

Sismondi on Population

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*For decades after 1798, the year of appearance of Malthus's first Essay, writers on population theory felt compelled to define their position on key issues either by endorsing or criticizing Malthus. The treatment of population theory by the eminent Geneva-born Swiss historian and economist Léonard Simonde de Sismondi (1773–1842) illustrates both these intellectual influences. In his two principal contributions to economic theory, *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique* (1819) and *Etudes sur l'économie politique* (1837–38), population questions are treated in depth. Sismondi was acutely aware of the precarious material condition of the laboring classes and searched for social policies capable of alleviating poverty and unemployment. His analysis adopts important elements of the Malthusian formulations but also offers trenchant criticisms of some central tenets of Malthus's theory; he objects, in particular, to the notion of food supply as governor of population growth.*

*An earlier work by Sismondi, his book-length article *Political Economy*, written in 1815 for Brewster's *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, exhibits all the important elements of his thinking about population and its relationship to economic change. Sismondi stresses the centrality of social organization as a regulator of the factors affecting population growth, including fertility. His comments on the effects of bad government reflect his interest in institutions and institutional reform. Like Malthus, and before him, Adam Smith, he sees the supply of labor as responding to the demand for labor, but Sismondi's understanding of the vicissitudes and possible derailments in the dynamic adjustment process is deeper. Criticizing Malthus, Sismondi notes the logical flaw in juxtaposing the abstract tendency of population to increase and the "increase of animals and vegetables in a confined place, under circumstances more and more unfavorable." Abstractly, food also grows by geometric progression. As a historical proposition, "population has never reached the limit of subsistence, and probably it never will."*

*With the exception of the last few pages, Chapter VII (entitled "Of Population") of Sismondi's *Political Economy* is reproduced below. A facsimile edition of the full text of this work was published in 1966 by Augustus M. Kelley, New York.*

We have defined political economy, as being the investigation of the means, by which the greatest number of men in a given state may participate in the highest degree of physical happiness, so far as it depends on government. Two elements, indeed, must always be received in connexion by the legislature; the increase of happiness in intensity, and the diffusion of it among all classes of subjects. It is thus that political economy, on a great scale,

becomes the theory of beneficence; and that every thing which does not in the long run concern the happiness of men belongs not to this science.

The human race originating in a single family, has multiplied, and spread itself by degrees over the globe; and much time was of course required, before it could be adjusted to the means of subsistence, which different parts of this globe are capable of supplying. We see this work of nature repeated in new countries, or in a colony established in a desert region. A state which passes from barbarism to a higher stage of civilization, cannot all on a sudden become covered with as many inhabitants as it may comfortably support: as the earth has been wasted several times; as the greater part of its provinces has been by turns plunged into a state of desolation, to arise from it slowly afterwards, we have often had the opportunity of witnessing this spectacle of a growing population. We are accustomed to consider it as the mark of prosperity and good government; and hence our law and constitution all tend to favour this increase, though to increase the symptoms of prosperity is very different from increasing prosperity itself.

Nature has attended to the multiplication of races with a kind of profusion. Although that of man is among the slowest in its progress, it may increase, when all circumstances are favourable, far more quickly than any of our observations indicate. When every man has a great interest in bringing up a family, and has the means of doing so; when all marry, and all as young as nature permits; when they continue to have children till the approaches of old age, their posterity increases so as very quickly to occupy all the allotted space. In several countries, in consequence of the social organization, not above a fourth part of the individuals marry; the rest grow old in celibacy. Yet this fourth is of itself sufficient to keep up the population at the same level. If their brothers and sisters could also marry with the same advantage, the population would be quadrupled in a single generation.

