

## CHAPTER X

### *Consequences and developments of the two preceding chapters.*

LET us always return to the point of departure. An animated being, and especially man, is endowed with sensibility and activity,\* with passion and action, that is to say with wants and means. While we were considering the manner in which our riches are formed, we might be charmed with our power and the extent of our means; in fact these are sufficient to render the species prosperous, and give it a great augmentation, both in number and in force. A man and woman, inept and scarcely formed, might end by covering the whole earth with a numerous and industrious population. This picture is very satisfactory; but it changes essentially its colour, when, from the examination of the formation of our riches, we pass to that of their distribution amongst the different individuals. There we every where find the superiority of wants over means; the weakness of the individual, and his inevitable sufferings. But this second aspect of the same object ought neither to disgust nor discourage us. We are thus formed—such is our nature; we must submit, and make the most we can of it by a skilful use of all our means, and by avoiding the faults which aggravate our evils.

The two chapters which we have just read, although very short, embrace important facts; and, joined to prior explanations, give notions sufficiently certain on our true interests. It only remains to profit of them.

We have seen, that we must be satisfied to permit an opposition of interests, and an inequality of means to exist among us; and that the best we can do is to leave to every one the freest employment of his faculties, and to favour their entire development. We have moreover seen that this employment and development of faculties, although profiting unequally the different individuals, succeeded, in conducting all to the

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\*We might say with nerves and muscles, for it goes to that.

highest state of well-being possible, so long as space, the greatest of all resources, was not wanting; and that when all the land is occupied, other subsidiary resources sufficed to support for a long time a high state of general prosperity.

We have also seen that, having once arrived to the period of being crowded and constrained, it is inevitable that those who have the smallest means will be able to procure by the employment of these means, but a bare satisfaction of their most urgent wants.

We have finally seen that, the multiplication of men continuing in all the classes of society, the superfluity of the first has been successively cast into the inferior classes; and that that of the last having no longer any resource, has been necessarily destroyed by wretchedness. It is this which causes the stationary and even retrograde state of population, wherever it is found, in spite of the great fecundity of the species.

This latter fact, population nearly stationary in all nations arrived to a certain degree of development, was for a long time scarcely remarked; because it is but lately, that we have begun to occupy ourselves with some success on social economy. It has ever been concealed by political commotions, which have produced disturbers of it; and has been disguised by the unfaithful or insufficient monuments of history, which have authorized mistakes. Finally, when it has been sufficiently observed and established, it has been with difficulty attributed to the real cause; because they had not an idea sufficiently clear of the progress of society, and of the manner in which its riches and power are formed. At this day, it appears to me we are able to put all this beyond a doubt.

Let us recollect that society is divided into two great classes, that of men, who, without having any thing in advance, work for wages—and that of men who employ them. This granted, it is evident that the first—taken in mass—live, daily and yearly, only on what the totality of the second has to distribute to them every day and every year. Now this latter class is of two kinds: the one lives on their revenue, without labour.

These are the lenders of money, the lessors of lands and houses—and in a word the annuitants of every kind. It is very clear that these men, in the long run, cannot give more in a year to those they employ than the amount of their revenue, or they would encroach on their funds. There is always a certain number who use them thus, and who ruin themselves. Their consumption diminishes or ceases; but it is replaced by those who become enriched, and the total continues

the same. This is but a change of hands, of which even the ordinary quantity may be nearly estimated in the different countries. These men, taken in mass, make no profit; thus the sum total of their revenue, which is divided amongst the hired, is a constant quantity. If it makes some insensible progress, it can only be by the slow improvement in agriculture; which, by rendering land a little more productive, furnishes ground for a small augmentation of rents. For as to the hire of their money lent, it does not vary. If ever it did augment by a rise in the rate of interest, it would be an evil which, injuring many enterprizes, would diminish much more the faculties of the second class, who feed those who work for wages.

This second kind of persons is composed of those who join to the product of their capital, that of their personal activity, that is to say the undertakers of any kind of industry whatsoever. It will be said that these make profits, and augment their means annually; but, first, this is not true of all. Many of them manage their affairs badly, and go to decay instead of thriving. Secondly, those who prosper, cease to labour after a certain time, and go to till the void which is daily produced in the class of those who live without doing any thing, by the fall of spendthrifts withdrawing from it in consequence of having badly managed their fortunes. Thirdly, in fine, and this is decisive, this class of undertakers has necessary limits, beyond which it cannot go. To form any enterprize whatever, it is not sufficient to have the desire and means: it is necessary to be able to dispose of the products in an advantageous manner, which more than defrays the expenses they cost. When once all profitable employments are filled, no new ones can be created, unless others fall, at least unless some new vents are opened. This second fund for the support of the hired class is also, then, in our ancient societies, a quantity nearly constant like the first.

