

Thomas Malthus

An Essay on the Principles of
Population

Appendices

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Appendix I, II, III

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Appendix I, 1807

In the preface to the second edition of this Essay, I expressed a hope that the detailed manner in which I had treated the subject and pursued it to its consequences, though it might open the door to many objections, and expose me to much severity of criticism, might be subservient to the important end of bringing a subject so nearly connected with the happiness of society into more general notice. Conformably to the same views I should always have felt willing to enter into the discussion of any serious objections that were made to my principles or conclusions, to abandon those which appeared to be false, and to throw further lights, if I could, on those which appeared to be true. But though the work has excited a degree of public attention much greater than I should have presumed to expect, yet very little has been written to controvert it; and of that little, the greatest part is so full of illiberal declamation, and so entirely destitute of argument, as to be evidently beneath notice. What I have to say therefore at present, will be directed rather more to the objections which have been urged in conversation, than to those which have appeared in print. My object is to correct some of the misrepresentations which have gone abroad respecting two or three of the most important points of the Essay; and I should feel greatly obliged to those who have not had leisure to read the whole work, if they would cast their eyes over the few following pages, that they may not, from the partial and incorrect statements which they have heard, mistake the import of some of my opinions, and attribute to me others which I have never held.

The first grand objection that has been made to my principles is, that they contradict the original command of the Creator, to increase and multiply and replenish the earth. But those who have urged this objection have certainly either not read the work, or have directed their attention solely to a few detached passages, and have been unable to seize the bent and spirit of the whole. I am fully of opinion, that it is the duty of man to obey this command of his Creator; nor is there, in my recollection, a single passage in the work, which, taken

with the context, can, to any reader of intelligence, warrant the contrary inference.

Every express command given to man by his Creator is given in subordination to those great and uniform laws of nature, which he had previously established; and we are forbidden both by reason and religion to expect that these laws will be changed in order to enable us to execute more readily any particular precept. It is undoubtedly true that, if man were enabled miraculously to live without food, the earth would be very rapidly replenished: but as we have not the slightest ground of hope that such a miracle will be worked for this purpose, it becomes our positive duty as reasonable creatures, and with a view of executing the commands of our Creator, to inquire into the laws which he has established for the multiplication of the species. And when we find, not only from the speculative contemplation of those laws, but from the far more powerful and imperious suggestions of our senses, that man cannot live without food, it is a folly exactly of the same *kind* to attempt to obey the will of our Creator by increasing population without reference to the means of its support, as to attempt to obtain an abundant crop of corn by sowing it on the way-side and in hedges, where it cannot receive its proper nourishment. Which is it, I would ask, that best seconds the benevolent intentions of the Creator in covering the earth with esculent vegetables, he who with care and foresight duly ploughs and prepares a piece of ground, and sows no more seed than he expects will grow up to maturity, or he who scatters a profusion of seed indifferently over the land, without reference to the soil on which it falls, or any previous preparation for its reception?

It is an utter misconception of any argument to infer that I am an enemy to population. I am only an enemy to vice and misery, and consequently to that unfavourable proportion between population and food, which produces these evils. But this unfavourable proportion has no necessary connection with the quantity of absolute population which a country may contain. On the contrary, it is more frequently found in countries which are very thinly peopled, than in those which are populous. The bent of my argument on the subject of population may be illustrated by the instance of a pasture farm. If a young grazier were told to stock his land well, as on his stock would depend his profits and the ultimate success of his undertaking, he

would certainly have been told nothing but what was strictly true: and he would have to accuse himself, not his advisers, if, in pursuance of these instructions, he were to push the breeding of his cattle till they became lean and half-starved. His instructor, when he talked of the advantages of a large stock, meant undoubtedly stock in proper condition, and not such a stock as, though it might be numerically greater, was in value much less. The expression of stocking a farm well does not refer to particular numbers, but merely to that proportion which is best adapted to the farm, whether it be a poor or a rich one, whether it will carry fifty head of cattle or five hundred. It is undoubtedly extremely desirable that it should carry the greater number, and every effort should be made to effect this object: but surely that farmer could not be considered as an enemy to a large quantity of stock, who should insist upon the folly and impropriety of attempting to breed such a quantity, before the land was put into a condition to bear it.