Thus, every nation very soon arrives at the degree of population which it can attain without changing its social institutions. It soon arrives at counting as many individuals as it can maintain with a revenue so limited, and so distributed. If a great transient calamity, a war, a pestilence, a famine, have left a great void in the population, should those events be followed by a period of general security and comfort, this renewing power of human generation is speedily developed; and an observer is astonished to see how few years are required to obliterate all traces of a scourge, which seemed to have unpeopled the earth. But, on the other hand, so soon as this term has been reached, a greater increase of the population is a national calamity; the earth soon consumes those whom it cannot feed. The more numerous births are, the more will mortality display its ravages, to maintain constantly the same level; and this mortality, the effect of misery and suffering, is preceded by the lengthened punishment, not of those who perish only, but of those who have struggled with them for existence.

In every country, it is essential to know well those different periods of increase, of stagnation and decline, in order to adapt the laws, and all social institutions, to the circumstances; and not, as has too frequently been done, to hasten, with all our efforts, the destruction we ought most to fear.

So long as a great part of the country is uncultivated; as land proper for liberally rewarding rural labour is covered only with spontaneous production; as even the part under tillage is imperfectly worked; as the soil is not rendered healthy, the marshes drained, the hills protected against precipitations, the fields defended against the ruinous force of nature; so long as all this is not done merely for want of hands—it is desirable for the happiness of agriculturists, and for that of the nation living on their labour, that the class of cultivators should be increased, and enabled to accomplish the task reserved for them.

So long as the objects produced by the industrious arts are imperfectly supplied to the consumer, or at least as he cannot procure them except by a sacrifice quite disproportionate to their value; so long as he is constrained to furnish himself coarsely by domestic industry, for want of opportunity to buy furniture, effects, clothes, proper for his use; so long as his enjoyments are restricted by the inconveniences of all the utensils with which he is obliged to content himself,—it is desirable that the manufacturing population increase; since, from the need there is of such a population, it might evidently live in comfort, and contribute to the enjoyment of other classes.

So long as all hands are in such a degree necessary for agriculture, and manufactures, or trade which serves them, that the guardian professions, equally useful to society, are badly filled up—it is desirable that population continue to increase, that so interior order, security of person and property, may be better protected, health better attended to, the soul better nourished, the mind more enlightened; and that society may be externally defended with sufficient force, comprehending even the rapid recruitment of a sea or land army, which consume population.

This population, indeed, whenever it is required, will quickly be replaced. But it is not enough that it be replaced, if it cannot find the niche, to which it is destined. Sometimes a fertile soil is in vain abundant, and remains uncultivated. There is no chance of the most numerous population assembled in its neighbourhood coming to profit by its resources. This soil has become the property of a few families; it is declared indivisible and unalienable; it will always pass to a single proprietor, according to the order of primogeniture, without the capacity either to be subjected to an emphyteutic lease, or burdened with a mortgage. The proprietor has not the capital necessary for its cultivation; he can give no security to such as have this capital, that will engage them to employ it in his land. Thus the idle population of Rome in vain calls for labour; the waste Campagna di Roma in vain calls for labourers: the social organization is bad; and so long as this shall remain

unchanged, the day-labourer will perish from penury, on the surface of fields which, for want of culture, are returning to their wild state; and the population, far from increasing, will diminish.

On the same principle in manufactures, the rich proprietors of Poland will in vain require all the produce of luxury; the bad condition of the roads, prohibiting every distant transport, will in vain present superior advantages to national industry; oppression and servitude destroy all energy, all spirit of enterprise in the lower class. Elsewhere ruinous monopolies, absurd privileges, affrighting advances, ignorance, barbarity, and want of security, will render the progress of manufactures impossible; no capital will be accumulated to animate them. In those cases, to increase the population will not increase industry. The births will in vain be doubled, be quadrupled, during a certain number of years; they will not afford an additional workman, they will only be followed by a proportionably quicker mortality. The social organization is bad; so long as this shall remain unchanged, population cannot increase.

The guardian population is fed as well as recruited by the other classes. It is not sufficient that many children are born; unless their parents enjoy a certain degree of opulence, they can never bring them up to the age of men; the prince can never make soldiers of them. In this case, wars by land or sea will devour the population; whilst they employ only its superfluity, the social organization is good.