Things being thus, we see clearly why the number of hired does not augment, when the funds which might provide for their support, cease to increase. It is because all who are born beyond the requisite number perish through want of the means of existence. This is very easy to be conceived. We even comprehend that it is impossible for it to be otherwise, for every one knows that if four persons are daily to divide a loaf of bread, barely sufficient for two, the weaker will perish, and the stronger will subsist only because they quickly inherit the portion of the others.

If we further observe, that when the men who live solely on their revenues multiply so much that this revenue suffices for them no longer, they return into the class of those who join their labour to the product of their funds; that is to say of those whom we have called undertakers—and that when these, in their turn, become too numerous, many are received and link into the class of hirelings, we shall see that this latter class receives as we may say the too great plenitude of all the others; and that, consequently, the limits beyond which it cannot go are those of the total production.

This single point, well elucidated, gives us an explanation of all the phenomena relative to population. It shows why it is retrograde in one country, stationary in another, while it is rapidly progressive in a third; why it is arrested sometimes sooner sometimes later, according to the degree of intelligence and of activity of different people, and the nature of their governments; why it is quickly re-established after great calamities of a transient nature, when the means of existence have not been destroyed; why, on the contrary, without any violent shock, it sometimes languishes and perishes gradually, from causes difficult to be perceived, from the single change of a circumstance little remarkable. In a word, it gives us the solution of all the questions of this kind, and moreover furnishes us with the means of drawing therefrom an infinity of important consequences. I am only embarrassed with their number, and the choice of those which I ought to notice.

I will commence by remarking, with satisfaction, that humanity, justice and policy, equally require that of all interests, those of the poor should always be the most consulted, and the most constantly respected; and by the poor I mean simple hirelings, and every where those whose labour is worst paid.

First, humanity: for we should observe, that when it respects the poor, the word interest has quite a different degree of energy, from what it has when men are spoken of whose wants are less urgent, and sometimes even imaginary. We every day say, that the interests of one minister are contrary to those of another; that such a body has interests opposed to those of another body; that it is the interest of certain undertakers, that the raw material should sell high; and the interest of some others to buy them low. And we often espouse these motives with warmth as if they were worth the trouble. Yet this means no more than that some men believe, and often erroneously, that they have a little more or a little less enjoyment under some circumstances



than under others. The poor, in his small sphere, has, assuredly, also interests of this kind; but they disappear before greater ones; we only do not perceive them—and, when we attend to him, the question is almost always on the possibility of his existence or the necessity of his destruction, that is to say of his life or his death. Humanity does not permit interests of this kind to be placed in the balance with simple conveniences.

Justice is equally opposed to it; and, moreover, it obliges us to take into consideration the number of those interested. Now, as the lowest class of society is every where much the most numerous, it follows, that whenever it is in opposition with others, what is useful to it, ought always to be preferred.

Policy leads us to the same result: for it is well agreed, that it is useful to a nation to be numerous and powerful. Now it has just been proved, that the extent to which the lower class can go, is that which determines the limits of the total population; and it is not less so by the experience of all ages and countries, that wherever this lowest class is too wretched, there is neither activity, nor industry, nor knowledge, nor real national force—and we may even say, nor interior tranquility well established.

This granted, let us examine what are the real interests of the poor; and we shall find that, effectually, they are always conformable to reason and the general interest. If they had always been studied in this spirit, we should have acquired sounder ideas of social order, and we would not have eternized war—sometimes secret, sometimes declared—which has always existed between the poor and the rich. Prejudices produce difficulties, reason resolves them.

We have already seen, that the poor are as much interested in the maintenance of the right of property as the most opulent: for the little they possess is every thing for them, and of consequence infinitely precious in their eyes; and they are sure of nothing, but so far as property is respected. They have still another reason for wishing it; it is that the funds on which they live, the sum of the capitals of those who employ them, is considerably diminished when property is not assured. Thus they have a direct interest, not only in the preservation of what they possess, but also in the preservation of what is possessed by others. Accordingly—notwithstanding that from the fatal effects of misery, of bad education, of the want of delicacy, and of a sense of injustice—it would perhaps be true to say, that it is in the lowest

class that most crimes are committed\* it is, however, also true, that it is this class which has the highest idea of the right of property, and in which the name of thief is the most odious. But when you speak of property, comprehend under this term, as the poor do, personal property, as well as that which is moveable and immoveable. The first is even the most sacred, since it is the source of the others. Respect that, in them, as you wish they should respect, in you, those which are derived from it; leave to him the free disposition of his faculties, and of their employment, as you wish him to leave to you that of your lands and capitals. This rule is as politic, as it is just and unattended to.

