

Chapter X.

Consequences Of The Foregoing Laws.

§ 1. Remedies for Weakness of the Principle of Accumulation.

From the preceding exposition it appears that the limit to the increase of production is twofold: from deficiency of capital, or of land. Production comes to a pause, either because the effective desire of accumulation is not sufficient to give rise to any further increase of capital, or because, however disposed the possessors of surplus income may be to save a portion of it, the limited land at the disposal of the community does not permit additional capital to be employed with such a return as would be an equivalent to them for their abstinence.

In countries where the principle of accumulation is as weak as it is in the various nations of Asia, the desideratum economically considered is an increase of industry, and of the effective desire of accumulation. The means are, first, a better government: more complete security of property; moderate taxes, and freedom from arbitrary exaction under the name of taxes; a more permanent and more advantageous tenure of land, securing to the cultivator as far as possible the undivided benefits of the industry, skill, and economy he may exert. Secondly, improvement of the public intelligence. Thirdly, the introduction of foreign arts, which raise the returns derivable from additional capital to a rate corresponding to the low strength of the desire of accumulation.

An excellent example of what might be done by this process is to be seen under our very eyes in the present development of Mexico, to which American capital and enterprise have been so prominently drawn of late. All these proposed remedies, if put into use in Mexico, would undoubtedly result in a striking increase of wealth.

§ 2. Even where the Desire to Accumulate is Strong, Population must be Kept within the Limits of Population from Land.

But there are other countries, and England [and the United States are] at the head of them, in which neither the spirit of industry nor the effective desire of accumulation need any encouragement. In these countries there would never be any deficiency of capital, if its increase were never checked or brought to a stand by too great a diminution of its returns. It is the tendency of the returns to a progressive diminution which causes the increase of production to be often attended with a deterioration in the condition of the producers; and this tendency, which would in time put an end to increase of production altogether, is a result of the necessary and inherent conditions of production from the land.

This, of course, is based on the supposition that no new lands, such as those of the United States, can be opened for cultivation. If there is no prohibition to the importation of cheaper food, new and richer land in any part of the world, within reach of the given country, is an influence which works against the tendency. Yet the tendency, or economic law, is there all the same, forever working.

In all countries which have passed beyond a very early stage in the progress of agriculture, every increase in the demand for food, occasioned by increased population, will always, unless there is a simultaneous improvement in production, diminish the share which on a fair division would fall to each individual. An increased production, in default of unoccupied tracts of fertile land, or of fresh improvements tending to cheapen commodities, can never be obtained but by increasing the labor in more than the same proportion. The population must either work harder or eat less, or obtain their usual food by sacrificing a part of their other customary comforts. Whenever this necessity is postponed, it is because the improvements which facilitate production continue progressive; because the contrivances of mankind for making their labor more effective keep up an equal struggle with Nature, and extort fresh resources from her reluctant powers as fast as

human necessities occupy and engross the old.

From this results the important corollary, that the necessity of restraining population is not, as many persons believe, peculiar to a condition of great inequality of property. A greater number of people can not, in any given state of civilization, be collectively so well provided for as a smaller. The niggardliness of nature,(140) not the injustice of society, is the cause of the penalty attached to over-population. An unjust distribution of wealth does not even aggravate the evil, but, at most, causes it to be somewhat earlier felt. It is in vain to say that all mouths which the increase of mankind calls into existence bring with them hands. The new mouths require as much food as the old ones, and the hands do not produce as much.

After a degree of density has been attained, sufficient to allow the principal benefits of combination of labor, all further increase tends in itself to mischief, so far as regards the average condition of the people; but the progress of improvement has a counteracting operation, and allows of increased numbers without any deterioration, and even consistently with a higher average of comfort. Improvement must here be understood in a wide sense, including not only new industrial inventions, or an extended use of those already known, but improvements in institutions, education, opinions, and human affairs generally, provided they tend, as almost all improvements do, to give new motives or new facilities to production.

The increase in the population of the United States has been enormous, as already seen, but the increase of production has been still greater, owing to the fertility of our land, to improvements in the arts, and to our great genius for invention, as may be seen by the following table (amounts in the second column are given in millions).(141) The steady increase of the valuation of our wealth goes on faster than the increase of population, so that it manifests itself in a larger average wealth to each inhabitant.