The population is always measured, in the long run, by the demand for labour. Wherever labour is required, and a sufficient wage offered, the workmen will arise to earn it. The population, with its expansive force, will occupy the place which is found vacant. Subsistence will also arise for the workmen, or in case of need, be imported. The same demand which calls a man into existence, will likewise recompense the agricultural labour which provides him with food. If the demand for labour cease, the workman will perish, yet not without a struggle, in which not he alone will suffer, but all his brethren and his rivals. The subsistence which enabled him to live, and which henceforth he cannot pay for, and cannot demand, will, in its turn, cease to be produced. Thus national happiness rests on the demand for labour, but on a regular and perpetual demand. For, on the contrary, a demand which is intermittent, after having formed workmen, condemns them to suffering and death; it would be far better if they never had existed.

We have seen that the demand for labour, the cause of production, must be proportional to revenue which supports consumption; that this revenue, in its turn, originates in the national wealth, which wealth is formed and augmented by labour. Thus, in political economy, all things are linked together, we move constantly in a circle, since each effect becomes a cause in its turn. Yet all things are progressive, provided that each movement is adjusted to the rest; but all stops, all retrogrades, whenever one of the

movements which ought to be combined is disordered. According to the natural march of things, an augmentation of wealth will produce an augmentation of revenue; from this will arise an increase of consumption, next an increase of labour for reproduction, and therewith of population; and, finally, this new labour will, in its turn, increase the national wealth. But if, by unreasonable measures, any one of those operations is hastened without regard to all the rest, the whole system is deranged, and the poor are weighed down with suffering, instead of the happiness which was anticipated for them.

The object of society is not fulfilled, so long as the country occupied by this society, presents means of supporting a new population, of enabling it to live in happiness and abundance, whilst yet those means are not resorted to. The multiplication of happiness over the earth, is the object of Providence; it is stamped in all his works, and the duty of men in their human society is to co-operate in it.

The government which, by oppression of its subjects, by its contempt for justice and order, by the shackles it puts on agriculture and industry, condemns fertile countries to be deserts, sins not against its own subjects alone; its tyranny is a crime against human society, on the whole of which it inflicts suffering; it weakens its rights over the country occupied by it, and as it troubles the enjoyments of all other states, it gives to all others the right of controlling it. All men are mutually necessary to each other. Europe has a double need of the subsistence which it might procure from Barbary, if this magnificent shore of Africa were given back to civilization, and from the consumers we should soon find there. The institution of property is the result of social conventions. In a society subjected to laws and a regulating government, the interest of each may be implicitly relied on for producing the advantage of all, because the aberrations of this private interest are, in every case of need, limited by public authority. But, in the great human society formed among independent nations, there is no law or general government to repress the passions of each sovereign: besides, the interest of those sovereigns is not necessarily conformable to that of their subjects; or, to speak more correctly, the one is contrary to the other, whenever the object of the rulers is to maintain their tyranny. Thus respect for the pretended right of property claimed by each government over its territory, is not referrible to the right of private property, and, besides, it cannot be reciprocal. The same circumstances which cause a tyrannical government to impede its own civilization, render it equally incapable of respecting that of its neighbours, and submitting to the laws of nations.

But whilst more than three quarters of the habitable globe are, by the faults of their governments, deprived of the inhabitants they should support, we, at the present day, in almost the whole of Europe, experience the opposite calamity, that of not being able to maintain a superabundant population,

which surpasses the proportion of labour required, and which, before dying of poverty, will diffuse its sufferings over the whole class of such as live by the labour of their hands. For our part, we owe this calamity to the imprudent zeal of our governments. With us, religious instruction, legislation, social organization, every thing has tended to produce a population, the existence of which was not provided for beforehand. The labour was not adjusted to the number of men; and, frequently, the same zeal with which it was attempted to multiply the number of births, was afterwards employed, in all arts, to diminish the required number of hands. The proportion which should subsist in the progress of the different departments of society has been broken, and the suffering has become universal.