After the free disposition of his labour, the greatest interest of the poor man is that this labour should be dearly paid. Against this I hear violent outcries. All the superior classes of society—and in this view I even comprehend the smallest chief of a workshop—desire that the wages should be very low, in order that they may procure more labour for the same sum of money; and they desire it with so much fury, that when they can, and the laws permit them, they employ even violence to attain this end,—and they prefer the labour of slaves, or serfs, because it is still at a lower rate. These men do not fail to say, and persuade, that what they think is their interest, is the general interest; and that the low price of wages is absolutely necessary to the development of industry, to the extension of manufactures and commerce,—in a word, to the property of the state. Let us see how much truth there is in these observations.

I know it would be disagreeable that the price of workmanship should be so dear as to render it economical to draw from abroad all transportable things: for then those engaged in their fabrication would suffer, and would become extinct; it would be a foreign population which the consumers would pay, and support, instead of a national one. But, first, this degree of dearness would be no longer for the interest of the poor, since, instead of being well paid, they would want employment; and, moreover, it is impossible, or at least it could not continue; because, on one part, the hirelings would lower their pretensions so soon as they found themselves out of employ; and, on the other, if the price of a days' work still remained so high as to afford

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\*This is very doubtful, if we take into consideration the difference in the number of individuals.

them a great degree of ease, they would soon multiply sufficiently to be obliged to offer their labour at a lower rate. I add that if nevertheless the price of workmanship should still remain too high, it would no longer be to the scarcity of workmen that it ought to be attributed, but to unskilfulness and bad workmanship; and then it would be the unskilfulness, ignorance, and laziness, of men which ought to be combated. These are effectually the true causes of the languor of industry, wherever it is remarked.

But where are these sad causes met with? Is it not always and uniformly there where the lowest class of the people is most miserable? This furnishes me new arms against those who believe it to be so useful, that labour should be badly paid. I maintain that their avidity blinds them. Do you wish to assure yourselves of it? Compare the two extremes, St. Domingo and the United States; or, rather, if you wish objects nearer together, compare in the United States, the northern with those of the south. The first furnish only very common articles; workmanship is there at a rate that may be called excessive—yet they are full of vigour and prosperity, while the others remain in languor and stagnation, although they are adapted to productions the most precious, and that they employ the species of labourers the worst paid—namely slaves.

What this example particularly demonstrates we see in all times, and in all places; wherever the lowest class of society is too wretched, its extreme misery, and its abjectness—which is a consequence of it—is the death of industry, and the principle of infinite evils, even to its oppressors. The existence of slavery among ancient nations should be regarded as the source of their principal errors in economy, morality and politics, and the first cause of their continual fluctuation between anarchy, turbulent, and often ferocious or an atrocious tyranny. The slavery of the negroes, or aborigines in our colonies, which had so many means of prosperity, is equally the cause of their languor, their weakness, and the gross vices of their inhabitants. The slavery of serfs of the soil, wherever it has existed, has equally prevented the development of all industry, of all sociability, and of all political strength; and even in our own days, it has reduced Poland to such a state of weakness, that an immense nation existed for a long time only through the jealousy of its neighbors, and has ended by seeing its territory divided as easily as a private patrimony, so soon as the pretenders to it have come to an agreement among themselves. If from these extreme

cases—without attending to the fury of the rabble in France, or to the excesses of John of Leyden and his peasants in Germany—we come to the calamities caused by the populace of Holland, excited by the house of Orange; to the disquietudes arriving from the lazzarone of Naples, the transtiberians of Rome; and, in fine, to the embarrassments which even at this moment are caused in England, by the enormity of the poor tax, and the immensity of its wretched population, which nothing but punishments can restrain; I think all mankind will agree that when a considerable portion of society is in a state of too great suffering, and consequently too much brutalized, there is neither repose nor safety, nor liberty, possible even for the powerful and rich; and that, on the contrary, these first citizens of a state are really much greater, and happier, when they are at the head of a people enjoying honest ease, which develops in them all their intellectual and moral faculties.

On the whole, I do not pretend to conclude, that the poor ought to employ violence, to fix the price which they may demand for their labour. We have seen that their first interest is a respect for property; but I repeat that the rich ought no more to fix this price authoritatively, that it ought to leave to them the most free and entire disposition of their slender means. And here justice also pronounces in their favour; and I add, that they ought to rejoice if the employment of their means procure them an honest ease, for policy proves that it is the general good.

