much as 3 times ; in the French tables, during periods of the same length, one instance occurs of a variation of above 6 times, and three instances besides of a variation of 4 times or above.

These variations may, perhaps, have been aggravated by a want of freedom in the internal trade of corn, but they are strongly confirmed by the calculations of Turgot, which relate solely to variations of produce, without reference to any difficulties or obstructions in its free transport from one part of the country to another.

On land of an average quality he estimates the produce at seven septiers the arpent in years of great abundance, and three septiers the arpent in years of great scarcity ; while the medium produce he values at five septiers the arpent<sup>a</sup>. These calculations he conceives are not far removed from the

<sup>a</sup> Œuvres de Turgot, tom. vi. p. 143. Edit. 1808.

truth ;

truth; and proceeding on these grounds he observes that, in a very abundant year, the produce will be five months above its ordinary consumption, and in a very scarce year as much below. These variations are, I should think, much greater than those which take place in this country, at least if we may judge from prices, particularly as in a given degree of scarcity in the two countries there is little doubt that, from the superior riches of England, and the extensive parish relief which it affords to the poorer classes in times of dearth, its prices would rise more above the usual average than those of France.

If we look to the prices of wheat in Spain during the same period, we shall find, in like manner, much greater variations than in England. In a table of the prices of the fanega of wheat in the market of Seville from 1675 to 1764 inclusive, published in the Appendix to the Bullion Report<sup>a</sup>, the highest price is 48 reals vellon (in 1677), and the lowest price 7 reals vellon (in 1720), a difference of nearly seven times;

<sup>a</sup> Appendix, p. 182.

and

and in periods of ten or twelve years the difference is, in two or three instances, as much as four times. In another table, from 1788 to 1792 inclusive, relating to the towns of Old Castille, the highest price in 1790 was 109 reals vellon the fanega, and in 1792 the lowest price was only 16 reals vellon the fanega. In the market of Medina del Rio Seco, a town of the kingdom of Leon, surrounded by a very fine corn country, the price of the load of four fanegas of wheat was, in May, 1800, 100 reals vellon, and in May, 1804, 600 reals vellon, and these were both what are called *low prices*, as compared with the highest prices of the year. The difference would be greater if the high prices were compared with the low prices. Thus, in 1799, the low price of the four fanegas was 88 reals vellon, and in 1804 the high price of the four fanegas was 640 reals vellon,—a difference of above seven times in so short a period as six years<sup>a</sup>.

In Spain, foreign corn is freely admitted; yet the variation of price, in the towns

<sup>a</sup> Bullion Report. Appendix, p. 185.

of Andalusia, a province adjoining the sea, and penetrated by the river Guadalquiver, though not so great as those just mentioned, seem to shew that the coasts of the Mediterranean by no means furnish very steady supplies. It is known, indeed, that Spain is the principal competitor of England in the purchase of grain in the Baltic; and as it is quite certain that what may be called the growing or usual price of corn in Spain is much lower than in England, it follows, that the difference between the prices of plentiful and scarce years must be very considerable.

I have not the means of ascertaining the variations in the supplies and prices of the northern nations. They are, however, occasionally great, as it is well known that some of these countries are at times subject to very severe scarcities. But the instances already produced are sufficient to shew, that a country which is advantageously circumstanced with regard to the steadiness of its home supplies may rather diminish than increase this steadiness by uniting its interests with a country less favourably circumstanced

stanced in this respect ; and this steadiness will unquestionably be still further diminished, if the country which is the most variable in its supplies is allowed to inundate the other with its crops when they are abundant, while it reserves to itself the privilege of retaining them in a period of slight scarcity, when its commercial neighbour happens to be in the greatest want<sup>a</sup>.

3dly, if a nation be possessed of a territory, not only of sufficient extent to maintain under its actual cultivation a population adequate to a state of the first rank, but of sufficient unexhausted fertility to allow of a very great increase of population, such a circumstance would of course make the measure of restricting the importation of foreign corn more applicable to it.

