TWO LECTURES

ON THE

CHECKS TO POPULATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN MICHAELMAS TERM 1832.

BY

THE REV. W. F. LLOYD, M.A.

STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH,

PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL ECONOMY.

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TWO LECTURES ON THE CHECKS TO POPULATION

WILLIAM FORSTER LLOYD

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The two lectures on population reproduced below were delivered in 1832 by William Forster Lloyd (1794–1852). Lloyd, a mathematician and an ordained minister of the Church of England, made a lasting if long unrecognized mark in economics as one of the early contributors to the development of the marginal utility theory of value. From 1832 to 1837 Lloyd held the Drummond chair of political economy at the University of Oxford. A collection of his lectures on economic topics, Lectures on Population, Value, Poor-Laws and Rent, *was published in 1837. (This book is available in a reprint edition by Augustus M. Kelley, New York, 1968.)*

The lectures were first published in 1833 in Oxford under the title Two Lectures on the Checks to Population. *In the first part of these lectures, Lloyd not only provides a penetrating exposition of the core of Malthus's population theory but also significantly advances the Malthusian analysis by introducing a clear notional division between checks to population represented by scarcity of food and checks represented by causes "originating in moral and physical circumstances totally independent of this scarcity." However, the chief original contribution in Lloyd's discussion of population issues is his recognition and incisive analysis of the deleterious consequences that ensue "when the constitution of society is such as to diffuse the effects of individual acts throughout the community at large, instead of appropriating them to the individuals, by whom they are respectively committed." Lloyd's discussion of this problem—best known to many modern readers through Garrett Hardin's influential 1968 article in* Science *as "The Tragedy of the Commons"—delineates what is arguably the central issue underlying contemporary debates on population policy.*

Lecture I

I proposed to consider, in this and in the following Lecture, the checks to population.

We have seen that the increase of food cannot keep pace with the theoretical rate of increase of population. Since, therefore, food is essential to the existence of

man, it is obvious, that, with reference to the increase of numbers actually possible, the theoretical power of multiplication can be of little moment, and that, whatever be its extent, the actual excess of the births above the deaths must be determined according to the inferior progression of the supply of food.

In considering therefore the condition of any country in respect to its population, we have two rates of increase to which to direct our attention; viz. first, the theoretical rate, or in other words, as I explained in a former Lecture, that amount of the annual excess of the births above the deaths, which would be possible, and might be expected to have a real existence, were the supply of food abundant, and were no part of the people cramped in their circumstances: and secondly, the actual rate of increase, or the annual excess of the births above the deaths really occurring.

It is necessary, I say, to attend to these two rates of increase, because the difference between them is the measure of the amount of existences repressed, and it is in the mode by which the repression is effected, that the happiness or misery of every people is essentially involved. The superabundant tendency to increase must of necessity be repressed by some one mode of repression or another.[1] So far is absolutely unavoidable. But there are material differences in the possible modes of repression, and it is of importance to ascertain the circumstances, which favour them respectively, and tend to give the predominance to any one of them in particular.

The modes of repression are the same as what have been called the checks to population. It is obvious that the theoretical rate of increase, that is, the theoretical excess of the births above the deaths, may be reduced to the dimensions of the increase actually possible, in two ways, namely, either by a diminution in the births, or an increase in the deaths. Mr. Malthus therefore distinguishes the checks into two principal classes, the preventive, which restrain the number of the actual births, and prevent its being as great as the theoretical number: and the positive, which swell the number of the deaths, and increase them beyond the proportion due to the natural law of mortality in the human species.

There is reason to believe, as I intimated in a previous Lecture, that the poverty and hard living, which in many cases operate to the destruction of life, have in other cases the effect of diminishing fecundity. So far as they produce this latter effect they are preventive checks. Promiscuous intercourse, beyond a certain degree, prevents the birth of children, and therefore belongs to the same class. But the most important branch of the preventive check consists in, what is termed by Mr. Malthus, moral restraint. For an explanation of its nature, I will read his own description of it.

"The preventive check," he observes, "as far as it is voluntary, is peculiar to man, and arises from that distinctive superiority of his reasoning faculties, which enables him to calculate distant consequences. The checks to the indefinite increase of plants and irrational animals are all either positive, or, if preventive, involuntary. But man cannot look around him, and see the distress which frequently presses on those who have large families; he cannot contemplate his present possessions or earnings, which he now nearly consumes himself, and calculate the amount of each share, when, with very little addition, they must be divided, perhaps, among seven or eight, without feeling a doubt whether, if he follow the bent of his inclinations, he may be able to support the offspring which he may probably bring into the world. In a state of equality, if such can exist, this would be the simple question. In the present state of society other considerations occur. Will he not lower his rank in life, and be obliged to give up in a great measure his former habits? Does any mode of employ-

[1]The consideration of the resource of emigration is at present waived.

ment present itself by which he may reasonably hope to maintain a family? Will he not at any rate subject himself to greater difficulties, and more severe labour, than in his single state? Will he not be unable to transmit to his children the same advantages of education and improvement that he had himself possessed? Does he even feel secure that, should he have a large family, his utmost exertions can save them from rags and squalid poverty, and their consequent degradation in the community? And may he not be reduced to the grating necessity of forfeiting his independence, and of being obliged to the sparing hand of charity for support?

"These considerations are calculated to prevent, and certainly do prevent, a great number of persons in all civilized nations from pursuing the dictate of nature in an early attachment to one woman."

This is Mr. Malthus' account of the operation of that branch of the preventive check termed *moral restraint*. I now proceed to what he says about the positive checks.

"The positive checks to population are extremely various, and include every cause, whether arising from vice or misery, which in any degree contributes to shorten the natural duration of human life. Under this head, therefore, may be enumerated all unwholesome occupations, severe labour and exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nursing of children, great towns, excesses of all kinds, the whole train of common diseases and epidemics, wars, plague, and famine."

Now, if we examine the particulars mentioned by Mr. Malthus, we shall see, that, though they embrace all the checks arising, either directly or indirectly, from a want of food, yet they are not limited to these alone. They go much further, and include checks which must exist in every stage of society, as well while an immense expanse of fertile land remains unappropriated, as when every acre of land in the country has been cultivated like a garden. In every stage of society the period of infancy is helpless, and the prospect of a family must always carry with it the prospect of some division of a limited command of wealth, or otherwise of greater difficulties and more severe labour than in a single state. Wealth is never to be had for nothing, and to have to maintain those who contribute no addition to it, must of course imply either a deduction from the existing stock, or a compensation derived either from increased labour or extraneous sources.

An American, we will suppose, settles in the woods, marries and has a family. He clears his ground, builds his house, plants an orchard, incloses his fields. As time rolls on, he acquires experience, obtains a knowledge of the localities, finds out the most advantageous channels of trade, his orchard becomes productive, the cultivation of his land becomes more easy, he improves his habitation, every year adds to his comforts, and eventually he surrounds himself with many of the conveniences and luxuries of refined life. In a word, his daily enjoyments depend much more on accumulation, than on the daily labour of himself or of his family. His children are brought up participating in all these advantages. Thus comfortably situated at home, have they no cause for hesitation, or for an interval of preparation, before they venture upon marriage? Surely they have, and so long as man is a reasoning animal, and not only food but all the conveniences and luxuries of life are not to be had for nothing, motives for prudential restraint must present themselves, more or less imperiously, in every condition of society.[2]

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[2]In proportion to the depression consequent upon a change of life, must be the force of the motives opposed to such change, though its consequences would not involve any scantiness of the mere means of subsistence. The prevalence of the preventive check among the middling

Again, as to the positive checks. The whole train of common diseases and epidemics, war and plague, are contained in the list. But these, as a whole, are not, either mediately or immediately, the effects of a deficiency of food. The cholera, for example, has appeared in America, to say the least of it, in a form as severe as in England; and though in England it has been most destructive in the abodes of poverty, yet neither has it altogether spared the rich. The like may be said of wars, and other evils which we bring upon ourselves. They are not universally the result of a scarcity of the means of subsistence. Many would, perhaps, be startled on being told, that they have any thing to do with it. Yet I think that, on consideration, they would agree with an observation of Mr. Malthus, that the causes of war, in their remote ramifications, are not unconnected with it. The late war, for example, was owing, in a very considerable degree, to the apprehension entertained by the aristocracy of the contagion of the French revolution. But they would have had less ground for apprehension, had the bulk of the people been easy in their condition. Few will deny that an easy command of subsistence is almost a panacea for discontent among the lower classes.

