

not being produced it is either because there is a sufficient abundance for all already, or else because, owing to something wrong in our social arrangements, the labourer receives so small a share of the produce of his labour that he has not money enough to buy with; and so the capitalist, whose real object in producing is to make a profit for himself, not to feed other people, will not produce the bread; in short, it is because the man who is in possession of the land won't grow the wheat, and not because there is any difficulty in growing it to any extent that may be required.

Why, then, it will be asked, is population driven to resort to inferior lands?

RESORT TO INFERIOR LANDS.

The orthodox explanation of this movement is that, as population increases, it *presses on subsistence*, and *compels* resort to inferior lands, subsistence becoming more difficult owing to the diminishing return.

The true explanation, we submit, is that as knowledge and skill improve and appliances multiply, lands that formerly could not be cultivated with profit now become worth cultivating, and so *invite* resort to them, no matter whether subsistence be short or not; subsistence becoming *easier* to procure in consequence of the diminishing labour required to secure a given product, and the increasing area rendered available.

According to the orthodox view, capital is the prime mover in industry, and will not move unless it sees its profit ahead; and it is assumed that all the land in a country (except in newly settled countries), which, at any given time, is profitable

to cultivate, is in cultivation, what lies outside being left uncultivated because it "doesn't pay."

But if it does not pay, how can mere increase of population pressing on subsistence make it pay, or make the capitalist content with a less profit? What is population to him?

Population pressing on subsistence means people getting hungrier and poorer, and less able to give paying prices. The effect would be rather to throw out of cultivation the worse lands in use than to bring into use worse land still, for a paying price is all that capital cares about. It will not resort to inferior land merely because food is getting scarce and people hungry; that would be contrary to all its instincts, contrary to the fundamental assumption on which the orthodox view rests.

But when, through improved instruments or methods or diminished cost of transport, or what not, the cost of placing a given produce in the market is so reduced that land which formerly did not pay will now yield, not as great a bulk, but as great a profit as better land did before, then capital will step very quickly on to these lands without waiting to ask whether population is pressing on subsistence or not, for subsistence is far from being the only thing that land will profitably produce.

It may be that there is subsistence enough already with a balance over to carry on, so that to produce more would be a needless over-production of perishable goods; or it may be that there is not enough (though that never really happens in countries that have once fairly entered on the progressive stage), but that those for whom there is not enough are paupers, and could not pay for it if there were enough, in which case capital would not think of producing it. But neither of these conditions will prevent capital from immediately utilising the inferior lands now become profitable, for if there is no subsistence wanted there are comforts and luxuries

to be got out of the soil, and these will always sell. There is always flax, wool, silk, cotton, to make fancy fabrics, draperies, and hangings of State, over and above needful clothing. There are always dyes and scents, flowers and ornamental shrubs, alcohol, tobacco, and condiments. Even simple food-products can be grown for other purposes than human food; to be used up for manufacturing purposes, as starch, etc., or for maintaining sporting dogs, horses, and game. There are always, in short, articles of mere luxury which the soil will produce, and which rich people will buy though the poor be starving, and the prospect of this is quite enough to attract capital to inferior lands without any pressure of population on subsistence.

Production, indeed, so far from falling short of subsistence, far and away outstrips it, and yet falls short still further of its possibilities. That is to say, there is always land in abundance that will yield useful products in abundance more than there are people effectively to cultivate it. If it were not so, then indeed we should be face to face with the Law of Diminishing Area; Malthus's bugbear would become a substantial and awful reality; and the further increase of population would be effectually stopped.

Resort to inferior lands, then, is not caused by population pressing on subsistence, but by the increasing productiveness of labour making lands profitable that were not profitable before. It would go on all the same were subsistence even more ahead of population than it is, and it is a sign not of increasing difficulty, but of increasing facility of providing subsistence, and of supplying all secondary satisfactions.