A country which, though fertile and populous, had been cultivated nearly to the utmost, would have no other means of increasing its population than by the admission of foreign corn. But the British isles

<sup>a</sup> These two circumstances essentially change the premises on which the question of a free importation, as applicable to a particular state, must rest.

shew at present no symptoms whatever of this species of exhaustion. The necessary accompaniments of a territory worked to the utmost are very low profits and extent, a very slack demand for labour, low wages, and a stationary population. Some of these symptoms may indeed take place without an exhausted territory; but an exhausted territory cannot take place without all these symptoms. Instead, however, of such symptoms, we have seen in this country, during the twenty years previous to 1814, a high rate of profits and interest, a very great demand for labour, good wages, and an increase of population more rapid, perhaps, than during any period of our history. The capitals which have been laid out in bringing new land into cultivation, or improving the old, must necessarily have yielded good returns, or, under the actual rate of general profits, they would not have been so employed: and although it is strictly true that, as capital accumulates upon the land, its profits must ultimately diminish; yet owing to the increase of agricultural skill, and other causes noticed in a former chapter, these



these two effects of progressive cultivation do not by any means always keep pace with each other. Though they must finally unite and terminate the career of their progress together, they are often, during the course of their progress, separated for a considerable time, and at a considerable distance. In some countries, and some soils, the quantity of capital which can be absorbed before any essential diminution of profits necessarily takes place is so great, that its limit is not easily calculated; and certainly, when we consider what has actually been done in some districts of England and Scotland, and compare it with what remains to be done in other districts, we must allow that no near approach to this limit has yet been made. On account of the high money price of labour, and of the materials of agricultural capital, occasioned partly by direct and indirect taxation, and partly, or perhaps chiefly, by the great prosperity of our foreign commerce, new lands cannot be brought into cultivation, nor great improvements made on the old, without a high money price of grain; but these lands,  
when

when they have been so brought into cultivation or improved, have by no means turned out unproductive. The quantity and value of their produce have borne a full and fair proportion to the quantity of capital and labour employed upon them ; and they were cultivated with great advantage both to individuals and the state, as long as the same, or nearly the same, relations between the value of produce and the cost of production, which prompted this cultivation, continued to exist.

In such a state of the soil, the British empire might unquestionably be able, not only to support from its own agricultural resources its present population, but double, and in time, perhaps, even treble the number ; and consequently a restriction upon the importation of foreign corn, which might be thought greatly objectionable in a country which had reached nearly the end of its resources, might appear in a very different light in a country capable of supporting from its own lands a very great increase of population.

But it will be said, that although a country

try may be allowed to be capable of maintaining from its own soil not only a great, but an increasing population, yet, if it be acknowledged that, by opening its ports for the free admission of foreign corn, it may be made to support a greater and more rapidly increasing population, it is unjustifiable to go out of our way to check this tendency, and to prevent that degree of wealth and population which would naturally take place.

This is unquestionably a powerful argument; and granting fully the premises, (which however may admit of some doubt,) it cannot be answered upon the principles of political economy solely. I should say, however, that if it could be clearly ascertained that the addition of wealth and population so acquired would subject the society to a greater degree of uncertainty in its supplies of corn, greater fluctuations in the wages of labour, greater unhealthiness and immorality owing to a larger proportion of the population being employed in manufactories, and a greater chance of long and depressing retrograde movements occasioned

sioned by the natural progress of those countries from which corn had been imported; I should have no hesitation in considering such wealth and population as much too dearly purchased. The happiness of a society is, after all, the legitimate end even of its wealth, power, and population. It is certainly true that with a view to the structure of society most favourable to this happiness, and an adequate stimulus to the production of wealth from the soil, a very considerable admixture of commercial and manufacturing population with the agricultural is absolutely necessary; but there is no argument so frequently and obviously fallacious as that which infers that what is good to a certain extent is good to any extent; and though it will be most readily admitted that, in a large landed nation, the evils which belong to the manufacturing and commercial system are much more than counterbalanced by its advantages, as long as it is supported by agriculture; yet, in reference to the effect of the excess which is not so supported, it may fairly be doubted whether the evils do not decidedly predominate.