Decades.	Valuation.	Per cent	Population.	Per cent	Per of of capital increase.	increase.	valuation.
1800	\$1,742	..	5,308,483	..	\$328	1810	2,382
37	7,239,881	36	329	1820	3,734	57	9,633,882
33	386	1830	4,328	16	12,866,020	34	336
1840	6,124	41	17,069,453	33	359	1850	8,800
44	23,191,876	36	379	1860	16,160	84	31,443,321
35	514	1870	30,068	86	38,558,371	23	780
1880	40,000	33	50,155,783	30	798		

If the productive powers of the country increase as rapidly as advancing numbers call for an augmentation of produce, it is not necessary to obtain that augmentation by the cultivation of soils more sterile than the worst already under culture, or by applying additional labor to the old soils at a diminished advantage; or at all events this loss of power is compensated by the increased efficiency with which, in the progress of improvement, labor is employed in manufactures. In one way or the other, the increased population is provided for, and all are as well off as before. But if the growth of human power over nature is suspended or slackened, and population does not slacken its increase; if, with only the existing command over natural agencies, those agencies are called upon for an increased produce; this greater produce will not be afforded to the increased population, without either demanding on the average a greater effort from each, or on the average reducing each to a smaller ration out of the aggregate produce.

Ever since the great mechanical inventions of Watt, Arkwright, and their contemporaries, the return to labor has probably increased as fast as the population; and would even have outstripped it, if that very augmentation of return had not called forth an additional portion of the inherent power of multiplication in the human species. During the twenty or thirty years last elapsed, so rapid has been the extension of improved processes of agriculture [in England], that even the land yields a greater produce in proportion to the labor employed; the average price of corn had become decidedly lower, even before the repeal of the corn laws had so materially lightened, for the time being, the pressure of population upon production. But though improvement may during a certain space of time keep up with, or even surpass, the actual increase of population, it assuredly never comes up to the rate of increase of which population is capable: and nothing could have prevented a general deterioration in the condition of the human race, were it not that population has in fact been restrained. Had it been restrained still more, and the same improvements taken place, there would have been a larger dividend than there now is, for the nation or the species at large. The new ground wrung from

nature by the improvements would not have been all tied up in the support of mere numbers. Though the gross produce would not have been so great, there would have been a greater produce per head of the population.

§ 3. Necessity of Restraining Population not superseded by Free Trade in Food.

When the growth of numbers outstrips the progress of improvement, and a country is driven to obtain the means of subsistence on terms more and more unfavorable, by the inability of its land to meet additional demands except on more onerous conditions, there are two expedients, by which it may hope to mitigate that disagreeable necessity, even though no change should take place in the habits of the people with respect to their rate of increase. One of these expedients is the importation of food from abroad. The other is emigration.

The admission of cheaper food from a foreign country is equivalent to an agricultural invention by which food could be raised at a similarly diminished cost at home. It equally increases the productive power of labor. The return was before, so much food for so much labor employed in the growth of food: the return is now, a greater quantity of food for the same labor employed in producing cottons or hardware, or some other commodity to be given in exchange for food. The one improvement, like the other, throws back the decline of the productive power of labor by a certain distance: but in the one case, as in the other, it immediately resumes its course; the tide which has receded, instantly begins to readvance. It might seem, indeed, that, when a country draws its supply of food from so wide a surface as the whole habitable globe, so little impression can be produced on that great expanse by any increase of mouths in one small corner of it that the inhabitants of the country may double and treble their numbers without feeling the effect in any increased tension of the springs of production, or any enhancement of the price of food throughout the world. But in this calculation several things are overlooked.

In the first place, the foreign regions from which corn can be imported do not comprise the whole globe, but those parts of it almost alone which are in the immediate neighborhood of coasts or navigable rivers; and of such there is not, in the productive regions of the earth, so great a multitude as to suffice during an indefinite time for a rapidly growing demand, without an increasing strain on the productive powers of the soil.

In the next place, even if the supply were drawn from the whole instead of a small part of the surface of the exporting countries, the quantity of food would still be limited, which could be obtained from them without an increase of the proportional cost. The countries which export food may be divided into two classes: those in which the effective desire of accumulation is strong, and those in which it is weak. In Australia and the United States of America, the effective desire of accumulation is strong; capital increases fast, and the production of food might be very rapidly extended. But in such countries population also increases with extraordinary rapidity. Their agriculture has to provide for their own expanding numbers, as well as for those of the importing countries. They must, therefore, from the nature of the case, be rapidly driven, if not to less fertile, at least what is equivalent, to remoter and less accessible lands, and to modes of cultivation like those of old countries, less productive in proportion to the labor and expense.

The extraordinary resources of the United States are scarcely understood even by Americans. Chart No. XVIII (see Book IV, Chap. III) may give some idea of the agricultural possibilities of our land. It will be seen from this that the quantity of fertile land in but one of our States--Texas--is greater than that of Austria-Hungary.