Mr. Malthus, the first writer who awakened public attention to this calamity, under which nations have long suffered, without knowing it, whilst he gave an alarm to legislators, did not reach the true principles which he seemed on the road to find. On reading his writings, one is struck at once with an essential error in his reasoning, and with the importance of the facts to which he appeals. Such confusion, in a matter to which the happiness of man is attached, may produce the most fatal consequences. By rigorously applying principles deficient in accuracy, the most grievous errors may be committed; and if, on the other hand, the error is discovered, there is a risk of simultaneously rejecting both the observations and the precepts.

Mr. Malthus established as a principle that the population of every country is limited by the quantity of subsistence which that country can furnish. This proposition is true only when applied to the whole terrestrial globe, or to a country which has no possibility of trade; in all other cases, foreign trade modifies it; and, farther, which is more important, this proposition is but abstractly true,—true in a manner inapplicable to political economy. Population has never reached the limit of subsistence, and probably it never will. Long before the population can be arrested by the inability of the country to produce more food, it is arrested by the inability of the population to purchase that food, or to labour in producing it.

The whole population of a state, says Mr. Malthus, may be doubled every twenty-five years; it would thus follow a geometrical progression: but the labour employed to meliorate a soil, already in culture, can add to its produce nothing but quantities continually decreasing. Admitting that, during the first twenty-five years, the produce of land has been doubled, during the second we shall scarcely succeed in compelling it to produce a half more, then a third more, then a fourth. Thus the progress of subsistence will not follow the geometrical, but the arithmetical progression; and, in the course of two centuries, whilst the population increases, as the numbers, 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, subsistence will increase not faster than the numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

This reasoning, which serves as a basis to the system of Mr. Malthus,

and to which he incessantly appeals, through the whole course of his book, is completely sophistical. It opposes the possible increase of the human population, considered abstractly, and without regarding circumstances, to the positive increase of animals and vegetables in a confined place, under circumstances more and more unfavourable. They ought not thus to be compared. Abstractly, the multiplication of food follows a geometrical progression, no less than the multiplication of men. It follows it only in a much more rapid manner. In a given space and time, this progression is not followed any more by the one species than the other. Population is arrested first, and arrests subsistence in its turn; when the obstacle is removed, both begin again to increase, till they reach a new limit, equally common to both; and the history of the universe has never yet presented the example of a country in which the multiplication of food could not be more rapid than that of the co-existent population.

In a state absolutely savage, men live on the produce of hunting and fishing. The fish and the game are multiplied like man, in a geometrical progression, but much more rapid than the one he follows. Man, it is true, hinders their reproduction by destroying them; but, on the other hand, they arrest his; for it is not certainly among nations of hunters that the population is doubled every twenty-five years; and whenever this destruction is suspended, the reproduction of game will be much more rapid than that of men.

The progress of civilization substitutes the pastoral life for a life of hunting; and the natural produce of the ground, better managed, is sufficient for a much more numerous population of men and of animals. The deserts, which scarcely support five hundred Cherokee hunters, would be sufficient for ten thousand Tartar shepherds, with all their flocks; the multiplication of the latter is always much more rapid than that of men; whilst the production of a man requires twenty-five years, that of an ox requires but five, of a sheep but two, of a hog but one. The number of oxen may be doubled in six years, that of sheep in three, that of hogs may be rendered ten times as great in two years. Whenever a shepherd gains possession of a country formerly abandoned to hunting, the multiplication of his flocks will greatly precede that of his family; when, afterwards, one of the two is arrested, the other will be so too.

But when civilization makes a new step, pastoral nations abandon their flocks for agriculture; and, instead of trusting to the natural productions of the vegetable kingdom, they produce and multiply them by their labours. It is calculated that thirty families may live on the corn produced by a piece of ground, which would have supported only a single family by its produce in cattle. At the time, therefore, when a nation passes from the pastoral to the agricultural state, it in some sense acquires a country thirty times as large as the one it formerly occupied. If the whole of this country is not cultivated,

if even in the most civilized kingdoms, there remains a vast extent of fertile land still employed in unprofitable pasturage, it is an evident proof that other causes than want of subsistence prevent the development of population.