Suppose that the cases, in which prudential restraint arises from the fear of a want of sustenance, were clearly distinguishable, by some manifest token, from those in which it depends on other motives. Suppose also poverty, by which I here mean misery produced by want, to have diseases of its own, wars of its own, and other modes of destruction of its own, all marked by some specific difference, and never to use any tools, or instruments of death, not peculiarly appropriated to its own department. Then the view of the subject would be comparatively simple, and we might draw a hard line of distinction between the different checks, separating them into two classes, and placing on one side of the line all those motives, and all those diseases and other causes, which diminish fecundity or destroy life, and which arise from a scarcity of the means of subsistence; and on the other, all causes productive of the same effect, but originating in moral and physical circumstances totally independent of this scarcity. Now, though in the natural course of events, causes appertaining to both of these classes are commonly intermixed in their operation, and cannot be disentangled, and though, perhaps, scarcely a single case of diminished fecundity or of death, in which poverty is concerned, be the result of poverty alone, yet these circumstances constitute no objection to our distinguishing in imagination the quantities of the effects due to each description of causes. A line, or the equivalent of a line, parting the quantities of the effects, must exist in nature, though not visible to the eye of the philosopher, and we are at liberty to reason respecting the quantities placed on each side of this line in the same manner as if its position were actually ascertained.

We shall thus have a third rate of increase, viz. a theoretical rate, which might be expected to have a real existence, were not only food always abundant, but also all wars, all diseases, and other causes in any way tending to diminish fecundity, or to extinguish human life before the completion of the natural term of longevity, to be utterly removed. The three rates will then stand as follows:

First, we shall have a theoretical rate, derived from the supposition of the ab-

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classes in England does not depend on a scarcity of mere subsistence, and in America similar reasons must exist for its prevalence among all classes elevated above poverty. Were it not that the wild life of a woodsman offers many attractions, it would actually prevail there in a much more considerable degree than it does at present.

sence, not only of a scarcity of food, but also of all other causes whatever, which tend to diminish fecundity, or prematurely to weaken or destroy the human frame. Let us assume this to be such as would double population in ten years.

Secondly, we shall have another theoretical rate, derived from the supposition of the absence only of a scarcity of food, and not of the other causes of retardation unconnected with this scarcity. This is not, like the other, merely an imaginary case, but one of which examples may be found; and according to this rate it has appeared in a former Lecture that population would probably, in this country, double itself at the least in thirty-five years.

Thirdly, there is the actual rate which occurs in every country under its existing circumstances, and which, at the present time, and in this country, is that of a duplication in forty-nine or fifty years.

With respect to these different rates of increase we may remark, that the first is the most stable of all, and that though its exact quantity is difficult to be ascertained, yet, whatever it is, it is nearly invariable, and, if it can be rightly assumed to give a rate of duplication in ten years at any particular time and place, the same assumption will be equally applicable to all times and places. The second is much less stable, and oscillates between limits widely distant, according to the varieties of different countries in respect of climate, and in the same country at different times, according as it is cleared, drained, and improved, and according to the advance of its inhabitants in the knowledge of medicine, and in their command of the conveniences of life. Though however not accurately geometrical, it yet preserves those main features of a geometrical progression, which are essential with regard to practical considerations, viz. that the increase of one period furnishes the power of a greater increase in the next, and this without any limit.

The third rate, or the actual progression, is of course the most variable of all, being influenced by the greatest variety of causes. It is observable, that, while the checks, which produce the difference between the first rate and the second, have the property of retarding, and of taking away a part of the original rate of progression, still they are not connected with any limitation of its range, and their intensity is not necessarily increased in consequence of any actual increase of number. But the checks, which cause the difference between the second rate and the third, are subject to variations in intensity dependent on the actual range. They not only retard, but they limit also. In short, the difference between the first and second class of checks, to which I am here alluding, is, that those of the first class, though they lessen the rate of progression, yet prescribe no bounds to the ultimate accumulation of population; while those of the second class, i.e., those which determine the third rate of increase, not only lessen the rate of progression, but also confine the amount of ultimate accumulation.

The remark, therefore, which I made on Mr. Malthus' enumeration of the checks amount to this, that they comprise the whole difference between the first and third rates, or between the ideal rate of duplication in ten years and the actual rate, and not that part only of the difference which depends on a scarcity of the means of subsistence.[3]

Assume the circumstances of a nation to admit of a certain rate of advance in its

[3]This distinction of these rates of increase (which, it will be remarked, involves a second independent classification of the checks) is not introduced merely as a criticism on Mr. Malthus' account, but because it seems to be really useful with a view to clearness of conception.

means of subsistence; then its population will increase at the same rate, and the whole difference between the first rate of increase and the third will be a given quantity. The two classes of checks therefore, viz those independent of, and those generated by, a scarcity of the means of subsistence, which by their combined action produce this difference, must also be given. In other words, their sum, must remain the same, whatever variation may take place among their parts. Where therefore those independent of a scarcity of food are great, those dependent on such scarcity are small. Now, in proportion to the amount of, or rather to the range for, the checks dependent on a scarcity of the means of subsistence, is the necessity for moral restraint, or the preventive check.[4] Consequently, as in unhealthy countries there is little, so in the healthy there is great necessity for moral restraint.

In ancient times war was the great depopulator. And it stood so far, at least, unconnected with the want of food, that the prevalence of the preventive check in any particular nation would not have operated to diminish its ravages, as it would to diminish those sufferings which result immediately from scarcity. We may therefore look on the wars of ancient times in the same light as an unhealthy climate, which diminishes the field for the checks depending directly on want of subsistence, but of which the effects would not be lessened by the prevalence of moral restraint. Hence, considering the importance of a numerous population for the great object of national defence, the maxims of ancient legislators respecting the propriety of encouraging marriage were probably correct as general rules, and suitable to the times to which they were applied.

But now, when the invention of gunpowder has changed the whole art of war, which, partly from that cause, and partly from the greater humanity of modern times, has become much less destructive; when also from the improvement of medicine, and of the arts which supply the comforts of life, epidemic and other diseases, not depending on want of food, have abated in violence, the ancient doctrine is no longer suitable. The first class of checks, or, at least, so many belonging to that class, as are also of a positive description, having been contracted, a wider sphere is now opened for those depending on a scarcity of subsistence, and it has become a matter of importance, instead of encouraging marriage, rather to discourage it, and by restraining the number of the births, to prevent the sickness and misery, arising from a want of food, which would be otherwise inevitable. In our times, therefore, the influence of different institutions and conditions of society, according as they are favourable or unfavourable to the preventive check,[5] will form an interesting subject of inquiry.

Systems of equality, with a community of labour and of goods, are highly unfavourable to it. I begin with these, because, in all the objections to such systems, a common principle is involved, the knowledge of which, in its different bearings, will be useful to us afterwards, when we come to examine the encouragements to moral

[4]In what follows, I omit the other branches of the preventive check, and use the expression synonymously with moral restraint.

[5]To the whole of the preventive check, understood, as I have used the term, synonymously with moral restraint: not to that part of it only, which depends on a scarcity of food, but also to that, of which we see so much in all classes of society elevated above poverty, and which results from the apprehension of lesser evils and inconveniences; the laws of nature, which require merely an equilibrium between the population and the food, being equally satisfied, whatever be the causes or motives, through the medium of which the necessary equilibrium is actually produced.

restraint, which, under the existing state of things, are offered to the different classes of society.