But the countries which have at the same time cheap food and great industrial prosperity are few, being only those in which the arts of civilized life have been transferred full-grown to a rich and uncultivated soil. Among old countries, those which are able to export food, are able only because their industry is in a very backward state, because capital, and hence population, have never increased sufficiently to make food rise to a higher price. Such countries are Russia, Poland, and Hungary.

The law, therefore, of diminishing return to industry, whenever population makes a more rapid progress than improvement, is not solely applicable to countries which are fed from their own soil, but in substance applies

quite as much to those which are willing to draw their food from any accessible quarter that can afford it cheapest.

§ 4. --Nor by Emigration.

Besides the importation of corn, there is another resource which can be invoked by a nation whose increasing numbers press hard, not against their capital, but against the productive capacity of their land: I mean Emigration, especially in the form of Colonization. Of this remedy the efficacy as far as it goes is real, since it consists in seeking elsewhere those unoccupied tracts of fertile land which, if they existed at home, would enable the demand of an increasing population to be met without any falling off in the productiveness of labor. Accordingly, when the region to be colonized is near at hand, and the habits and tastes of the people sufficiently migratory, this remedy is completely effectual. The migration from the older parts of the American Confederation to the new Territories, which is to all intents and purposes colonization, is what enables population to go on unchecked throughout the Union without having yet diminished the return to industry, or increased the difficulty of earning a subsistence.

How strictly true this is may be seen by examining the map given in the last census returns,(142) showing the residence of the natives of the State of New York. The greater or less frequency of natives of New York, residing in other States, is shown by different degrees of shading on the map. A large district westward as far as the Mississippi shows a density of natives of New York of from two to six to a square mile, and a lesser density from Minnesota to Indian Territory, on the other side of the Mississippi. The same is shown of other older States. The explanation of the movement can not be anything else than the same as that for the larger movement from Europe to America.

There is no probability that even under the most enlightened arrangements (in older countries) a permanent stream of emigration could be kept up, sufficient to take off, as in America, all that portion of the annual increase (when proceeding at its greatest rapidity) which, being in excess of the progress made during the same short period in the arts of life, tends to render living more difficult for every averagely situated individual in the community. And, unless this can be done, emigration can not, even in an economical point of view, dispense with the necessity of checks to population.

The influence of immigration to the United States from European countries, in lessening the tension in the relation between food and numbers, is one of the most marked events in this century. The United States has received about one fourth of its total population in 1880 from abroad since the foundation of the republic, as will be seen by this table:

Total Immigration Into The United States.

Periods.	Numbers.	From 250,000(143)	1789-1820	1820-1830	151,824	1831-1840	599,125	1841-1850	
		1,713,251	1851-1860	2,598,214	1861-1870	2,491,451	1871-1880	2,812,191	1881-1883
		12,677,801							Total

Of this number, 5,333,991 came from the British Isles, of which 3,367,624 were Irish.

There came 3,860,624 Germans, 593,021 Scandinavians, and 334,064 French. (See United States "Statistical Abstract," 1878, 1880, 1883.)

The causes operating on this movement of men--a movement unequalled in history--are undoubtedly economic. Like the migration of the early Teutonic races from the Baltic to Southern Europe, it is due to the pressure of numbers on subsistence.

A still more interesting study is that of the causes which attempt to explain the direction of this stream after it has reached our shores. It is a definite fact that the old slave States have hitherto received practically none of this vast foreign immigration.(144) The actual distribution of the foreign born in the United States is to be seen in a most interesting way by aid of the colored map, Chart No. VIII, giving the different densities of foreign-born population in different parts of the Union. It seems almost certain that the general belief hitherto in the insecurity of life and property in the old slave States has worked against the material prosperity of that section.

The different ages of the native- and foreign-born inhabitants of the United States may be seen from the accompanying diagrams(145) comparing the aggregate population of the United States with the foreign-born. This may profitably be compared with a similar diagram relating to the Chinese in the United States (Book II, Chap. III, § 3).

Aggregate: 1870. The figures give the number of thousands of each sex.

Decade of Life. Males. Females. 1 136 132 2 115 114 3 87 90 4 62 63 5 47 44 6 31 27 7 17 15 8 7 7 9 2 2

Foreign: 1870.

Decade of Life. Males. Females. 1 24 23 2 48 49 3 128 114 4 134 113 5 107 84 6 60 44 7 27 23 8 9 9 9 2 2

BOOK II. DISTRIBUTION.