The arguments which I have used respecting the increase of population are exactly of the same nature as these just mentioned. I believe that it is the intention of the Creator that the earth should be replenished; but certainly with a healthy, virtuous and happy population, not an unhealthy, vicious and miserable one. And if, in endeavouring to obey the command to increase and multiply, we people it only with beings of this latter description and suffer accordingly, we have no right to impeach the justice of the command, but our irrational mode of executing it.

In the desirableness of a great and efficient population, I do not differ from the warmest advocates of increase. I am perfectly ready to acknowledge with the writers of old that it is not extent of territory, but extent of population that measures the power of states. It is only as to the mode of obtaining a vigorous and efficient population that I differ from them; and in thus differing I conceive myself entirely borne out by experience, that great test of all human speculations.

It appears from the undoubted testimony of registers, that a large proportion of marriages and births is by no means necessarily connected with a rapid increase of population, but is often found in countries where it is either stationary or increasing very slowly. The population of such countries is not only comparatively inefficient

from the general poverty and misery of the inhabitants, but invariably contains a much larger proportion of persons in those stages of life, in which they are unable to contribute their share to the resources or the defence of the state.

This is most strikingly illustrated in an instance which I have quoted from M. Muret, in a chaplet on Switzerland, where it appeared, that in proportion to the same population, the Lyonais produced 16 births, the Pays de Vaud 11, and a particular parish in the Alps only 8; but that at the age of 20 these three very different numbers were all reduced to the same. In the Lyonais nearly half of the population was under the age of puberty, in the Pays de Vaud one-third, and in the parish of the Alps only non-fourth. The inference from such facts is unavoidable, and of the highest importance to society.

The poorer of a country to increase its resources or defend its possessions must depend principally upon its efficient population, upon that part of the population which is of an age to be employed effectually in agriculture, commerce or war; but it appears with an evidence little short of demonstration, that in a country, the resources of which do not naturally call for a larger proportion of births, such an increase, so far from tending to increase this efficient population, would tend materially to diminish it. It would undoubtedly, at first, increase the number of souls in proportion to the means of subsistence, and therefore cruelly increase the pressure of want; but the numbers of persons rising annually to the age of puberty might not be so great as before, a larger part of the produce would be distributed without return to children who would never reach manhood, and the additional population, instead of giving additional strength to the country, would essentially lessen this strength, and operate as a constant obstacle to the creation of new resources.

We are a little dazzled at present by the population and power of France, and it is known that she has always had a large proportion of births: but if any reliance can be placed on what are considered as the best authorities on this subject, it is quite certain that the advantages which she enjoys do not arise from any thing peculiar in the structure of her population, but solely from the great absolute quantity of it, derived from her immense extent of fertile territory.

Necker, speaking of the population of France, says, that it is so comprised, that a million of individuals present neither the same force in war, nor the same capacity for labour, as an equal number in a country where the people are less oppressed and fewer die in infancy. And the view which Arthur Young has given of the state of the lower classes of the people at the time he travelled in France, which was just at the commencement of the revolution, leads directly to the same conclusion. According to the *Statistique Générale et Particulière de la France*, lately published, the proportion of the population under twenty is almost 9/62; in England, if increasing no faster than France, it would probably not be much more than 7/26. Consequently out of a population of ten millions England would have a million more of persons above twenty than France, and would upon this supposition have at least three or four hundred thousand more males of a military age. If our population were of the same description as that of France, it must be increased numerically by more than a million and a half, in order to enable us to produce from England and Wales the same number of persons above the age of twenty as at present; and if we had only an increase of a million, our efficient strength in agriculture, commerce and war, would be in the most decided manner diminished, while at the same time the distresses of the lower classes would be dreadfully increased. Can any rational man say that an additional population of this description would be desirable, either in a moral or political view? And yet this is the kind of population which invariably results from direct encouragements to marriage, or from the want of that personal respectability which is occasioned by ignorance and despotism.