Suppose the case of two persons agreeing to labour jointly, and that the result of their labour is to be common property. Then, were either of them, at any time, to increase his exertions beyond their previous amount, only half of the resulting benefit would fall to his share; were he to relax them, he would bear only half the loss. If, therefore, we may estimate the motives for exertion by the magnitude of the personal consequences expected by each individual, these motives would in this case have only half the force, which they would have, were each labouring separately for his own individual benefit. Similarly, in the case of three partners, they would have only one third of the force—in the case of four, only one fourth—and in a multitude, no force whatever. For beyond a certain point of minuteness, the interest would be so small as to elude perception, and would obtain no hold whatever on the human mind.

In this, I have not assumed that the produce of the labour is to be equally divided, but merely, that all are equally interested in it, so long as it is unknown how it will be divided; and, therefore, that each person will view the future consequences, expected to result from an increase or relaxation of his own exertions, in the same light as he would any other benefit or injury extending indifferently to the whole community.

Again, suppose two persons to have a common purse, to which each may freely resort. The ordinary source of motives for economy is a foresight of the diminution in the means of future enjoyment depending on each act of present expenditure. If a man takes a guinea out of his own purse, the remainder, which he can spend afterwards, is diminished by a guinea. But not so, if he takes it from a fund, to which he and another have an equal right of access. The loss falling upon both, he spends a guinea with as little consideration as he would use in spending half a guinea, were the fund divided. Each determines his expenditure as if the whole of the joint stock were his own. Consequently, in a multitude of partners, where the diminution affected by each separate act of expenditure is insensible, the motive for economy entirely vanishes.

It may here be asked, what has this to do with the preventive check? It merely serves to illustrate those parts of a cause and of its consequences, which enter into human motives, and to show how the future is struck out of the reckoning, when the constitution of society is such as to diffuse the effects of individual acts throughout the community at large, instead of appropriating them to the individuals, by whom they are respectively committed. Where the present and the future are not opposed, of course there can be no question. I am here, therefore, referring only to cases, such as those which I have been considering, in which the endurance of a present pain or inconvenience will be the cause of a future benefit, or the gratification of a present desire will lead to eventual evil. Prudence is a selfish virtue; and where the consequences are to fall on the public, the prudent man determines his conduct, by the comparison, of the present pleasure with his share of the future ill, and the present sacrifice with his share of the future benefit. This share, in the multitude of a large society, becomes evanescent; and hence, in the absence of any countervailing weight, the conduct of each person is determined by the consideration of the present alone. The present good is chosen; the present evil is refused. This is what happens with the brute creation, and thus the obligation to prudence being placed upon the society collectively, instead of being distributed to the individual members, the

effect is, that, though the reasoning faculty is in full force, and each man can clearly foresee the consequences of his actions, yet the conduct is the same as if that faculty had no existence.

Now, the objection, drawn from the theory of population, against such systems of equality, is this. Marriage is a present good. The difficulties attending the maintenance of a family are future. But in a community of goods, where the children are maintained at public tables, or where each family takes according to its necessities out of the common stock, these difficulties are removed from the individual. They spread themselves, and overflow the whole surface of society, and press equally on every part. All may determine their conduct by the consideration of the present only. All are at liberty to follow the bent of their inclinations in an early marriage. But, as we have already seen, it is impossible to provide an adequate supply of food for all who can be born. Hence, supposing the form of the society to remain, the shares of subsistence are continually diminishing, until all are reduced to extreme distress, and until, ultimately, the further increase of population is repressed by the undisguised check of misery and want.

We may observe, that, supposing the proceedings of all in respect of marriage to be alike, the aggregate amount of the several shares of pressure accruing to one person by reason of the acts of all, will be equal to the primary amount of the pressure distributed to the whole society in consequence of the act of one. Each, therefore, will feel ill effects, corresponding precisely, in character and quantity, with the consequences of his own conduct. Yet they will not be the identical effects flowing from that conduct; but, being a portion of the accumulated effects resulting from the whole conduct of the society in general, would, therefore, still be felt, though the conduct of the individual should be changed. Thus it is that the universal distress fails to suggest to individuals any motive for moral restraint.

From what has been said, I draw one general inference, viz. that the simple fact of a country being over populous, by which I mean its population pressing too closely against the means of subsistence, is not, of itself, sufficient evidence that the fault lies in the people themselves, or a proof of the absence of a prudential disposition. The fault may rest, not with them as individuals, but with the constitution of the society, of which they form part.

I do not profess to be here considering generally the merits of systems of equality, and, therefore, I shall not stop to inquire, whether any, and what substitute, for the motive of private interest, can be suggested, to stimulate exertion, to prevent waste, and to check the undue increase of population. My object, in now referring to them, has merely been to illustrate the principle of objection to them, derived from the theory of population—a principle, which to some may perhaps appear so plain and self-evident, as not to have required the notice I have bestowed on it, but which, while it exists in a considerable degree of force in the present condition of the labouring classes in this country, seems nevertheless, as to its bearing on those classes, in a great measure to have escaped observation.

In order to shew the principle in a clear light, I will take an abstract case, removing in idea those adjuncts and modifications, which, in the existing state of things, operate to disguise its action.

Let us assume, therefore, the imaginary case of a society, constituted in part as society is at present constituted in this country, viz. one in which there shall be a small class of proprietors of the soil, and a large class of labourers, but where the power of labouring shall commence from the moment of birth, and shall afterwards

increase progressively with the necessities of the different ages up to the period of adolescence. For example, supposing that to supply the necessities of a new-born infant, and those of his parent in the same degree, two shillings and ten shillings a week are respectively required; I assume, that, where the parent can manufacture ten yards, the infant can manufacture two. It must be observed, that the supposition expresses merely a relation between the bodily powers of the child and the adult, and does not involve any assumption respecting the absolute power of either to obtain by labour a competent subsistence. It implies, that, if the labour of the father be rewarded liberally, so also will be that of the child; or, on the other hand, if the father can earn but little, that the child also can earn but little. In short, the whole hypothesis differs only from the actual state of things in this country in this respect; that, whereas the discoveries in manufactures seem to render it possible to turn to account the labour of children at an earlier age than formerly, and we may expect that with the progress of discovery it will be possible to turn it to account at a still earlier age, I now, for the convenience of argument, assume the progression to have advanced up to the very beginning of life. Not that we can believe that it will ever reach this extreme limit, but because this assumption serves to simplify the elements of the reasoning. With the like view to convenience and simplicity, I shall for the present omit the class of capitalists. I set aside also the class of proprietors, and the definite quantity of food which, in proportion to their numbers, they take, for their own consumption, out of the general stock, proposing to attend only to the causes, which will determine the ratio, between the number of the labourers, and the remaining portion of the food.

In the actual business of life, we commonly find some labourers out of employment, and more at one time than at another. So long however as the whole stock of food is sufficient for the possible maintenance of all, want of employment does not arise from an absence of demand for labour in general. It depends on more partial causes. The inability of the labourers to change at pleasure the quality and direction of their capacity to labour, and to adjust it to the varying tastes and demands of those who have the food of the country at their disposal, will prevent some from obtaining employment, whenever such variations may occur. Another impediment consists in the difficulty of arranging contracts—a difficulty, which is periodically increased or mitigated by oscillations in the currency. A third arises out of the greater trustiness and greater ability to labour of some than others, while all insist on an equal recompense. Abstracting however from all these disturbing causes, with which I am not now concerned, we may safely lay down the general proposition, that the channel of employment can always receive as many labourers as can live; from which it follows, that employment will be coextensive with the ability to labour, and may be considered simply as an appointed mean, for obtaining a ticket entitling the bearer to a proportional share of the general stock of subsistence.

In the case before us, therefore, where the children are able to labour from the moment of birth, they can immediately earn their ticket which is to give them a share; not a definite share, (containing a precise weight in pounds or ounces,) but a share determined by the proportion of the whole number of tickets to the food which is to be divided. Suppose an unmarried man to be able to command by his labour, of the general stock of food, one part out of ten million parts. If he marries, and has children requiring as much more, he and his children will command two out of ten million and one parts. All the privation therefore, which his family entails on him, consists in the difference between one out of ten million, and one out of ten million

and one parts. This difference in a single case is of course imperceptible. All the other members of the society are, however, subjected to the like privation, and the ten million differences thence arising constitute in fact the new share acquired by his family. In this case, therefore, as well as under a community of goods, there is a want of appropriation to each person of the consequences of his own conduct. All suffer through the act of one, and no encouragement to moral restraint is offered to individuals.