Observe, also, that if it is just and useful to allow every man to dispose of his labour, it is equally so—and for the same reasons—to allow him to choose his residence. The one is a consequence of the other. I know nothing more odious, than to prevent a man from emigrating from his country, who is there so wretched as to wish to quit it, in spite of all the sentiments of nature, and the whole force of habits, which bind him to it. It is moreover absurd: for since it is clearly proved, there are always in every country as many men as can exist in it under the given circumstances, he who goes away only yields his place to another who would have perished if he had remained. To wish that he should remain, is as if two men being inclosed in a box, with air but for one, it should be wished that one or both should be smothered, rather than suffer either one or the other to go out. Emigration, far from being an evil, is never a sufficient succour; it is always too painful to resolve on it for it to become in any degree considerable, the vexations must be frightful; and even then the void it operates, is quickly filled, as that

which results from great epidemics. In these unhappy cases, it is the sufferings of men that ought to be regretted; and not the diminution of their number.

As to immigration I say nothing. It is always useless, and even hurtful, unless it be that of some men who bring new knowledge. But then it is their knowledge, and not their persons, that is precious; and such are never very numerous. We may without injustice prohibit immigration; and it is this precisely of which governments have never thought. It is true they have still more rarely furnished many motives for desiring it.

After sufficient wages—which is of first importance to the poor—the next is, that these wages should be constant. In fact it is not a momentary augmentation, or accidental increase, of his profits which can ameliorate his situation. Improvidence is one and perhaps the greatest of his evils. An extravagant consumption always destroys quickly this extraordinary surplus of means, or an indiscreet multiplication divides it among too many. When then this surplus ceases, those who lived on it perish, or those who enjoyed it must restrict themselves; and in the latter case it is never the consumptions least useful which cease first, because these are the most seducing. Then misery recommences in all its horrors, with a greater degree of intensity. Thus we may say, in general terms, that nothing which is transient is really useful to the poor; in this also he has the same interests as the social body.

This truth excludes many false political combinations, particularly if we join with it this other maxim equally true—that nothing forced is durable. It teaches us, also, that it is essential to the happiness of the mass of a nation, that the price of provisions of the first necessity should vary the least possible: for it is not the price of wages in itself that is important; it is their price compared with that of the things necessary for life. If for two sous I can buy bread sufficient for the day, I am better nourished than if I were to receive ten sous, when twelve would be necessary to complete my daily ration. Now we have before shewn (Chap. 4th. and elsewhere) that the rate of the lowest wages is regulated, and cannot fail of being regulated in the long run, by the price of the things necessary to existence. If the price of necessaries suddenly abates, hirelings without doubt profit momentarily; but without durable utility to them, as we have just said. This, then, is not desirable. If, on the contrary, this price augments, it is much worse; and the evils which result aggravate each other. First, he who has

nothing more than what is necessary—has nothing to spare—thus all the poor are in distress: but, moreover, in consequence of this distress, they make extraordinary efforts; they are more urgent to be employed; or in other words, they offer more labour. Other persons who lived without labour, have need of this resource—there is no employment for them. They are hurtful to one another by this concurrence. This occasion is taken to pay them less, when they have need of being better paid. Accordingly, constant experience proves that in times of want wages fall, because there are more workmen than can be employed; and this continues till a return of abundance, or till they perish.

It is then desirable that the price of commodities, and above all that of the most important, should be invariable. When we shall come to speak of legislation, we shall see—that the mean of making this price as little variable as possible, is to leave the most entire liberty to commerce; because the activity of speculators, and their competition, makes them eager to take advantage of the smallest fall to buy, and the smallest rise to sell again; and thus they prevent either the one or the other from becoming excessive. This method is also the most conformable with a respect for property, for the just and the useful are always united. For the present let us limit ourselves to our conclusion, and extend it to other objects.

Sudden variations, in certain parts of industry and commerce, occasion—though in a manner less general—the same effect as variations in the price of commodities. When any branch of industry whatever takes suddenly a rapid increase, there is a greater demand for labour than in ordinary:—a profit here results to the labourers; and they use it as all other momentary profits, that is to say badly. But afterwards should this industry be relaxed or extinguished, distress arrives; every one must seek resources. In truth there are many more in this case than in that of a dearness, which is a universal misfortune. The unoccupied workmen here may go elsewhere. But men are not abstract and insensible beings. Their removals are not made without sufferings, without anguish, without breaking up imperious habits. A workman is never so adapted to the business he seeks as to that which he is forced to quit. Besides he is there superfluous—he produces repletion, and consequently a depression of the ordinary wages. Thus every one suffers. This is the great unhappiness of nations predominating in commerce, and the inconvenience of an exaggerated development of industry, a development which from being exaggerated is subject to vicissitudes,

it is what at least should prove, that it is very imprudent for a political society to seek to procure a factitious prosperity by forced means. It can but be fragile, it is enjoyed without happiness, and is never lost without extreme evils.