It is observed by Adam Smith, that the “capital which is acquired to any country by commerce and manufactures is all a very uncertain and precarious possession, till some part of it has been secured and realized in the cultivation and improvement of its lands”<sup>a</sup>.

It is remarked in another place, that the monopoly of the colony trade, by raising the rate of mercantile profit, discourages the improvement of the soil, and retards the natural increase of that great original source of revenue—the rent of land<sup>b</sup>.

Now it is certain that, at no period, have the manufactures, commerce and colony trade of the country been in a state to absorb so much capital as during the twenty years ending with 1814. From the year 1764 to the peace of Amiens, it is generally allowed that the commerce and manufactures of the country increased faster than its agriculture, and that it became gradually more and more dependent on foreign corn for its support. Since the peace of Amiens the state of its colonial monopoly and of its manu-

<sup>a</sup> Vol. ii. b. iii. c. 4. p. 137.

<sup>b</sup> Id. b. iv. c. 8. p. 495.

factures has been such as to demand an unusual quantity of capital; and if the peculiar circumstances of the subsequent war, the high freights and insurance, and the decrees of Buonaparte, had not rendered the importation of foreign corn extremely difficult and expensive, we should at this moment, according to all general principles, have been in the habit of supporting a much larger portion of our population upon it, than at any former period of our history. The cultivation of the country would be in a very different state from what it is at present. Very few or none of those great improvements would have taken place which may be said to have purchased fresh land for the state that no fall of price can destroy. And the peace, or accidents of different kinds, might have curtailed essentially both our colonial and manufacturing advantages, and destroyed or driven away our capital before it had spread itself on the soil, and become national property.

As it is, the practical restrictions thrown in the way of importing foreign corn during the war have forced our steam-engines and  
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our colonial monopoly to cultivate our lands; and those very causes which, according to Adam Smith, tend to draw capital from agriculture, and would certainly have so drawn it if we could have continued to purchase foreign corn at the market prices of France and Holland, have been the means of giving such a spur to our agriculture, that it has not only kept pace with a very rapid increase of commerce and manufactures, but has recovered the distance at which it had for many years been left behind, and now marches with them abreast.

But restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn in a country which has great landed resources, not only tend to spread every commercial and manufacturing advantage possessed, whether permanent or temporary, on the soil, and thus, in the language of Adam Smith, secure and realize it; but also tend to prevent those great oscillations in the progress of agriculture and commerce, which are seldom unattended with evil.

It is to be recollected, and it is a point of great importance to keep constantly in our

minds, that the distress which has been experienced among almost all classes of society from the sudden fall of prices, except as far as it has been aggravated by the state of the currency, has been occasioned by *natural*, not *artificial*, causes.

There is a tendency to an alternation in the rate of the progress of agriculture and manufactures in the same manner as there is a tendency to an alternation in the rate of the progress of food and population. In periods of peace and uninterrupted trade, these alternations, though not favourable to the happiness and quiet of society, may take place without producing material evil ; but the intervention of war is always liable to give them a force and rapidity that must unavoidably produce a convulsion in the state of property.