I have here proceeded on the tacit assumption of the stock of food being a given quantity. That assumption renders the case a little easier, but it is evident that it is not essential to the conclusion. The whole food of a country divided by the sum of its population, constitutes the share of each person. Here, the food is the numerator, and the population the denominator of a fraction. In order that this fraction shall diminish, it is not necessary that the numerator shall continue stationary while the denominator increases: it is sufficient that it shall not increase as fast; and this is the case with food, which, we know, cannot increase as rapidly as an unchecked population.

I have also stated that the channel of employment can receive as many labourers as can possibly be maintained. It is to be remarked, however, that neither is the truth of this proposition essential to the conclusion. It is sufficient that all persons, young and old, shall have an equal chance of obtaining employment, even though there be not employment adequate for all. If there be no established order of succession among the labourers; no claim, that is, to a priority of admission, and no permanency in the possession of a place once obtained in the field of employment; then, though a man may know that it can contain no more, yet he will have no reason for expecting that his children cannot find their way into it. He will know that by their entrance some will be cast out, but he will consider this as a chance, to which all, whether married or unmarried, are equally liable. Being himself exposed to it, in innumerable instances, from the increase of population resulting from the marriages of others, he will not anticipate any sensible increase of danger to himself, from the competition of his own children. Amongst so many, he would reckon it hard, were he the person, on whom, in a particular instance, the lot should fall. In short, upon the supposition of all being able to obtain employment, the inference is, that the consequences of the act of one will be equally divided between all: on the supposition of the field of employment admitting only a certain number, these consequences fall undivided upon some one unlucky person. But before the drawing of the lottery, since the chances of all are equal, we must in idea consider them as divisible. The motives therefore are the same upon both suppositions, and in both cases the encouragement to moral restraint is equally wanting.

It will serve to illustrate the subject, if we compare the relation subsisting between the cases of two countries, in one of which the constitution of society is such as to throw the burden of a family entirely on the parents, and in the other such that the children maintain themselves at a very early age, with that subsisting between the parallel cases of inclosed grounds and commons; the parallel consisting in what regards the degree of density, in which the countries are peopled, and the commons are stocked, respectively. Why are the cattle on a common so puny and stunted? Why is the common itself so bare-worn, and cropped so differently from the adjoining inclosures? No inequality, in respect of natural or acquired fertility, will account for the phenomenon. The difference depends on the difference of the way in which an increase of stock in the two cases affects the circumstances of the author of the

increase. If a person puts more cattle into his own field, the amount of the subsistence which they consume is all deducted from that which was at the command, of his original stock; and if, before, there was no more than a sufficiency of pasture, he reaps no benefit from the additional cattle, what is gained in one way being lost in another. But if he puts more cattle on a common, the food which they consume forms a deduction which is shared between all the cattle, as well that of others as his own, in proportion to their number, and only a small part of it is taken from his own cattle. In an inclosed pasture, there is a point of saturation, if I may so call it, (by which, I mean a barrier depending on considerations of interest,) beyond which no prudent man will add to his stock. In a common, also, there is in like manner a point of saturation. But the position of the point in the two cases is obviously different. Were a number of adjoining pastures, already fully stocked, to be at once thrown open, and converted into one vast common, the position of the point of saturation would immediately be changed. The stock would be increased, and would be made to press much more forcibly against the means of subsistence.

Now, the field for the employment of labour is in fact a common, the pasture of which is free to all, to the born and to the unborn, to the present tenants of the earth and to all who are waiting for admission. In the common for cattle, the young animal begins an independent participation in the produce, by the possession of a set of teeth and the ability to graze. In the common for man, the child begins a similar participation, by the possession of a pair of hands competent to labour. The tickets for admission being so readily procurable, it cannot happen otherwise, than that the commons, in both cases, must be constantly stocked to the extreme point of saturation.

It appears then, that, neither in the actual condition of the labouring classes, nor under a system of equality with a community of labour and of goods, when the increase in the resources of the society is so slow as to require prudence in reference to marriage, is the obligation of such prudence sufficiently divided and appropriated. In neither case, if individuals are prudent, do they alone reap the benefit, nor, if they are imprudent, do they alone feel the evil consequences. The helplessness of the first few years of life operates indeed, to a certain degree, as a weight in favour of individual prudence. But this is not enough. It ought to be an adequate weight. Nobody would maintain, that, were the helplessness to continue only for nine or ten days, or for nine or ten weeks, or for nine or ten months, it would offer a sufficient incentive to abstinence. Why then should there be any peculiar virtue in nine or ten years? If the pressure of a family during that period is disregarded, the public is not saved from the subsequent inconvenience. It does not follow, that, because the children are able to maintain themselves, as it is called, or, in other words, to purchase by their labour their daily bread, nobody else is the worse for their being brought into the world. Were this a just inference, it would be equally just could they work for their living from the moment of birth, as under the abstract hypothesis. I shall return to this subject in the next Lecture.

Lecture II

Mr. Malthus, in treating of the effects which would result to society from the prevalence of moral restraint, infers, that "if it were generally adopted, by lowering the supply of labour in the market, it would, in the natural course of things, soon raise its

price." And we may readily allow, that, abstinence from marriage, if generally and almost universally prevalent, would have this effect. But, if the principles laid down in the last Lecture be correct, it is idle to imagine, that, among labourers who have only the sale of their labour on which to depend for their maintenance, such abstinence can ever generally prevail; and this for the simple reason, that, against it, there are the natural passions which prompt to marriage, and the substantial benefits derivable from marriage; while, in favour of it, to oppose these, there is no adequate individual benefit to be derived from abstinence.

For, for the sake of argument, suppose it to prevail, and, by consequence, that the money wages of labour will command a considerable quantity of food. All labourers, therefore, without distinction, have apparently a greater power of maintaining with decency a large family. If all continue to abstain, they will retain this power. But here I ask, what is there to hinder individuals, who do not enter into the common feeling, from taking advantage of the general forbearance? What rule of prudence would they violate by doing so? Would they lower their rank in life? Would they be unable to transmit to their children the same advantages which they had themselves possessed? They might indeed have for a few years to deny themselves a few luxuries of dress or furniture, or otherwise, possibly, to submit to harder work and harder fare in order to retain them. But these inconveniences could not be sufficient, in the judgment even of the most prudent person, to counterbalance the real advantages of a wife and family, and to induce the preference of a life of celibacy. Neither would they furnish any material grounds for delay; since, among labourers, the natural age for marriage coinciding nearly with the time when their income is the greatest, and when, being in the vigour of their health and strength, they are best able to endure privations, and, if necessary, to increase their exertions, no future opportunity would appear more favourable than the present. The wages of labour being by the hypothesis high, about the maintenance of his family the labourer would have nothing to fear. His individual act could produce no sensible effect on the market of labour, and he might therefore justly expect his children to have the same advantages which he had himself possessed.

Dr. Chalmers follows in the track of Mr. Malthus, and assumes, that by the operation of the moral preventive check, we may hope to see wages kept permanently high. And this effect he proposes to produce, through the means "both of common and Christian education."[6] It is also to be the immediate fruit, "not of any external or authoritative compulsion, but of the spontaneous and collective will of the working classes of society."[7]

Let us examine this question by reference to a case, which, though not exactly similar, is yet sufficiently so for the present purpose. Were unanimity essential to the enactment of every law, and, not only to its enactment, but also to its continuance, there would evidently be great difficulties in the way of government. Could we entertain the hope of removing these difficulties by means of education? And in like manner I would ask, will education produce unanimity among the working classes of society? And, if it will not, how can effect be given to their collective will, without authoritative compulsion to coerce a dissentient minority? How can we expect that some will abstain from marriage, when others may step in to take advantage of their abstinence?

[6]"By elevating their standard of enjoyment through the means both of common and Christian education." *Chalmers's Pol. Econ.* p. 554.

[7]P. 552.