It may perhaps be true that France fills her armies with greater facility and less interruption to the usual labours of her inhabitants than England; and it must be acknowledged that poverty and want of employment are powerful aids to a recruiting serjeant; but it would not be a very humane project to keep our people always in want, for the sake of enlisting them cheaper; nor would it be a very politic project to diminish our wealth and strength with the same economical view. We cannot attain incompatible objects. If we possess the advantage of being able to keep nearly all our people constantly employed, either in agriculture or commerce, we cannot expect to retain the opposite advantage of their being always at leisure, and willing to

enlist for a very small sum. But we may rest perfectly assured that while we have the efficient population, we shall never want men to fill our armies, if we propose to them adequate motives.

In many parts of the Essay I have dwelt much on the advantage of rearing the requisite population of any country from the smallest number of births. I have stated expressly, that a decrease of mortality at all ages is what we ought chiefly to aim at; and as the best criterion of happiness and good government, instead of the largeness of the proportion of births, which was the usual mode of judging, I have proposed the smallness of the proportion dying under the age of puberty. Conscious that I had never intentionally deviated from these principles, I might well be rather surprised to hear that I had been considered by some as an enemy to the introduction of the vaccine inoculation, which is calculated to attain the very end which I have uniformly considered as so desirable. I have indeed intimated what I still continue most firmly to believe, that if the resources of the country would not permanently admit of a greatly accelerated rate of increase in the population (and whether they would or not must certainly depend upon other causes besides the number of lives saved by the vaccine inoculation,) one of two things would happen, either an increased mortality of some other diseases, or a diminution in the proportion of births. But I have expressed my conviction that the latter effect would take place; and therefore consistently with the opinions which I have always maintained, I ought to be, and am, one of the warmest friends to the introduction of the cow-pox. In making every exertion which I think likely to be effectual, to increase the comforts and diminish the mortality among the poor, I act in the most exact conformity to my principles. Whether those are equally consistent who profess to have the same object in view, and yet measure the happiness of nations by the large proportion of marriages and births, is a point which they would do well to consider.

It has been said by some, that the natural checks to population will always be sufficient to keep it within bounds, without resorting to any other aids; and one ingenious writer has remarked that I have not deduced a single original fact from real observation, to prove the inefficiency of the checks which already prevail. These remarks are correctly true and are truisms exactly of the same kind as the assertion that men cannot live without food. For, undoubtedly as long as

this continues to be a law of his nature, what are here called the natural checks cannot possibly fail of being effectual. Besides the curious truism that these assertions involve, they proceed upon the very strange supposition, that the *ultimate* object of my work is to check population; as if any thing could be more desirable than the most rapid increase of population, unaccompanied by vice and misery. But of course my ultimate object is to diminish vice and misery, and any checks to population, which may have been suggested, are solely as means to accomplish this end. To a rational being, the prudential check to population ought to be considered as equally natural with the check from poverty and premature mortality which these gentlemen seem to think so entirely sufficient and satisfactory; and it will readily occur to the intelligent reader, that one class of checks may be substituted for another, not only without essentially diminishing the population of a country, but even under a constantly progressive increase of it.