The multiplication of vegetables follows a geometrical progression much more rapid still than the multiplication of cattle. In common tillage, corn increases five-fold in the course of a year; potatoes ten-fold in the same space of time. The latter vegetable, to produce a given quantity of food, scarcely requires the tenth part of the ground which corn would occupy. Yet even in the most populous countries, men are very far from having planted all their corn fields with potatoes; from having sown all their pasturages with corn; from having converted into pasturage all their woods, all their deserts abandoned to hunting. Those things are a fund of reserve remaining to every nation; and, by means of them, if a new demand for labour should suddenly cause the population to increase as rapidly as the nature of man can permit, the multiplication of food would still precede it.

The demand for labour which the capital of a country can pay, and not the quantity of food which that country can produce, regulates the population. In political economy nothing is reckoned a demand but what is accompanied with a sufficient compensation for the thing demanded. If no fault has been committed on the part of government, if no dangerous prejudice has been diffused among the people, very few men will think of marrying, and burdening their hands with the subsistence of individuals unable to procure it themselves, till they have first acquired an establishment. But whenever a new demand for labour raises their wages, and thus increases their revenue, they hasten to satisfy one of the first laws of nature, and seek in marriage a new source of happiness. If the rise of wages was but momentary; if, for example, the favours granted by government suddenly give a great development to a species of manufacture, which, after its commencement, cannot be maintained, the workmen, whose remuneration was double during some time, will all have married to profit by their opulence; and then, at the moment when their trade declines, families disproportionate to the actual demand of labour will be plunged into the most dreadful wretchedness.

It is those variations in the demand for labour, this sort of revolution so frequent in the lives of poor artisans, that gives to the state a superabundant population. Already brought into the world, that population finds no longer any room to exist there; it is always ready to be satisfied with the lowest terms on which it may be permitted to live. There is no condition so hard that men are not found ready to engage in it voluntarily. In some trades, the workmen are obliged to live in mud, exposed to continual nausea; in others, the labour engenders painful and inevitable maladies; several stupify the senses, degrade the body and the soul; several employ none but children, and after introducing into life, abandon to a horrible indigence the being

they have formed. There are callings, in fine, which public opinion brands with infamy: there are some which deserve this condemnation. Yet the ranks are always full; and a miserable wage, scarce sufficient for existence, induces men to undergo so many evils. The reason is, society does not leave them any choice; they are compelled to be contented with this cruel lot, or not to live. The duty of governments to succour so much wretchedness cannot be doubtful, for they are almost always the cause of this wretched population's being created; but, at the same time they ought not to forget that it is their part to save from indigence the miserable creatures already in existence, though at the same time discouraging them from perpetuating their race. Assistance given to the poor has often done the contrary.

Religious instruction has almost always strongly contributed to destroy the equilibrium between the population and the demand for labour which is to give it subsistence. When questions of moral polity are introduced in a religious system, it almost constantly happens, that the cause of the precept is absolutely separated from the precept itself; and a rule, which should be modified by circumstances, becomes an invariable law. Religions began with the origin of the human race; and therefore at a time when the rapid progress of population was every where desirable; their principles have not yet changed, now when the unlimited increase of families has given birth only to beings, of necessity condemned to physical suffering or moral degradation.

A Chinese knows no greater misfortune, no deeper humiliation, than not to leave sons behind him to perform the funeral honours at his death. In almost all other creeds the indefinite increase of families has ever been represented as a blessing of heaven. On the other hand, whilst religion repressed irregularity of morals, it attached all morality of conduct to marriage, and washed away, by the nuptial benediction alone, whatever was reprehensible in the imprudence of him who inconsiderately contracted the bonds of paternity. Yet, how important soever purity of morals may be, the duties of a father towards those whom he brings into existence are of a still higher order. Children born but for wretchedness, are also born but for vice. The happiness and the virtue of innocent and defenceless beings are thus sacrificed beforehand, to satisfy the passions of a day. The ardour of casuists in preaching up marriage to correct a fault; the imprudence with which they recommend husbands to shut their eyes upon the future, to entrust the fate of their children to Providence; the ignorance of social order, which has induced them to erase chastity from the number of virtues proper in marriage, are causes which have been incessantly active in destroying the proportion which naturally would have established itself between the population and its means of existing.