The fact is, that the wages of the lowest description of labour, in every old country where competition has been tolerably free, have always bordered on the minimum necessary for maintenance. It was an observation of Swift, a hundred years ago, that there were few countries in which one third of the people were not extremely stinted even in the necessaries of life; and, were the point doubtful, similar remarks, applicable to almost every period of history, might be gleaned from other writers. We may also expect them to remain at least equally applicable in future, unless some improvement shall take place in the structure of society, which shall furnish hopes of an advancement in station, leaving less to chance, and, at the same time, producing a degree of isolation, by which the consequences, whether good or evil, flowing from the actions of individuals, may be more fully appropriated to the authors of them.

Such an improvement, however, could not operate through the medium of high wages. Even in past times, when competition was much restricted, and, owing to the difficulty of communication, the field for the employment of labour did not consist of one vast common as at present, but rather of many little commons distinct from each other, and when, by consequence, a fountain of imprudence in one part, could not so readily overflow, and spread misery equally amongst all, still, in every part, there were enough at the bottom of the scale to keep down the wages of common labour. Much more must this be the case, when, by the change of circumstances, all barriers have been broken down, and the communication is free throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Fifty years ago, it was contended by those who advocated the propriety of throwing small farms together, that, by the increase of products which would follow from better husbandry, wages would be raised, and that the husbandman, in his new capacity of a labourer, would, by reason of the high wages, be better off than in his ancient capacity of a small farmer. Those, who argued thus, did not perceive, that the benefit on which they laid so much stress, could not by possibility be permanent. They proceeded rashly on the tacit assumption of population being a given quantity. They did not observe, that, in his condition of a small farmer, the husbandman had a degree of isolation, while, in his condition of a labourer, he would have no source of subsistence on which others could not encroach.[8]

The effects deduced from the abstract hypothesis, which I considered in the last Lecture, of children being able to labour from the moment of birth, correspond much more nearly with the existing condition of the labouring classes, than, on a comparison of the data of that hypothesis with their actual powers, a first view would lead us to expect. The natural helplessness of the first years of infancy is a weight in favour of prudential motives, which operates in a certain degree to oppose the consequences resulting from the theory. But then again, on the other hand, there are countervail-

[8]Were the competition as free between the occupiers of land, as between the purchasers of food in the market, there would be no greater degree of isolation in the condition of a small farmer than in that of a labourer. But it cannot be as free, in the case of the former, as in that of the latter. Mr. Babbage, in his late work on the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures, has added a new element to the previously known elements of price. This is the cost of verification, as he terms it, or (what it amounts to in other words,) a payment for confidence. On account of the difficulties which would attend the enforcing a hard bargain with a tenant, and the inconveniences which would arise from a frequent change of tenants, this element enters very largely into almost every bargain about the letting of land. I have here inverted the common order of the terms, and considered the use of the land the price, and the rent the thing purchased.

ing circumstances, in the actual condition of society, tending to neutralize its effects, which had no place under the hypothesis. The chief of these is the uncertainty of employment.

The failure of employment in one quarter, diverts the command of the means of subsistence, and causes it to flow more strongly in another channel. Consequently, the more fortunate labourers who retain their employment, can purchase, by their labour, an amount of subsistence, which the proportion between the whole population and the food of the country could not afford to all, were all employed. Thus, while the world is already full, a false signal is held out, and the same encouragement to marriage is offered, which would be offered by the legitimate encouragements, a vacancy by death, or an actual increase in the sum total of subsistence.

It cannot be justly argued, that the uncertainty of employment ought to be foreseen and provided for. The extent of the measures necessary to obviate it cannot be foreseen, and we cannot expect that those who are in actual employment should refrain from marrying, on account of the obscure anticipation of a danger which is not near, which may perhaps never be realized, or which, on the contrary, may fall on them with such force, as utterly to overwhelm them, notwithstanding their best precautions. The business of life must proceed in spite of its uncertainties. The mariner, going a long voyage, has scope for the exercise of his discretion in choosing the moment of his departure, but, as to the rest, he must commit himself to the chances of the winds and waves.

The failure of employment, were it simply periodical, that is, were it to recur at known intervals, and to continue during periods of known duration, though its effects would be much mitigated, yet even thus, would offer a great obstruction to the preventive check. The term during which the constitution of society charges the labouring classes with the maintenance of their families, is precisely analogous with that during which nature charges the birds and beasts with the maintenance of theirs. In both cases, the term is fixed, merely by the time required for the development of the physical strength. Supposing the birds to possess the faculties of reason and speech, as in the times of which Æsop treats, let us consider the motives for moral restraint which their circumstances would then suggest. The peculiarity of their condition consists in the great expansion of their means of subsistence, which occurs in the time of spring and summer, and its subsequent contraction in winter. Hence, after each annual reduction of their numbers, the survivors, upon the return of the season, have abundant means for maintaining a family. Where then are we to look for motives for moral restraint? In the chance of starvation in the winter? But this chance will not be sensibly varied whether they refrain or not. They possess the means of subsistence in common, and before winter the helplessness of the first period of life having passed, each family can then take in proportion to its number out of the common stock. In the same manner, a labourer obtaining good employment, with a prospect of its continuance during ten or twelve years, may marry upon that prospect without violating the rules of prudence.

It may be said indeed, that, instead of extravagantly squandering his temporary income in the maintenance of a family, he might save it for himself against the evil day when employment should fail. It is questionable however whether this is practicable to any extent. The benefit of saving depends in a material degree on its being partial. Were all to make the attempt, they would probably, by their competition, counteract each other's expectations of advantage. In a season of scarcity the least resolute would draw upon their hoards, and, by enhancing the price of provisions,

would compel others to do the same. And, though this would tend to equalize the supply of food through a series of years, it would only have the tendency, without fully producing the effect. At any rate, to expect labourers thus to save, would be to make an additional call upon their prudence; and we may remark generally, that, in proportion to the intricacies of the path of life, there will be a certain number of failures, notwithstanding that they may be in some degree mitigated by means of expedients. The expedients are themselves a new subject of attention, which is liable to disorder, and can never afford a remedy, equal to that of rendering the path of life more simple, by removing the evil which occasions the necessity for them.

To suppose, however, that the failure of employment is periodical, or, in other words, that the difficulties of life can be foreseen, would be a concession in favour of the existing state of things far greater than the true nature of the case will warrant. There is in fact a vast degree of uncertainty in the prospects of a labouring man, and the natural consequence is, as I have already intimated, that he must act at random. All the same elements and principles, which are commonly considered essential to the efficacy of punishment, are applicable here. Of these, certainty has always been accounted the chief. In proportion as punishments are uncertain, they will be little regarded, and particularly so when even innocence constitutes no security. In the case of the preventive check, not only is the punishment uncertain, but, what is equally pernicious, there is the like uncertainty as to the character of the offence. Marriage cannot be put even in analogy with crime, except *sub modo*. It cannot, like crime, be simply and without exception reprobated. And where much depends on chance, there must of course be many cases of actual failure, in which it may be justly alleged, that the measure was prudent, but the event unlucky: and it would be difficult, to distinguish from the rest, those cases in which the like excuse might not be urged with equal justice.

It is convenient, here, to distinguish between the motives and the disposition to prudence. By the motives, I mean circumstances external to the minds of the individuals, operating from without upon the reasoning faculty, and furnishing the considerations and grounds upon which they determine to be prudent. By the disposition, I mean something internal to the mind itself, namely, the strength of the reasoning faculty, combined with the degree of self-command possessed by the individuals, and their consequent sensibility to prudential considerations. Supposing now a necessity for a limitation of the number of births, that is, for the preventive check, to exist, it is evident that the dictates of this necessity will be attended to, in proportion, jointly to the motives for prudence which the constitution of the society suggests to the individuals composing it, and to their sensibility to prudential considerations. The motives, as we have seen, depend materially on the manner in which the constitution of the society is regulated, and on the degree of pressure which a family entails on the parents. The disposition, which depends on the reasoning faculty, will vary according as that faculty is improved by education and experience.