On the possibility of increasing very considerably the effective population of this country, I have expressed myself in some parts of my work more sanguinely, perhaps, than experience would warrant. I have said, that in the course of some centuries it might contain two or three times as many inhabitants as at present and yet every person be both better fed and better clothed. And in the comparison of the increase of population and food at the beginning of the Essay, that the argument might not seem to depend upon a difference of opinion respecting facts, I have allowed the produce of the earth to be unlimited, which is certainly going too far. It is not a little curious therefore, that it should still continue to be urged against me as an argument, that this country might contain two or three times as many inhabitants; and it is still more curious, that some persons, who have allowed the different ratios of increase on which all my principal conclusions are founded, have still asserted that no difficulty or distress could arise from population, till the productions of the earth could not be further increased. I doubt whether a stronger instance could readily be produced of the total absence of the power of reasoning, than this assertion, after such a concession, affords. It involves a greater absurdity than the saying, that because a farm can by proper management be made to carry an additional stock of four

head of cattle every year, that therefore no difficulty or inconvenience would arise if an additional forty were placed in it yearly.

The power of the earth to produce subsistence is certainly not unlimited, but it is strictly speaking indefinite; that is, its limits are not defined, and the time will probably never arrive when we shall be able to say, that no further labour or ingenuity of man could make further additions to it. But the power of obtaining an additional quantity of food from the earth by proper management, and in a certain time, has the most remote relation imaginable to the power of keeping pace with an unrestricted increase of population. The knowledge and industry, which would enable the natives of New Holland to make the best use of the natural resources of their country, must, without an absolute miracle, come to them gradually and slowly; and even then, as it has amply appeared, would be perfectly ineffectual as to the grand object; but the passions which prompt to the increase of population are always in full vigour, and are ready to produce their full effect even in a state of the most helpless ignorance and barbarism. It will be readily allowed, that the reason why New Holland, in proportion to its natural powers, is not so populous as China, is the want of those human institutions which protect property and encourage industry; but the misery and vice which prevail almost equally in both countries, from the tendency of population to increase faster than the means of subsistence, form a distinct consideration, and miss from a distinct cause. They arise from the incomplete discipline of the human passions; and no person with the slightest knowledge of mankind has ever had the hardihood to affirm that human institutions could completely discipline all the human passions. But I have already treated this subject so fully in, the course of the work, that I am ashamed to add any thing further here.

The next grand objection which has been urged against me, is my denial of the *right* of the poor to support.

Those who would maintain this objection with any degree of consistency, are bound to shew, that the different ratios of increase with respect to population and food, which I attempted to establish at the beginning of the Essay, are fundamentally erroneous; since on the supposition of then being true, the conclusion is inevitable. If it appear, as it must appear on these ratios being allowed, that it is not possible for the industry of man to produce on a limited territory

sufficient food for all that would be born, if every person were to marry at the time when he was first prompted to it by inclination, it follows irresistably, that all cannot have a *right* to support. Let us for a moment suppose an equal division of property in any country. If under these circumstances one half of the society were by prudential habits so to regulate their increase, that it exactly kept pace with their increasing cultivation, it is evident that the individuals of this portion of society would always remain as rich as at first. If the other half during the same time married at the age of puberty, when they would probably feel most inclined to it, it is evident that they would soon become wretchedly poor. But upon what plea of justice or equity could this second half of the society claim a right, in virtue of their poverty, to any of the possessions of the first half? This poverty had arisen entirely from their own ignorance or imprudence; and it would be perfectly clear, from the manner in which it had come upon them, that if their plea were admitted, and they were not suffered to feel the particular evils resulting from their conduct the whole society would shortly be involved in the same degree of wretchedness. Any voluntary and temporary assistance, which might be given as a measure of charity by the richer members of the society to the others, while they were learning to make a better use of the lessons of nature, would be quite a distinct consideration, and without doubt most properly applied; but nothing like a claim of *right* to support can possibly be maintained, till we deny the premises; till we affirm that the American increase of population is a miracle, and does not arise from the greater facility of obtaining the means of subsistence.