It has been remarked that nations essentially agricultural are less subject to suffer from these sudden revolutions of industry and commerce, in consequence, the stability of their prosperity has been greatly vaunted, and to a certain point with reason. But I think it has not been sufficiently remarked, that they are more exposed than commercial nations to the most cruel of all variations, that of the price of grain: it seems that this ought not to be, and yet it is, it is even easy to find the reason. A people devoted to agriculture are spread over a vast territory. This territory is either entirely inland, or if it borders on some sides on the sea, it has necessarily a great portion of its extent deeply inland. When the crops fail their succours can only be carried by land, or by ascending rivers, a kind of navigation, always very expensive and often impossible. Now as grain and other alimentary matters, are articles of great burthen, it happens that when they are brought to the place in which they are wanted, their price from the expenses of transportation, is so high, that scarcely any one can purchase, accordingly it is known from experience that all importations of this kind in times of calamity, have merely served to console and calm the imagination; but have never been real resources: the poor then must absolutely restrict his consumption so as to suffer greatly, and the most destitute must perish. There is no other mean of preventing the whole from perishing, when the dearth is very great. It is in this case that in a besieged town, all the useless mouths if possible are sent away. It is the same calculation. The defence would still be prolonged, if they dared to rid themselves of all the defenders who are not indispensable; but the consumption of war operates their destruction: and it is perhaps this cruel—but wise combination, which determines the otherwise useless sorties, made by, certain governors near the end of a siege—sorties very different from those made at its commencement, in mere bravado.

Men would greatly augment the security of their existence, and the possibility of their occupying certain countries, if they could reduce alimentary matters to small bulk, and consequently to easy transportation. In truth, they would immediately abuse this faculty, to injure themselves, as Shepherd tribes avail themselves of the facility of transportation produced by the celerity of their beasts of burden, to become

brigands: for nothing is so dangerous as a transportable man. We have only to observe the enormous advantage which temperance gives to armies in invasions. This is the power of the species badly employed; but in short it is its power—and it is this power which, in case of dearth, is wanting to agricultural and peaceful nations, spread over a vast territory.

Commercial nations, on the contrary, are either insular, or extended along the coasts of the sea. Accessible every where, they may receive succour from all countries. In order that dearness should become excessive in these nations, for the price to become excessive with these people, the crops must have failed in all the habitable globe. Even then it would only rise to the mean rate of general dearness, and never to the extreme rate of the local dearness of the inland countries most destitute. These nations, then, are exempt from the greatest of disasters; and, as to the less general evils resulting from the revolutions which take place in some branches of industry and commerce; I observe that they are rarely exposed to them if they have left to this industry and to this commerce their natural course—and if they have not employed violent means to give them an exaggerated extension. I conclude, not only that their condition is better, but also that their misfortunes are produced by their faults, whilst those of the others proceed from their position; and that thus they have more means of avoiding these misfortunes. We were necessarily led to this result, and ought to have seen it in advance: for since society—which is a continual commerce—is the cause of our power and of our own resources; it would be contradictory, that where this commerce is the most perfect, and most active, we should be more accessible to misfortune.

If, therefore, it were proved that the prosperity of commercial nations was less solid, and less durable, (a fact I do not believe true, at least amongst moderns)\* it would be necessary, first, to distinguish between happiness and power—and to remark, that in the calamities of which we have just spoken—the happiness of individuals in agricultural nations is much at hazard, but their power subsists; because the loss of men, who perish in dearth, is quickly repaired by new births when it ceases—the habitual means of existence, not having been de-

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\*The examples of the ancients prove nothing, because their political economy was entirely founded on force. The inland people were brigands, the maritime people pirates.—All wished to be conquerors. Then chance determines the destiny of a nation.



stroyed; whereas in a commercial nation, when a branch of industry is annihilated, it is sometimes annihilated without return, and without a possibility of being replaced by another; so that that part of the population which it brings to ruin cannot be again restored. But, as we have said, this latter case is rare, when not provoked by faults. If, independently of this, it were proved that the prosperity of commercial nations is frail, in proportion to the internal vices to which they are subject, it would not be proper to impute it to commerce itself, but to accidental causes—and principally to the manner in which riches are frequently introduced into these states, which favours extremely their very unequal distribution; and this is the greatest and most general of evils. On examination, we should find there, as every where, the human race happy from the development and increase of its means; but ready to become unhappy from the bad use it makes of them. The discussion of this question, in all its extent, will find its place elsewhere.