I have hitherto confined myself chiefly to the consideration of the *motives* to prudence, in the labouring class. The disposition to prudence, in the same class, naturally occurs next in the order of reasoning. I will, however, only now remark, that constant labour at an early age precludes the possibility of effective education. The other points belonging to this head will be sufficiently illustrated in the course of the subsequent investigation, and it is unnecessary to constitute them a distinct subject of inquiry.

The abstract hypothesis, which I considered in the last Lecture, was in every

respect unfavourable to the preventive check. I will now proceed to one which will be in many respects favourable to it.

Let us retain the supposition of a society constituted as society is at present constituted in this country, that is, with a small class of proprietors of the soil and a large class of persons with no source of income besides their labour; but instead of supposing the power of labouring to commence from the moment of birth, as in the former case, let us now suppose its commencement to be deferred until the age of eight or ten, and instead of its remaining nearly stationary from the period of adolescence, let us further suppose that it shall continue increasing with the advance of age, until the very termination of life. According to this supposition, the earnings of a child eight or ten years of age might perhaps be one or two shillings a week. At the age of twenty they might have increased to eight or ten shillings. We may take them as twenty or twenty-four shillings at forty, and as two or three pounds at seventy. Consequently this case differs from the existing state of things, in what regards the labouring classes, much more materially than the last.

Now it is evident that, upon this supposition, all the pressure arising from a scarcity of food, would fall in the first instance on the junior members of the society. It could never touch the old, except through the medium of those who might be dependent on them. Were all to act independently of each other, and to draw, each of his own resources only, in the competition between the purchasers of food the young would have no chance. Their competition would soon cease by the failure of their means. The old could alone purchase a sufficiency, and what the young would want, besides their earnings, to complete the amount of their necessary sustenance, they could obtain only through the favour of the old. Hence, they would generally be in a state of dependence on the old, and from this dependence many advantages would arise.

The manner in which this dependence would be produced may be thus traced. Let us begin from the present and actual state of the labouring classes, in what regards the proportions of the money wages of the different ages. Then, were the money wages of all to be alike increased, the price of food would be increased in the same proportion. For example, were the wages to be doubled, the prices of food would be also doubled. But were the transition, from the present state of things to the state assumed in the hypothesis, to be effected by a series of additions to the wages of all, increasing according to their age, and consequently leaving the wages of the young nearly unchanged, while those of the old would be greatly increased, the effect on the price of food would not shew itself to the same exent: in other words, the rise of price would not be equal to the average addition to the wages. There would however be a rise, and that not an inconsiderable one, and it would be effected by the following process. In the first place, many of those receiving an addition to their income would devote a part of it to the purchase of more food for themselves, and would consequently occasion a rise of price. For every additional sum, devoted to the purchase of a commodity, limited in quantity as food is, must cause a rise of price, since one cannot increase his own consumption without diminishing the remainder which is to be consumed by others. Secondly, they would devote a further portion of it to the purchase of food for the benefit of their families. I do not here mean, merely infant families, but children commonly maintaining themselves, though not earning a maintenance as ample as they could wish. This would in like manner cause a further addition to the price, and these additions would necessarily produce the dependence I mentioned. For the earnings of the young, of which the nominal amount would

remain nearly the same, would become incompetent to their maintenance under the advanced prices.

It is difficult to determine what limit should be assigned to the rise of the price of food in this form of society. The increase of means being accumulated with the old, the position of the limit would practically depend on the average amount of the pecuniary assistance which they would devote to the assistance of the young. It is reasonable to assume that this would be generally confined to the sum, which, in combination with the earnings of these, would be sufficient for their maintenance while they should remain unmarried. Beyond this point it is probable that most parents would be unwilling to continue their assistance. They would hesitate at the prospect of an indefinite charge, and, at the most, the assistance they would give would not be likely to exceed a limited maximum. Hence it is probable, that parents would in general be much opposed to the marriage of their children, unless they could see sufficient grounds for expecting, that, by their own exertions, and from their own resources alone, they would be able to maintain a family.

Now the benefits which would result from this state of things are these:

First, the objections, which apply to a community of goods, and to the case where the children can maintain themselves at a very early age, would not be applicable here. The additions which a young family could make to the income of the parents would be inconsiderable, and their maintenance would chiefly be derived from the subdivision of the resources of the parents.

Secondly, the means of all beyond a certain period of life would exceed the amount requisite for the necessary maintenance of themselves and families, and they would of course employ the excess in procuring conveniences and comforts. These conveniences and comforts they would enjoy in common with their children, who, were they to separate themselves from their father's family without an adequate independency, would be immediately obliged to forego many enjoyments to which they had been accustomed, and to which habit would have given, in their estimation, almost the character of necessaries. This circumstance, though in itself apparently of less importance than a positive inability to maintain a family, would perhaps of the two have the greatest influence on the conduct. Quitting a comfortable home involves consequences obvious and immediate. The difficulty of maintaining a future family is distant and uncertain. But distant futurity, like a distant object, is diminished to our perceptions; and seldom sufficiently awakens our fears, or fixes our attention.

Both the benefits, which I have mentioned, have depended on an increase of the external motives. A third, connected chiefly with the disposition to prudence, is as follows:

The younger members of society receiving from their parents so many more benefits than the children of the lower classes receive at present, and being also actually dependent on them in much greater degree, would find themselves under a greater necessity of consulting them with regard to their own plans and views of interest, of respecting their feelings, and of being guided by their advice. In nothing is this influence more likely to be beneficial than in the particular of marriage. This proposition I will explain in the following manner.

Generally speaking, prudence, or the habit of attending to future consequences, is a virtue seldom acquired in any great degree of perfection until late in life. It is the result of long observation and repeated experience. It is acquired, first in respect of cases of which the consequences are near, or which are of frequent recurrence, and

not until long afterwards in respect of cases of which the consequences are remote and indistinct, or which recur but seldom.

The magnitude also of an effort of prudence is evidently proportional to the extent of the present sacrifice. For example, in a question about marriage, the effort of prudence, when successful, is greater in proportion as the passion is stronger. The power however of discerning the necessity for such an effort, and consequently *cæteris paribus* the probability of its being made, seems to vary inversely in this proportion. The human eye is incapable of taking a clear view of many objects at once. When it is intently fixed on one object, all other objects are necessarily overlooked. In like manner, the mind can only attend at one time to a definite number of considerations: and it follows, that, where the thoughts and feelings are deeply engaged on a present benefit, little power of attention remains to be bestowed upon the future.

Now, in these elements, essential to the prudential disposition, the young are deficient, and hence there is a necessity for the cooperation of different persons, upon the principle of a division of labour, in the arrangement of a marriage. The old should take the prudential department. They alone have the necessary experience, and, what is of still more importance, they alone have their minds serene, and unimpeded by the mists and clouds of present passion. But this cooperation can only have place where the young are under the influence of the old, and they cannot be in any sufficient degree under this influence, unless trained by habitual dependence to defer to the advice and direction of their parents. I am here speaking of influence properly so called, and not of authority, namely, the influence arising from benefits received, continued, and expected.

Suppose this influence established. Another consequence may be observed which will follow collaterally from the same cause. The same dependence which generates the influence, is also calculated to increase the watchfulness and anxiety of parents. In proportion to the dependence of children, is the degree in which the thoughts of their parents are necessarily engaged in their behalf, and again in proportion to this degree is the force of habit, and of other causes which tend to continue the thoughts and feelings in the same channel. On this ground I think, that, were a friend or relation to relieve a parent of the burden of maintaining his child from the age of seven to that of one and twenty, the probable consequence would be, that the parent would not afterwards feel the same interest in that child as he would otherwise have felt.

If this conclusion be just, it must be equally so in all cases in which a parent is in fact discharged of the maintenance of his child, whatever be the way in which the discharge is effected. It will hold good therefore in the case, in which children are able, from an early age, to purchase their maintenance by their own labour. When that happens, it is to be expected that in the season of youth they will be left in a great measure to their own thoughtlessness and natural imprudence. Even supposing them, for argument's sake, to be open to influence, that is, to be fully ready to be guided by advice properly given, they will be without advisers. I say they will be without advisers, because, though advice in one sense is always cheap, yet they will be without friends, who will so far interest themselves in their welfare, as to watch the occasions in which advice is required, and to take the pains and trouble, of investigating facts, and of acquiring the knowledge which can alone render them competent, to advise with judgment, to support their advice with sufficient reasons, or to

weigh properly the objections which may be made to it. On this ground therefore, as well as on the ground of the influence produced by it, a long dependence of children on their parents is favourable to that element of the preventive check which I termed the prudential disposition.