The Catholic faith has sometimes gained credit for its religious vows; which by forbidding marriage to a certain number of individuals, seemed to offer some opposition to an unlimited multiplication of the human species.

But those who consider it thus, certainly do not understand another very important part of the legislation of casuists, with regard to all that they have named the duties of husbands. Considering marriage as solely destined for multiplication, they have made a sin of the very virtues which they enforce on single persons. This morality is enforced by every confessor on every father and mother of a family. The effects of it are powerfully felt in the social organization of Catholic countries. They are met with even in reformed churches.

When fatal prejudices are not honoured; when a system of morality contrary to our true duties towards others, and above all towards those indebted to us for life, is not taught in the name of the most sacred authority, no wise man will marry till he is in a condition that affords him sure means of living, no father of a family will have more children than he can conveniently maintain. The latter expects that his children will be satisfied with the lot in which he has lived; hence he will wish the rising generation exactly to represent that which is departing; he will wish that a son and a daughter arrived at the age of marriage, should fill the place of his father and his mother; that his children's children should fill his place and his wife's, in their turn; his daughter will find in another house exactly the lot which he will give to the daughter of another house in his own; and the income which satisfied the fathers will satisfy the children.

When once this family is formed, justice and humanity require that they submit to the same constraints which single people undergo. On considering how small is the number of natural children in every country, it ought to be admitted that this constraint is sufficiently effectual. In a country where population cannot increase, where new places do not exist for new establishments, the father who has eight children should reckon either that six of his children will die young, or that three contemporary males and their contemporary females; or in the following generation three of his sons and three of his daughters will not marry on his account. There is no less injustice in the second calculation than cruelty in the first. If marriage is sacred; if it is one great means of attaching men to virtue, and recompensing the chagrins of declining years, by the growing hopes of allowing an honourable old age to succeed an active youth, it is not because this institution renders lawful the pleasures of sense, but because it imposes new duties on the father of a family, and returns him the sweetest recompense in the ties of husband and father. Religious morality ought therefore to teach men, that marriage is made for all citizens equally; that it is the object towards which they should all direct their efforts; but that this object has not been attained except so far as they are able to fulfil their duties towards the beings whom they call into existence: and after obtaining the happiness of being fathers, after renewing their families, and giving this stay and hope to their declining years, they are no less obliged to live chastely with their wives, than single persons with such as do not belong to them.

Self-interest powerfully warns men against this indefinite multiplication of their families, to which they have been invited by so fatal a religious error, and no one ought to be disquieted if this order is observed remissly. In general at least three births are required to give two such individuals as arrive at the age of marriage; and the niches of population are not so exactly formed, that they cannot by turns admit a little more and a little less. Only government ought to awaken the prudence of citizens deficient in it, and never to deceive them by hopes of an independent lot, when this illusory establishment shall leave them exposed to misery, suffering, and death.

When peasants are proprietors, the agricultural population stops of itself, when it has brought about a division of the land, such that each family is invited to labour, and may live in comfortable circumstances. This is the case in almost all the Swiss cantons, which follow nothing but agriculture. When two or more sons are found in one family, the younger do not marry till they can find wives who bring them some property. Till then, they work day-labour, and live by means of it. But among peasant-cultivators the trade of day-labour does not afford a rank; and the workman who has nothing but his limbs, can rarely find a father imprudent enough to give him his daughter.