However, it maybe, it is then certain that the poor are proprietors as well as the rich; that in their quality of proprietors of their persons, of their faculties, and of their product, they have an interest in being allowed the free disposition of their persons and labour; that this labour should produce them sufficient wages; and that these wages should vary as little as possible, that is to say they have an interest that their capital should be respected, that this capital should produce the revenue necessary for existence, and that this revenue if possible should be always the same; and in all these points their interests conform to the general interest.

But the poor is not only a proprietor, he is also a consumer: for all men are both the one and the other. In this latter quality he has the same interest as all consumers, that of being provisioned in the best and cheapest manner possible. It is necessary then for him, that manufacture should be very expert, communications easy, and relations multiplied; for no one has a greater need of being supplied on good terms than he who has few means.

What must be thought then of those who maintain that ameliorations of the methods and the invention of machines, which simplify and abridge the processes of art, are an evil for the poor? My answer is that they have no idea of their real interest, nor of those of society: For one must be blind not to see that when a thing which required four days labour can be made in one, every one for the same sum can procure four times as much; or, consuming only the same quantity, may have

three-fourths of his money remaining to be employed in procuring other enjoyments—and certainly this advantage is still more precious to the poor than to the rich. But, say they, the poor gained these four days labour—and now he will gain but one. But, say I, in my turn, you forget then that the funds on which all the hirelings live are the sum of the means of those who employ them; that this sum is a quantity nearly constant; that it is always employed annually; that if a particular object absorbs a smaller part of it, the surplus, which is economised, seeks other destinations; and that thus, while it is not diminished, it hires an equal number of labourers—and that moreover, if there is a mean of augmenting it, it is by rendering fabrication more economical; because this is the mean of opening new vents, and of giving possibility to new enterprises of industry—which are as we have seen, the only sources of the increase of our riches. These reasons appear to me decisive. If the contrary reasons were valid, we should have to conclude that nothing is more beneficial, than the execution of useless labour, because there is always the same number of persons occupied; and that there would not remain fewer for the execution of the same quantity of necessary labour. I grant this second point. But, first, this useless labour would be paid with funds which would otherwise have paid for useful labour and which will not pay it—thus nothing is gained on this side. Secondly, from this unfruitful labour nothing remains; and, if it had been fruitful, there would have remained from it useful things for procuring enjoyments, or capable, by being exported, to augment the mass of acquired riches. It appears to me that nothing can be answered to this, when we have once clearly seen on what funds hirelings live. This series of combinations will occur when we shall speak of the employment of our riches. It is for this I have developed it: For so much reasoning appears unnecessary to prove that labour acknowledged useless is useless, and that it is more useful to execute useful labour. Now to this single truth is reduced the apology for machines and other improvements.

They have made against the construction of roads and canals, and generally against the facility of communications, and the multiplicity of commercial relations the same objections as those I have just refuted. I give them the same answer. It has moreover been pretended that all this is in another way hurtful to the poor, by raising the price of provisions. The truth is, that it raises their price at times when they are too low from the difficulty of exporting them; but it reduces their

price, when too high from the difficulty of importing them. Thus it renders the prices more constantly equal; and I conclude, on the principles we have established, that it is a great benefit to the poor and to society in general.

I admit, however, that all these innovations, advantageous in themselves, may sometimes produce at first a momentary and partial restraint—it is the effect of all sudden changes; but, as the utility of these is general and durable, this consideration ought not to retard them. It is only requisite that society should give succour to those who suffer for the moment; and this it can easily do, when it is prospering in the mass.

It is then true that notwithstanding the necessary opposition of our particular interests, we are all united by the common interests of proprietors and consumers; and, consequently, it is wrong to regard the poor and the rich, or the hirelings and those who employ them, as two classes essentially enemies. It is particularly true, that the real interests of the poor are always the same as those of the society taken in mass. I do not pretend to say that the poor always know their real interests. Who is he that always has just ideas on these matters, even amongst the enlightened? But, in fine, it is much that things are thus; and it is a good thing to know it. The greatest difficulty, in impressing this, is, perhaps, to be able clearly to point out the cause. This I think we have now done. Arriving at this result, we have examined by the way several questions, which, without diverting us from our road, have retarded our march. Yet I have not thought it right to pass them by without notice, because, in things of this kind, all the objects are so intimately linked together that there is no one which, being well cleared up, does not throw great light on all the others.

But we are not only opposed in interests, we are also unequal in means. This second condition of our nature deserves also to be studied in its consequences, without which we cannot completely know the effects of the distribution of our riches among different individuals; and we shall but imperfectly know what we ought to think of the advantages and inconveniences of the increase of these same riches, by the effect of society. Let us at first establish some general truths.