In fact, whatever we may say in our declamations on this subject, almost the whole of our *conduct* is founded on the non-existence of this right. If the poor had really a claim of *right* to support, I do not think that any man could justify his wearing broad cloth, or eating as much meat as he likes for dinner; and those who assert this right, and yet are rolling in their carriages, living every day luxuriously, and keeping even their horses on food of which their fellow-creatures are in want, must be allowed to act with the greatest inconsistency. Taking an individual instance with out reference to consequences, it appears to me that Mr. Godwin's argument is irresistible. Can it be pretended for a moment that a part of the mutton which I expect to eat to-day would not be much more beneficially employed on some

hard-working labourer, who has not perhaps tasted animal food for the last week, or on some poor family who cannot command sufficient food of any kind fully to satisfy the cravings of hunger? If these instances were not of a nature to multiply in proportion as such wants were indiscriminately gratified, the gratification of them as it would be practicable, would be highly beneficial; and in this case I should not have the smallest hesitation in most fully allowing the right. But as it appears clearly, both from theory and experience, that, if the claim were allowed, it would soon increase beyond the *possibility* of satisfying it; and that the practical attempt to do so would involve the human race in the most wretched and universal poverty; it follows necessarily that our conduct, which denies the right, is more suited to the present state of our being, than our declamations which allow it.

The great Author of nature, indeed, with that wisdom which is apparent in all his works, has not left this conclusion to the cold and speculative consideration of general consequences. By making the passion of self-love beyond comparison stronger than the passion of benevolence, he has at once impelled us to that line of conduct, which is essential to the preservation of the human race. If all that might be born could be adequately supplied, we cannot doubt, that he would have made the desire of giving to others as ardent as that of supplying ourselves. But since, under the present constitution of things, this is not so, he has enjoined every man to pursue, as his primary object, his own safety and happiness, and the safety and happiness of those immediately connected with him; and it is highly instructive to observe that, in proportion as the sphere contracts and the power of giving effectual assistance increases, the desire increases at the same time. In the case of children, who have certainly a claim of *right* to the support and protection of their parents, we generally find parental affection nearly as strong as self-love: and except in a few anomalous cases, the last morsel will be divided into equal shares.

By this wise provision the most ignorant are led to promote the general happiness, an end which they would have totally failed to attain, if the moving principle of their conduct had been benevolence. Benevolence indeed, as the great and constant source of action, would require the most perfect knowledge of causes and effects, and therefore can only be the attribute of the Deity. In a being so short-

sighted as man, it would lead into the grossest errors, and soon transform the fair and cultivated soil of civilized society into a dreary scene of want and confusion.

But though benevolence cannot in the present state of our being be the great moving principle of human actions, yet, as the kind corrector of the evils arising from the other stronger passion, it is essential to human happiness; it is the balm and consolation and grace of human life, the source of our noblest efforts in the cause of virtue, and of our purest and most refined pleasures. Conformably to that system of general laws, according to which the Supreme Being appears with very few exceptions to act, a *passim* so strong and general as self-love could not prevail without producing much partial evil: and to prevent this passion from degenerating into the odious vice of selfishness, to make us sympathize in the pains and pleasures of our fellow-creatures, and feel the same *kind* of interest in their happiness and misery as in our own, though diminished in degree; to prompt us often to put ourselves in their place, that we may understand their wants, acknowledge their rights and do them good as we have opportunity; and to remind us continually, that even the passion which urges us to procure plenty for ourselves was not implanted in us for our own exclusive advantage, but as the means of procuring the greatest plenty for all; these appear to be the objects and offices of benevolence. In every situation of life there is ample room for the exercise of this virtue; and as each individual rises in society, as he advances in knowledge and excellence, as his power of doing good to others becomes greater, and the necessary attention to his own wants less, it will naturally come in for an increasing share among his constant motives of action. In situations of high trust and influence it ought to have a very large share, and in all public institutions it should be the great moving principle. Though we have often reason to fear that our benevolence may not take the most beneficial direction, we need never apprehend that there will be too much of it in society. The foundations of that passion on which our preservation depends, are fixed so deeply in our nature, that no reasonings or addresses to our feelings can essentially disturb it. It is just therefore and proper that all the positive precepts should be on the side of the weaker impulse; and we may safely endeavour to increase and extend its influence as much as we are able, if at the same time we are

constantly on the watch, to prevent the evil which may arise from its misapplication.