When the land, instead of being cultivated by its proprietors, is cultivated by farmers, metayers, day-labourers, the condition of the latter classes becomes more precarious, and their multiplication is not so necessarily adjusted to the demand for their labour. They are far worse informed than the peasant-proprietor, and yet they are called to perform a much more complicated calculation. Living under the risk of being dismissed at a day's notice from the land they till, it is less a question with them what this land will give, than what is their chance of being employed elsewhere. They calculate probabilities in place of certainties, and commit themselves to fortune with regard to what they cannot investigate. They depend on being happy; they marry much younger; they bring into the world many more children, precisely because they know less distinctly how those children are to be established.

Thus metayers, day-labourers, all peasants depending on a master, being more imperfectly able to judge of their situation by themselves, ought to be guided and protected by government. Landed proprietors wield all the force of monopoly against them; whilst day-labourers, acting in competition with each other, are finally reduced to work for the most wretched subsistence. Those measures are wise, therefore, which have been adopted by legislators to fix the minimum share that should fall to each peasant. It would, in general, be a beneficent law which should permit no division of a metairie below a certain limit, no reduction below a half on the metayer's part. It is a beneficent law which has fixed the peasant's lot in Austria; a law which should invariably fix the Russian peasant's capitation to his landlord, would be equivalent to an emancipation from serfage, and free from all the con-

vulsions of such a step. The Russian nation could not, perhaps, receive a greater benefit from its government. The statute of Elizabeth, in fine, was wise in prohibiting a cottage from being built without at least four acres of land being allotted to it. Had this law been executed in England and Ireland, no marriage could have happened among day-labourers without a cottage to shelter the family, no cottager would have been reduced to the last degree of penury.

The industrious population which inhabit towns have still fewer data than those of the country, for calculating the lot of the succeeding generation. The workman knows only that he has lived by his labour; he naturally believes that his children will do so likewise. How can he judge of the extent of the market, or the general demand for labour in his country, whilst the master who employs him is incessantly mistaken on these points? Accordingly, this class, more dependent than any other on chances of every kind for its subsistence, is exactly the class which calculates those chances least in the formation of a family. They are the people who marry soonest, produce most children, and consequently lose most: but they do not lose their children, till after being themselves exposed to a competition which deprives them successively of all the sweets of life.

At the time when all towns were distributed into bodies of tradesmen, when a calling could not be exercised till the applicant had been united to a corporation, a workman never married till after he had been *passed master*. A reception into the trade gave him the certainty of being able to maintain his family; an excessive competition did not expose the great mass of the population to the danger of dying from hunger. Thus, all the institutions created in the republics of the middle ages, and reproduced in Queen Elizabeth's statute of apprenticeship, though keenly attacked by Adam Smith, for establishing a monopoly contrary to the consumer's interest, may be defended, not in regard to the increase of riches, but as forming a necessary obstacle to the immoderate increase of population.

Yet because the system we follow has made us experience a calamity, we ought not to imagine that no escape is to be found, except by rushing into the opposite extreme. It is not by the suppression of corporations alone, that we have disproportionately increased the manufacturing population. It is much more by the inordinate encouragement which all governments, at the same time, have given to production without attending to consumption. We have already pointed out the results of this imprudent struggle, in regard to the increase of wealth. They have been still more disastrous in producing and supporting with deceitful hopes a population, which has afterwards been abandoned to all the horrors of want.

A state ought, doubtless, to receive with gratitude whatever new industry the wants of consumers may develop; but it also ought to allow the industry which is quitting it to depart, without any effort to the contrary. When the profits of a manufacture diminish, new workmen do not engage

in it; former workmen withdraw; and after some years of suffering, too long and too cruel, by any mode of treatment, the level is again established. But if the favours of government keep up the staggering manufacture; if, trying to save it, government offers bounties for the discovery of any machine which shall spare manual labour, it will prolong suffering, and save the manufacturer only at the expense of those whom that manufacturer should support.