It may be useful here to mention that the two consequences which I have been considering, may be readily distinguished in the memory, by referring the one to the children and the other to the parents. The same cause disposes the children to receive with deference the opinions of their parents, and the parents to take the pains necessary for forming correct opinions as to all that concerns the welfare and prosperity of their children.

I here quit the abstract hypothesis, or at least the abstract consideration of it. The remainder of the Lecture will be occupied with the application of it, and with some general remarks upon the existing state of society, and the principles upon which it may be improved.

I have explained, that, to the preventive check two elements are necessary, namely, motives for prudence, and a prudential disposition; the motives being distinguished as depending on external causes, and the disposition, for contradistinction, being referred to the minds of the individuals. We have seen that, under the hypothesis of which I treated in the last Lecture, both these elements are deficient, but under that of which I have just concluded the examination, they are present in considerable force. Now, the former hypothesis, as I have already intimated, corresponds very nearly with the actual condition of the labouring classes in this country. The latter, in like manner, corresponds with that of persons engaged either in the learned professions, or in those other arts, in which the excellency of the product depends rather on mental, than on bodily attainments. And, though it corresponds solely with that of these persons, according to the strictness of the terms in which it is expressed, yet, substantially and in effect, it corresponds with that of all the higher and middling classes of society. For the conclusions do not depend on the mode by which an increased income is acquired with the advance of life, but, solely and simply, on the circumstances of the command of wealth residing chiefly with the old, without reference to the source from which that command is obtained.

The problem to be solved relates to the manner in which the possession of the world may be best secured to its existing occupants, and the entrance guarded, so that those who are already seated, and have but just elbow-room, may limit the admissions, and exclude the crowd which is pressing at the doors. At nature's mighty feast, to use an expression of Mr. Malthus, there should be no free sittings. The first comers should have, each a box appropriated to himself, into which alone he should be at liberty to introduce others. Now, the old are the first comers into the world, and with them, therefore, the right of disposing of its food should chiefly reside. This would be the case, did they possess, either exclusively or principally, the power of labouring. But it is also equally the case, where, for the deficiency of the power of labouring, there is an adequate substitute, in income derived either from capital or from property in land. The unborn, when they come to be born, bring with them a pair of hands, which will soon become competent to labour. Capital cannot be acquired until long after. The possession of landed property depends upon succession. It continues to the end of life, and must therefore in general be accumulated with the old.

Mr. Malthus, in describing the prevalence of the preventive check in England,

observes, that "the sons of tradesmen and farmers are exhorted not to marry, and generally find it necessary to comply with this advice, till they are settled in some business or farm which may enable them to support a family." "These events," he further remarks, "may not perhaps occur until they are far advanced in life."

Observe now the principle, to which, in the case of these persons, he refers the operation of the preventive check. It is clearly the state of dependence. The sons of labourers are themselves, *suo jure*, labourers. But the sons of tradesmen and farmers are the sons of tradesmen and farmers, and nothing more. They are not themselves tradesmen and farmers. Hence their prudence is described as an effect of exhortation, and not of the original workings of their own minds. They depend on others who are interested in their welfare, and who through this dependence have a powerful influence over them.

I have already observed, that the uncertainties and variations of employment are unfavourable to the preventive check among labourers. I may now add, that the same want of precedency, and the scramble which prevails in the whole business of commerical life, is, *pro tanto*, equally unfavourable to it among the middling classes. The sons of tradesmen and farmers are exhorted not to marry until they are settled in some business or farm. Let us suppose them uniformly to comply with this advice. Then, the rapidity of succession, which will regulate the number of marriages, will be proportional, not simply to the vacancies of the society, but, to the sum of these, together with the number of successful speculations: since every failure must make room for a new adventurer. Hence, in proportion to the number of failures is the excess of marriages, and in the same proportion is the constitution of society deficient, in respect of the motives for moral restraint, which it ought to present to individuals. This is of course to be understood, on the supposition of there being no compensation in some other particular.

One great point with respect to the preventive check is a motive for procrastination, and this can only be looked for in the assured prospect of an advance in circumstances with the advance in age. A curate, who is without hopes of further advancement, settles his mind to his condition, and marries at once upon his curacy. But, if he has reasonable expectation of preferment, he is apt to feed himself with hope, and, raising his ideas of comfort, and of the rank in society which he would wish his wife and family to hold, to the standard of his future prospects, to postpone his marriage until these prospects can be realized. The same principles are calculated equally to operate throughout all ranks of society.[9]

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[9]A point of difference, which has not been expressly noticed in the Lecture, between the labouring and the other classes of society, unfavourable to prudential *motives* among the former, is the following:

Among labourers, it is an actual family only, and not the mere state of matrimony, which occasions any considerable expense. They have no servants or establishment to maintain. And, as to their own maintenance, now that females are so much employed, the husband and the wife commonly earn it, independently of each other, or nearly so, as in the single state. They have indeed to pay house-rent; but, when single, they not unfrequently have to pay for lodging, even while living with their parents. Thus the expense, which marriage entails on them, is future and contingent. But in all other ranks, the expense depending on marriage, is great, immediate, and certain. The husband also has commonly alone to contribute the most considerable part of it.

That the prudential disposition in human nature is sufficiently strong, where the constitution of society distributes, and fixes properly, the obligation to prudence, is evident from the example of Norway, which, though ranking among the least civilized nations of Europe, is yet that, in which, unless perhaps we except Switzerland, the preventive check prevails in the highest degree. "The Norway farms[10] have in general a certain number of married labourers employed upon them, in proportion to their size, who are called *housemen*. They receive from the farmer a house and a quantity of land, nearly sufficient to maintain a family, in return for which they are under an obligation of working for him at a low price, whenever they are called upon. Except in the immediate neighbourhood of the towns, and on the sea-coast, the vacancy of a place of this kind is the only prospect which presents itself of providing for a family"; and, in consequence, the young men and women remain with the farmer as unmarried servants, and forming part of his household, till a houseman's place becomes vacant. Thus the condition of unmarried labourers, and their hope of succession to a houseman's place, is analogous to fellowships and succession to livings in this university. A houseman's place is in the nature of a benefice. This simple constitution seems to secure the efficacy of the preventive check in nearly the full degree which nature requires. On the sea-coast, however, which furnishes *hopes* of an adequate supply of food from fishing, a source of subsistence possessed in common, prudential restraint is much less prevalent. And there, accordingly, the people are very poor and wretched, and beyond comparison in a worse state than the peasants in the interior of the country.[11]

It is probable, that the obligation to moral restraint was better distributed in England a hundred years ago than it is at present. "It is seldom," says Swift, writing in 1737, and comparing the condition of Ireland with that of England, "it is seldom known in England, that the labourers, the lower mechanic, the servant or the cottager, thinks of marrying, until he hath saved up a stock of money sufficient to carry on his business; nor takes a wife without a suitable portion; and as seldom fails of making an yearly addition to that stock with the view of providing for his children. But in this kingdom, the case is directly contrary, where many thousand couples are yearly married, whose united fortunes, bating the rags on their backs, would not be sufficient to purchase a pint of buttermilk for their wedding supper, nor have any prospect of supporting their *honorable state*, but by service, or labour, or thievery."

It is observable that Swift here speaks of labour, by which he means the sale of labour, as a source of income, on which alone a labourer ought not to rely in venturing upon marriage. Hence it seems reasonable to infer, that in his time the number of

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[10]Malthus on Population. Chapter on the checks to population in Norway.