The war that succeeded to the peace of Amiens found us dependent upon foreign countries for a very considerable portion of our supplies of corn ; and we now grow our own consumption, notwithstanding an unusual increase of population in the interval. This great and sudden change in  
the



the state of our agriculture could only have been effected by very high prices occasioned by an inadequate home supply and the great expense and difficulty of importing foreign corn. But the rapidity with which this change has been effected must necessarily create a glut in the market as soon as the home growth of corn became fully equal or a little in excess above the home consumption ; and, aided only by a small foreign importation, must inevitably occasion a very sudden fall of prices. If the ports had continued open for the free importation of foreign corn, there can be little doubt that the price of corn in 1815 would have been still considerably lower. This low price of corn, even if by means of lowered rents our present state of cultivation could be in a great degree preserved, must give such a check to future improvement, that if the ports were to continue open, we should certainly not grow a sufficiency at home to keep pace with our increasing population ; and at the end of ten or twelve years we might be found by a new war in the same state that we were at the commencement of the present.

present. We should then have the same career of high prices to pass through, the same excessive stimulus to agriculture<sup>a</sup> followed by the same sudden and depressing check to it, and the same enormous loans borrowed with the price of wheat at 90 or 100 shillings a quarter, and the monied incomes of the landholders and industrious classes of society nearly in proportion, to be paid when wheat is at 50 or 60 shillings a quarter, and the incomes of the landlords and industrious classes of society greatly reduced—a state of things which cannot take place without an excessive aggravation of the difficulty of paying taxes, and particularly that invariable monied amount which pays the interest of the national debt.

On the other hand a country which so restricts the importations of foreign corn as on an average to grow its own supplies,

<sup>a</sup> According to the evidence before the House of Lords (Reports, p. 49), the freight and insurance alone on a quarter of corn were greater by 48 shillings in 1811 than in 1814. Without any artificial interference then, it appears that war alone may occasion unavoidably a prodigious increase of price.

and

and to import merely in periods of scarcity, is not only certain of spreading every invention in manufactures and every peculiar advantage it may possess from its colonies or general commerce on the land, and thus of fixing them to the spot and rescuing them from accidents ; but is necessarily exempt from those violent and distressing convulsions of property which almost unavoidably arise from the coincidence of a general war and an insufficient home supply of corn.

If the late war had found us independent of foreigners for our average consumption, not even our paper currency could have made the prices of our corn approach to the prices which were at one time experienced \*. And if we had continued, during the course of the contest, independent of foreign supplies, except in an occasional scarcity, it is impossible that the growth of

\* It will be found upon examination, that the prices of our corn led the way to the excess and diminution of our paper currency, rather than followed, although the prices of corn could never have been either so high or so low if this excess and diminution had not taken place.

our own consumption, or a little above it, should have produced at the end of the war so universal a feeling of distress.

The chief practical objection to which restrictions on the importation of corn are exposed is a glut from an abundant harvest, which cannot be relieved by exportation. And in the consideration of that part of the question which relates to the fluctuations of prices this objection ought to have its full and fair weight. But the fluctuation of prices arising from this cause has sometimes been very greatly exaggerated. A glut which might essentially distress the farmers of a poor country, might be comparatively little felt by the farmers of a rich one ; and it is difficult to conceive that a nation with an ample capital, and not under the influence of a great shock to commercial confidence, as this country was in 1815, would find much difficulty in reserving the surplus of one year to supply the wants of the next or some future year. It may fairly indeed be doubted whether, in such a country as our own, the fall of price arising from this cause would be so great as that which  
would

would be occasioned by the sudden pouring in of the supplies from an abundant crop in Europe, particularly from those states which do not regularly export corn. If our ports were always open, the existing laws of France would still prevent such a supply as would equalize prices; and French corn would only come in to us in considerable quantities in years of great abundance, when we were the least likely to want it, and when it was most likely to occasion a glut<sup>a</sup>.

But if the fall of price occasioned in these two ways would not be essentially different, as it is quite certain that the rise of price in years of general scarcity would be less in those countries which habitually grow their own supplies; it must be allowed that the range of variation will be the least under such a system of restrictions as, without preventing importation

<sup>a</sup> Almost all the corn merchants who gave their evidence before the committees of the two houses in 1814 seemed fully aware of the low prices likely to be occasioned by an abundant crop in Europe, if our ports were open to receive it.

when prices are high, will secure in ordinary years a growth equal to the consumption.