The law, which in this country entitles the poor to relief, is undoubtedly different from a full acknowledgment of the natural right; and from this difference, and the many counteracting causes that arise from the mode of its execution, it will not of course be attended with the same consequences. But still it is an approximation to a full acknowledgment, and as such appears to produce much evil, both with regard to the habits and the temper of the poor. I have in consequence ventured to suggest a plan of gradual abolition, which, as might be expected, has not met with universal approbation. I can readily understand any objections that may be made to it on the plea, that, the right having been once acknowledged in this country, the revocation of it might at first excite discontents; and I should therefore most fully concur in the propriety of proceeding with the greatest caution, and of using all possible means of preventing any sudden shock to the opinions of the poor. But I have never been able to comprehend the grounds of the further assertion, which I have sometimes heard made, that if the poor were really convinced that they had no claim of right to relief, they would in general be more inclined to be discontented and seditious. On these occasions, the only way I have of judging is to put myself in imagination in the place of the poor man, and consider how I should feel in his situation. If I were told that the rich, by the laws of nature and the laws of the land, were bound to support me, I could not, in the first place, feel much obligation for such support; and, in the next place, if I were given any food of an inferior kind, and could not see the absolute necessity of the change, which would probably be the case, I should think that I had good reason to complain. I should feel, that the laws had been violated to my injury, and that I had been unjustly deprived of my right. Under these circumstances, though I might be deterred by the fear of an armed force from committing any overt acts of resistance, yet I should consider myself as perfectly justified in so doing, if this fear were removed; and the injury, which I believed that I had suffered, might produce the most unfavourable effects on my general dispositions towards the higher classes of society. I cannot indeed conceive any thing more irritating to the human feelings, than to experience that degree of distress, which, in spite of all our poor-

laws and benevolence, is not unfrequently felt in this country; and yet to believe that these sufferings were not brought upon me either by my own faults, or by the operation of those general laws which, like the tempest, the blight or the pestilence, are continually falling hard on particular individuals, while others entirely escape, but were occasioned solely by the avarice and injustice of the higher classes of society.

On the contrary, if I firmly believed that by the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, I had no claim of *right* to support, I should, in the first place, feel myself more strongly bound to a life of industry and frugality; but if want, notwithstanding, came upon me, I should consider it in the light of sickness, as an evil incidental to my present state of being, and which, if I could not avoid, it was my duty to bear with fortitude and resignation. I should know from past experience, that the best title I could have to the assistance of the benevolent would be, the not having brought myself into distress by my own idleness or extravagance. What I received would have the best effect on my feelings towards the higher classes. Even if it were much inferior to what I had been accustomed to, it would still, instead of an injury, be an obligation; and conscious that I had no claim of *right*, nothing but the dread of absolute famine, which might overcome all other considerations, could palliate the guilt of resistance.

I cannot help believing that, if the poor in this country were convinced that they had no claim of *right* to support, and yet in scarcities and all cases of urgent distress were liberally relieved, which I think they would be; the bond, which unites the rich with the poor, would be drawn much closer than at present; and the lower classes of society, as they would have less real reason for imitation and discontent, would be much less subject to these uneasy sensations.

Among those who have objected to my declaration, that the poor have no claim of *right* to support, is Mr. Young, who, with a harshness not quite becoming a candid inquirer after truth, has called my proposal for the gradual abolition of the poor-laws a horrible plan, and asserted that the execution of it would be a most iniquitous proceeding. Let this plan however be compared for a moment with that which he himself and others have proposed, of fixing the sum of the poor's rates, which on no account is to be increased. Under such a

law, if the distresses of the poor were to be aggravated tenfold, either by the increase of numbers or the recurrence of a scarcity, the same sum would invariably be appropriated to their relief. If the statute which gives the poor a right to support were to remain unexpunged, we should add to the cruelty of starving them the injustice of still *professing* to relieve them. If this statute were expunged or altered, we should virtually deny the right of the poor to support, and only retain the absurdity of saying, that they had a right to a certain sum; an absurdity on which Mr. Young justly comments with much severity in the case of France. In both cases the hardships which they would suffer would be much more severe, and would come upon them in a much more unprepared state, than upon the plan proposed in the Essay.