[11]Dr. Chalmers considers, that fewer and later marriages will be the slow but sure product of education working on the habits and inclinations of the common people, and begetting a higher cast of character, and a higher standard of enjoyment; whence he tells us, that, *as in Norway*, we may expect to behold the cheerful spectacle of a thriving, independent, and respectable peasantry (p. 552). Education is beyond all question of great importance. It does not however appear, as a matter of fact, that the Norwegian peasantry possess any superior advantages with respect to education: while the high prevalence of the preventive check among them is sufficiently accounted for by the obvious circumstances peculiar to their condition, which have been above explained.

small capitals, small properties, or small holdings of land, all of which would operate in the nature of a houseman's place in Norway,[12] was much greater, in proportion to the population, than at present, and extended, perhaps, to the great majority of the labouring families. These were calculated to secure to their then possessors their places in the world, and to give them the advantage in the competition against new comers, who might otherwise have forced them from their positions. Without, however, building too much upon the presumption of the accuracy of Swift's expressions, we may observe generally, that the whole statement is strong; and certainly, far too strong, to allow us to believe it to have been made without more foundation, than the present condition of the English labourer would furnish.

The revolution in manufactures, by which small capitalists have been thrust out of the market, the accumulation of farms, which in agriculture has produced a similar effect, the decay of monopolies, and the increased productiveness of land, with the consequent advance of population, while the right of primogeniture has maintained nearly a stationary condition, or has perhaps caused even a retrogradation in the number of the landed proprietors,—all these causes[13] have vastly altered the proportions of society since the time of Swift, and produced an immense accumulation in the labouring class. I here mean the labouring class strictly so called; not including in it all who labour, but those only who live by the sale of their labour without any other source of income.

Moreover, in manufactures, the motives to prudential restraint, which, among labourers, as we have already seen, are at all times weak, have been still further weakened by the extended use of machinery, which, by performing those parts of operations requiring mere force, has opened a wider field for the employment of women and children, thereby, in a great measure, relieving the head of a family of the burden of its maintenance. In agriculture, the poor laws, as they have been administered during the last thirty-five years, have absorbed almost the whole of this burden: so that nearly the only portion of a prudential motive, which now remains to the agricultural labourer, is to be found in the difficulty of obtaining a house, and accumulating a little money to buy furniture.

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[12]With respect to small holdings, see [footnote 8]; to which it may be added, that the reasons there given were applicable in greater force a hundred years ago than at present. The difference arises, partly from the various laws, to facilitate the recovery of rent, which have been passed during the last century, and partly, from the circumstance, that the cost of verification is necessarily greater, in proportion, in small than in large holdings.

Small holdings, however, of land, the property of another, at a low rent, if in the hands of persons naturally inclined to indolence, are apt to foster and perpetuate it. Not being saleable as property, they cannot be squandered: but, being valuable in possession, they will be retained so long as a bare existence can be supported. Were they held in actual property, and saleable, they would soon pass into the hands of the industrious, and their late indolent owners, who had been insensible to any less powerful motive, would be compelled to exertion by the stimulus of necessity.

[13]To which may be added the progress of inclosures, for two reasons: first, because no benefit can be derived from a common, except from the possession of capital, in the form of a cow, or other live stock; and secondly, because the newly inclosed lands have been added to the estates of previous proprietors, whence, while population has been increased by the extension of cultivation, there has not, so far, at least, as this cause is concerned, been any corresponding increase in the class of proprietors.

Meanwhile, the progress of medicine, the increased healthiness of the country, through the destruction of the woods, the draining of marshes, the improvements in the police of cities, and their better ventilation, all tending to the prolongation of life generally, and especially to the preservation of infant life, render the necessity for moral restraint more urgent and intense than ever.

Let me, however, not be understood, as reprobating manufactures, or machinery, or the accumulation of farms, but only as noticing some evil, though certainly very serious, consequences, which are mingled with the good, as is commonly the case in all human affairs. I consider even infant schools, notwithstanding their acknowledged excellency in respect of their primary and obvious effects, to be liable to the same objection. The relief they give to mothers, must, infallibly, in the long run, be turned to the increase of labour, and the increase of the competition for food, since it is most certain that there is no other limit to that competition, than the inability, on the part of the most wretched, to increase their biddings. A long catalogue of evils might indeed be enumerated. But I see no reason for believing any of them insuperable, and I have no doubt but that the progress of political science will in time discover a remedy for most.

The common reasons for the establishment of private property in land are deduced from the necessity, of offering to individuals sufficient motives for cultivating the ground, and of preventing the wasteful destruction of the immature products of the earth. But to these there is another added, by the theory of population, from which we infer, that, since the earth can never maintain all who can offer themselves for maintenance, it is better that its produce should be divided into shares of a definite magnitude, sufficient each for the comfortable maintenance of a family, whence the number of families to be maintained would be determined from the number of such shares, than that all, who can possibly enter, should be first admitted, and then the magnitude of each share be determined from the number of admissions.

In the present state of society, down to a certain point, the food is distributed in definite shares. Beyond that point, that is, amongst those whose necessities press against their means, it is divided proportionally to their numbers. That the owners of land should be able to command definite shares, is a necessary consequence of their ownership. Between them, as purchasers of food, there can be no competition. Among capitalists, and the rest of the middling ranks, the same result follows, only contingently, from the limitation of their competition. Were capital as uniformly distributed, and as easily obtained, as is the ability to labour, then, however great its efficacy in assisting labour might be, still the capitalists would be as badly off as are at present the labouring classes. Capital would be in a manner absorbed into labour, and the possession of it would be equivalent merely to an increased effectiveness of labour. The labourers would indeed be better clothed, better lodged, and all their artificial wants would be more liberally supplied. But leisure they would not have, nor would they obtain the means of subsistence upon easier terms than at present.

If the incomes of a certain number of families, not exceeding that which the food of the country can well maintain, be greater than those of the remainder, then, amongst those families, the competition would be sufficiently limited, and they might all live in comfort and comparative affluence, notwithstanding inequalities in their conditions, and although their numbers might approach to the utmost amount which the food of the country could maintain upon a liberal allowance. Supposing, for example, the income derivable from the sale of the labour of a family to be fifty

pounds per annum, then, were as many, or nearly as many families as the food of the country could well maintain, but not a greater number, to possess, in addition to their labour, other sources of income, derived either from capital or from land, these families, in the competition for food, would drive all other families out of the market, and a due proportion would be preserved between the population and the food.[14] And it is evident that, according to the certainty and regularity of succession to these advantages, that is, according to the degree in which it could be calculated and foreseen, they would enter into human motives, and form incentives to moral restraint.

Wealth is productive of many other beneficial consequences besides such as are intended and desired by those who seek it. For the sake of those consequences, inequality of conditions is necessary, on account of its effect in creating new and powerful stimulants to exertion, which the natural utility of wealth, considered merely in reference to the primary gratifications resulting from its use, would be utterly insufficient to produce. After the necessary wants have been supplied, the next powerful motive to exertion is the spirit of emulation, and the desire of rising in the world. Men are attracted upwards by the example of others who are richer than themselves. At the top of the scale this attraction is wanting. At that point, therefore, it is necessary that there should be a title to wealth without the labour of producing it. A state of perfect equality, by its effect in lowering the standard of desire, and almost reducing it to the satisfaction of the natural necessities, would bring back society to ignorance and barbarism. Still, the same principle of population, which furnishes a reason for the institution of property, prescribes a limit to its concentration. To a plank in the sea, which cannot support all, all have not an equal right; the lucky individuals, who can first obtain possession, being justified in appropriating it to themselves, to the exclusion of the remainder. Where property is much concentrated, and where, by consequence, the class of mere labourers is great, the principle of population would warrant the application of the same argument, to justify the appropriation of the field of employment, and a monopoly of labour. But, since such a monopoly is not easily maintainable, we are led to look for an equivalent in the diffusion of a sufficient degree of property throughout the whole fabric of society.

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[14]On the supposition of the abilities of all to labour being accurately equal, and not only equal as between person and person, but also in the case of the same person uniform and permanent, the smallest excess of income above mere wages would be sufficient for the purpose. In proportion to the inaccuracy of the supposition, the necessary excess would become greater, as in proportion to the violence of storms is the amount of ballast which a ship must carry.