One objection however to systems of restriction must always remain. They are essentially unsocial. I certainly think that, in reference to the interests of a particular state, a restriction upon the importation of foreign corn may sometimes be advantageous ; but I feel still more certain that in reference to the interests of Europe in general the most perfect freedom of trade in corn, as well as in every other commodity, would be the most advantageous. Such a perfect freedom, however, could hardly fail to be followed by a more free and equal distribution of capital, which, though it would greatly advance the riches and happiness of Europe, would unquestionably render some parts of it poorer and less populous than they are at present ; and there is little reason to expect that individual states will ever consent to sacrifice the wealth within their own confines to the wealth of the world.

It is further to be observed, that independently of more direct regulations, taxation

ation alone produces a system of discouragements and encouragements which essentially interferes with the natural relations of commodities to each other ; and as there is no hope of abolishing taxation, it may sometimes be only by a further interference that these natural relations can be restored.

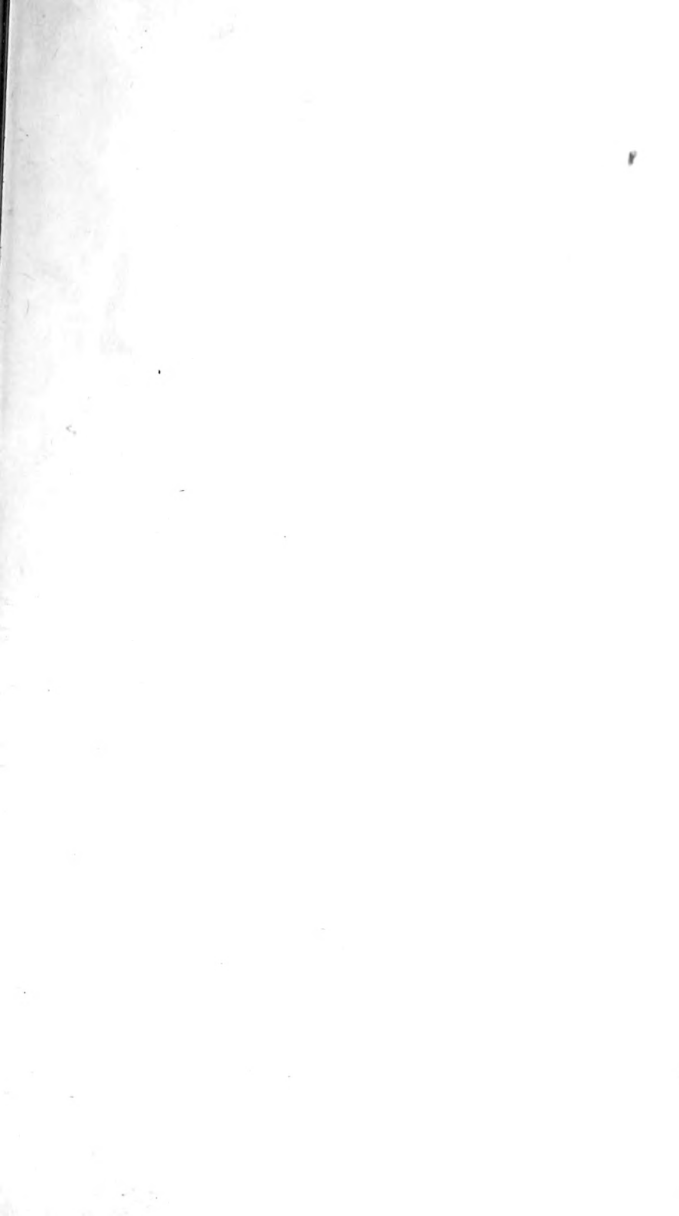
A perfect freedom of trade therefore is a vision which it is to be feared can never be realized. But still it should be our object to make as near approaches to it as we can. It should always be considered as the great general rule. And when any deviations from it are proposed, those who propose them are bound clearly to make out the exception.

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