According to this plan, all that are already married, and even all that are engaged to marry during the course of the year, and all their children, would be relieved as usual; and only those who marry subsequently, and who of course may be supposed to have made better provision for contingencies, would be out of the pale of relief.

Any plan for the abolition of the poor-laws must presuppose a general acknowledgment that they are essentially wrong, and that it is necessary to tread back our steps. With this acknowledgment, whatever objections may be made to my plan, in the too frequently short-sighted views of policy, I have no fear of comparing it with any other that has yet been advanced, in point of justice and humanity; and of course the terms iniquitous and horrible "pass by me like the idle wind, which I regard not." Mr. Young, it would appear, has now given up this plan. He has pleaded for the privilege of being inconsistent, and has given such reasons for it that I am disposed to acquiesce in them, provided he confines the exercise of this privilege to different publications, in the interval between which he may have collected new facts. But I still think it not quite allowable in the same publication: and yet it appears that in the very paper, in which he has so severely condemned my scheme, the same arguments, which he has used to reprobate it, are applicable with equal force against his own proposal, as there explained.

He allows that his plan can provide only for a certain number of families, and has nothing to do with the increase from them; but in allowing this, he allows that it does not reach the grand difficulty

attending a provision for the poor. In this most essential point, after reprobating me for saying, that the poor have no claim of *right* to support, he is compelled to adopt the very same conclusion; and to own that "it might be prudent to consider the misery to which the progressive population might be subject, when there was not a sufficient demand for them in towns and manufactures, as an evil which it was absolutely and physically impossible to prevent." Now the sole reason why I say that the poor have no claim of *right* to support, is the physical impossibility of relieving this progressive population. Mr. Young expressly acknowledges this physical impossibility; yet with an inconsistency scarcely credible still declaims against my declaration.

The power, which the society may possess of relieving a certain portion of the poor, is a consideration perfectly distinct from the general question; and I am quite sure I have never said that it is not our duty to do all the good that is practicable. But this limited power of assisting individuals cannot possibly establish a general right. If the poor have really a natural right to support, and if our present laws be only a confirmation of this right, it ought certainly to extend unimpaired to all who are in distress, to the increase from the cottagers as well as to the cottagers themselves; and it would be a palpable injustice in the society, to adopt Mr. Young's plan, and purchase from the present generation the disfranchisement of their posterity.

Mr. Young objects very strongly to that passage of the Essay, in which I observe that a man, who plunges himself into poverty, and dependence by marrying without any prospect of being able to maintain his family, has more reason to accuse himself than the price of labour, the parish, the avarice of the rich, the institutions of society, and the dispensations of Providence; except as far as he has been deceived by those who ought to have instructed him. In answer to this, Mr. Young says that the poor fellow is justified in every one of these complaints, that of Providence alone excepted; and that, seeing other cottagers living comfortably with three or four acres of land, he has cause to accuse institutions which deny him that which the rich could well spare, and which would give him all he wants. I would beg Mr. Young for a moment to consider how the matter would stand, if his own plan were completely executed. After all the commons had been divided as he has proposed, if a labourer had more