The guardian population presents the same species of suffering in another rank of society. War multiplies the commissions of officers in the army and navy; the complicity of administration multiplies the places of judges and civil agents of all kinds. Religious zeal multiplies the places for pastors. All of them live on pensions with a certain degree of opulence; none of them knows, or is able to insure the fund which affords him subsistence. They reckon on ushering their children into the same career with themselves; they bring them up, multiply their families in proportion to their actual opulence, and blindly repose on the future. Their pension, however, finishes with their life; and at death they leave their children in a state of indigence, the suffering of which is farther aggravated by the possession of a liberal education. The laws which obstruct the marriage of officers, judges, clergymen, and generally of all such as live on pensions, how hard soever those laws may appear at their first establishment, are justifiable, because they save from poverty the class to which its torments would be most piercing.

But an inordinate increase of population is not the only cause of this national suffering. The demand for labour may decrease, and the population continue stationary. Consumption may be arrested, revenues dissipated, capital destroyed, and the number of hands formerly occupied may no longer be able to find a sufficient employment. The population immediately follows the revolution of the capitals destined to support it. As day-labourers are more eager to receive even the smallest wage, than merchants to employ their money, the former are laid under conditions more and more hard, as the demand on the capital diminishes; and they conclude by contenting themselves with so miserable a remuneration, as is scarcely sufficient to maintain them alive. No enjoyment is any longer attached to the existence of this unhappy class; hunger and suffering stifle in them all the moral affections. When every hour is a struggle for life, all passions are concentrated in selfishness; each forgets the pain of others in what himself suffers; the sentiments of nature are blunted; a constant, obstinate, uniform labour, debases all the faculties. One blushes for the human species, to see how low on the scale of degradation it can descend; how much beneath the condition of animals it can voluntarily submit to maintain life; and, notwithstanding all the benefits of social order, notwithstanding the advantages which man has gained from the arts, one is sometimes tempted to execrate the division of labour, and the invention of manufactures, on beholding to what extremes of wretchedness they have reduced beings created equal with ourselves.

The misery of the savage hunter, who dies so frequently of hunger, is

not equal to that of millions of families, whom a manufacturer sometimes dismisses; because at least there remains to the former all the energy, and all the intelligence, which he has put to proof during all his life. When he dies for want of finding game, he yields to a necessity which nature herself presents, and to which he knew, from the beginning, he must submit, as to sickness, or to old age. But the artisan, dismissed from his workshop, with his wife and children, has beforehand lost the strength of his soul and his body; he is still surrounded with riches; he still sees beside him, at every step, the food which he requires; and if society refuses him the labour by which he offers, till his last moment, to purchase bread, it is men, not nature, that he blames.

Even when persons do not actually die of hunger; even when the aids of charity are eagerly administered to all indigent families, discouragement and suffering produce their cruel effects on the poor, the diseases of the soul are communicated to the body, epidemics are multiplied, children die in a few months after their birth, and the suppression of labour causes more cruel ravages than the cruellest war: besides, fatal habits, either of mendicity or idleness, take root in the population; another course is given to trade, another direction to fashion, and even after death has cleared the ranks of workmen, those who remain are no longer in a condition to support the competition of foreigners.

The causes of diminution in the demand for labour, often belong to polity, properly so called, rather than to political economy. There is, perhaps, none more efficacious than the loss or diminution of liberty. When a nation begins to alienate this precious possession, each citizen thinks himself less secure of his fortune, or the fruits of his labour; each abates something of the activity of his mind, and his spirit of industry. The virtues which accompany labour,—sobriety, constancy, economy,—give place to the vices of idleness, to intemperance, dissipation, and forgetfulness of the future. Trade, industry, activity, are regarded with contempt, in a state where the people are nothing, whilst all distinction, all honours, are reserved for noble indolence. Favour, intrigue, flattery, and all the arts of courtiers, which debase the soul, are roads to fortune, much more sure and rapid than strength of character, bold and enterprising activity, or a spirit of speculation. Intriguers are multiplied daily; they regard with contempt those who follow the only honourable path to fortune, that in which none makes progress except by his merit or his labour.