Declaimers have maintained that *inequality* in general is useful, and that it is a benefit for which we ought to thank Providence. I have but one word to answer. Amongst sensible beings, frequently with opposite interests, justice is the greatest good: for that alone can so conciliate

them, that none may have cause of complaint. Then inequality is an evil not because it is in itself injustice, but because it is a powerful prop to injustice wherever justice is in favour of the weak.

Every inequality of means, and of faculties, is at bottom an inequality of power. However, when we enter into detail, we can and ought to distinguish between the inequality of power, properly so called, and the inequality of riches.

The first is the most grievous—it submits the person itself. It exists in all its horror among brutal and savage men—with them it places the weak at the mercy of the strong. It is the cause why among them there are the fewest relations possible, for it would become insupportable. If it has not been always remarked among them, it is because scarcely ever accompanied by an inequality of riches; which is what strikes us most forcibly, having it always under our eyes.

The object of the social organization is to combat the inequality of power; and most frequently it causes it to cease, or at least diminishes it. Men shocked with the abuses still prevalent in society, have pretended that, on the contrary, it augments this inequality; and it must be confessed, that when it totally loses sight of its destination it justifies the reproaches of its bitterest detractors. For example wheresoever it continues slavery, properly so called, it is certain that savage independence, with all its dangers is still preferable. But it must be admitted nevertheless that this is not the object of society; and that it tends, most frequently with success, to diminish the inequality of power.

By diminishing the inequality of power, and thus establishing security, society produces the development of all our faculties, and increases our riches, that is to say our means of existence and enjoyment. But the more our faculties are developed, the more their inequality appears and augments; and this soon introduces the inequality of riches, which brings with it that of instruction, capacity and of influence. Here, in a word, as appears to me, are the advantages and inconveniences of society. This view shows us what we have a right to expect from it, and what we ought to do to perfect it.

Since the object of society is to diminish the inequality of power, it ought to aim at its accomplishment, and since its inconvenience is to favour the inequality of riches, it ought constantly to endeavour to lessen it—always by gentle, and never by violent, means: for it should always be remembered, that the fundamental base of society is a respect for property, and its guarantee against all violence.

But it will be asked, when inequality is reduced entirely to an inequality of riches, is it still so great an evil? I answer, boldly, yes: For, first, bringing with it an inequality of instruction, of capacity, and of influence, it tends to re-establish the inequality of power and consequently to subvert society. Again, considering it only under an economical relation, we have seen that the funds on which hirelings live are the revenues of all those who have capitals; and among these it is only undertakers of industry who augment their riches, and consequently the riches of the nation. Now it is precisely the possessors of great fortunes who are idle, and who pay no labour but for their pleasure. Thus the more there are of great fortunes, the more national riches tend to decay and population to diminish. The example of all times, and all places, supports this theory: For wherever you see exaggerated fortunes,\* you there see the greatest misery and the greatest stagnation of industry.

The perfection of society, then, would be to increase our riches greatly, avoiding their extreme inequality. But this is much more difficult at certain times, and in certain places, than in others. An inland agricultural people having few relations, living on a sterile soil, unable to increase their means of enjoyment but by the slow progress of its culture, and the still slower progress of their manufactures, will easily, and for a long time, avoid the establishment of great inequality among their citizens. If the soil is more rich—and especially, if in some places it produces articles in great demand—large fortunes will be more easily acquired: If it has mines of precious metals, many individuals will certainly ruin themselves by working them; but some will acquire immense riches: or, if the government reserves to itself this profit, it will soon be enabled to procure for its creatures an exaggerated opulence; and it is very probable it will not fail to do it. Too many causes concur to produce this effect. Finally, if you suppose this people, still poor, to become conquerors, to seize on a rich country, and to establish themselves in it as conquerors, here is at once the greatest inequality introduced: First between the victorious and the conquered nation, and afterwards among the conquerors themselves: for where force decides it is very difficult to have equitable partitions. The lots

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\*To judge of the exaggeration of certain fortunes, consider their proportions: for there may be Englishmen near as rich, or richer than the greatest Russian or Polish lords; but they live in the midst of a people generally in much more easy circumstances,—consequently the disproportion, though real, is much less.

of the different individuals are as different, as their degrees of authority in the army or of favour with the chief. Moreover, they are exposed to frequent usurpations.

The fortune of maritime nations is generally more rapid. Yet there we remark the same varieties. Navigators may be reduced to small profits—to carrying—to fishing—to commerce with nations from which great profits cannot be made. Then it is easy for them to remain long nearly equal amongst themselves. They may, on the contrary, penetrate into unknown regions; have in profusion the most rare articles; establish relations with people from whom they can derive immense profits; take to themselves great monopolies; found rich colonies, over which they hold a tyrannical empire; or even become conquerors, and import into their country the productions of countries very extensive subjected by their arms,—as the English in India, and the Spaniards in South America. In all these cases, there is more or less of chance; but in all, a great probability that their enormous riches will be very unequally distributed.

Many other circumstances, without doubt, connect themselves with these, and modify their effects. The different characters of people, the nature of their government, the greater or less extent of their information, and, above all, of their knowledge of the social art in the moments which decide their fortune, occasion like events to have very different consequences. If Vasco De Gama and his contemporaries had had the same views and misfortunes as Cook, or La Peyrouse, our relations with the Indies would be quite different from what they are. It is above all remarkable, how much influence the epoch at which a political society begins to be formed, has on the duration of its existence. Certainly empires founded by Clovis or by Cortez, or societies receiving their first laws from Locke or Franklin, ought to take very different directions; and this we clearly perceive, in every period of their history.\*

It is these causes so different, and above all the last, which produce the infinite variety remarked in the destinies of nations, but the ground is every where the same. Society affording to every one security of person and property, causes the development of our faculties;

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\*This is so striking, that I imagine there is no one who does not regret that America was discovered three hundred years too soon, and who does not even doubt whether it would yet be a proper time for discovering it. It is true that these events, however deplorable, have promoted our ulterior progress; but it is buying them very dear. It appears that such is our destiny.

this development produces the increase of our riches—their increase brings on sooner or later their very unequal division; and this unequal division occasioning the inequality of power which society begun by restraining, and was intended to destroy, produces its weakness, and sometimes its total dissolution.

It is doubtless this vicious circle which historians have wished to represent to us by the youth and old age of nations, and by what they call their primary virtue, their primitive purity, then their degeneration, their corruptions, their effeminacy. But these vague expressions, against which I have already protested, paint the facts very badly, and often lead astray even those who employ them:—they tell us always of the virtue of poor nations. Certainly where equality renders injustice and oppression more difficult, and more rare, they are more virtuous from the fact itself—since fewer faults are committed. But it is equality and not poverty which is their protection. Otherwise the passions are the same there as elsewhere. Why incessantly represent to us commercial nations as avaricious, and agricultural people as models of moderation? Men every where hold to their interests, and are occupied with them. The Carthaginians were not more avaricious than the Romans; and the Romans, who were the most cruel usurers at home and insatiable spoliators abroad, were quite as avaricious in what are called their best times, as under the emperors. The state of society alone was different. It is the same with the word degeneration. Certainly when a part of mankind has been accustomed to resign itself to oppression, and another part to abuse its power, we may well say they have degenerated; but, from the manner in which this expression is often employed, we should be led to believe they are no longer born the same—that nature has changed—that the race is depreciated—that they have no longer force or courage:—all this is very false. We have a still greater abuse of the expressions effeminate and effeminacy. Montesquieu himself tells you gravely, that the fertility of the land effeminates its inhabitants.\* It nourishes them and this is all. To listen to certain authors, we should suppose that there comes a time when all the inhabitants of a country live amidst delights, as those famous Sybarites of whom we have been told so much. This would be very happy, but it is impossible. When you are told that a nation is enervated by effeminacy, under-

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\*He says of it many other things. See his 18th book of laws, in the relation they have with the nature of the soil.

stand that there is about an hundredth part of it, at most, corrupted by the habit of power and the facility of enjoyment; and that all the rest are debarred by oppression, and devoured by misery.\* Nor are we less deceived in the sense of the expression, *poor nations*; it is there the *people* are at their ease—and the *rich nations* is where the *people* are commonly poor. It is for this reason that some are strong, and others often weak. We might multiply these reflections to infinity; but all may be reduced to this truth, which has not always been sufficiently perceived; the multiplication of our means of enjoyment is a very good thing; their too unequal partition is a very bad one, and the source of all our evils. On this point still the interest of the poor is the same as that of society. I think I have said enough on the distribution of our riches; it is time to speak of the use we make of them.

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\*And those famous delights of Capua! and all those armies suddenly effeminated, by having found themselves in abundance! Ask of all the generals if their soldiers have been the worse for having plentifully enjoyed the means of life for some time, unless they have suffered them to become pillagers, and undisciplined, by setting them the example; or the chiefs, having made their fortune, are no longer ambitious. If it is this which has happened to the Carthaginians, and others, this is what should have been said, and not in vain rhetorical phrases.