than one son, in what respect would the second or third be in a different situation from the man that I have supposed? Mr. Young cannot possibly mean to say that, if he had the very natural desire of marrying at twenty, he would still have a right to complain that the society did not give him a house and three or four acres of land. He has indeed expressly denied this absurd consequence, though in so doing he has directly contradicted the declaration just quoted. The progressive population, he says, would, according to his system, be cut off from the influence of the poor-laws, and the encouragement to marry would remain exactly in that proportion less than at present. Under these circumstances, without land, without the prospect of parish relief, and with the price of labour only sufficient to maintain two children, can Mr. Young seriously think that the poor man, if he be really aware of his situation, does not do wrong in marrying, and ought not to accuse himself for following what Mr. Young calls the dictates of God, of nature and of revelation? Mr. Young cannot be unaware of the wretchedness that must inevitably follow a marriage under such circumstances. His plan makes no provision whatever for altering these circumstances. He must therefore totally disregard all the misery arising from excessive poverty; or, if he allows that these supernumerary members must necessarily wait, either till a cottage with land becomes vacant in the country, or that by emigrating to towns they can find the means of providing for a family, all the declamation, which he has urged with such pomp against deferring marriage in my system, would be equally applicable in his own. In fact, if Mr. Young's plan really attained the object, which it professes to have in view, that of bettering the condition of the poor; and did not defeat its intent by encouraging a too rapid multiplication, and consequently lowering the price of labour; it cannot be doubted that not only the supernumerary members just mentioned, but all the labouring poor, must wait longer before they could marry than they do at present.

The following proposition may be said to be capable of mathematical demonstration. In a country, the resources of which will not permanently admit of an increase of population more rapid than the existing rate, no improvement in the condition of the people, which would lead to diminish mortality, could *possibly* take place without being accompanied by a smaller proportion of births, supposing of

course no particular increase of emigration. To a person who has considered the subject, there is no proposition in Euclid, which brings home to the mind a stronger conviction than this; and there is no truth so invariably confirmed by all the registers of births, deaths and marriages, that have ever been collected. In this country it has appeared that, according to the returns of the Population Act in 1801, the proportion of births to deaths was about 4 to 3. This proportion with a mortality of 1 in 40 would double the population in 83 years and a half; and as we cannot suppose that the country could admit of more than a quadrupled population in the next hundred and sixty-six years, we may safely say that its resources will not allow of a permanent rate of increase greater than that which was then taking place. But if this be granted, it follows as a direct conclusion, that if Mr. Young's plan, or any other, really succeeded in bettering the condition of the poor, and enabling them to rear more of their children, the vacancies in cottages in proportion to the number of expectants would happen slower than at present, and the age of marriage]must inevitably be later.

With regard to the expression of later marriages, it should always be recollected that it refers to no particular age, but is entirely comparative. The marriages in England are later than in France, the natural consequence of that prudence and respectability generated by a better government; and can we doubt that good has been the result? The marriages in this country now are later than they were before the revolution; and I feel firmly persuaded, that the increased healthiness observed of late years could not possibly have taken place without this accompanying circumstance.¹ Two or three years in the average age of in marriage, by lengthening each generation, and tending, in a small degree, both to diminish the prolifickness of marriages, and the number of born living to be married, may make a considerable difference in the rate of increase, and be adequate to allow for a considerably diminished mortality. But I would on no account talk of any limits whatever. The only plain and intelligible measure with regard to marriage, is the having a fair prospect of being able to maintain a family. If the possession of one of Mr. Young's cottages

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would give the labourer this prospect, he would be quite right to marry; but if it did not, or if he could only obtain a rented house without land, and the wages of labour were only sufficient to maintain two children, does Mr. Young, who cuts him off from the influence of the poor-laws, presume to say, that he would still be right in marrying?

Mr. Young has asserted that I have made perfect chastity in the single state absolutely necessary to the success of my plan; but this surely is a misrepresentation. Perfect virtue is, indeed, necessary to enable man to avoid *all* the moral and physical evils which depend upon his own conduct; but who ever expected perfect virtue upon earth? I have said, what I conceive to be strictly true, that it is our duty to defer marriage till we can feed our children; and that it is also our duty not to indulge ourselves in vicious gratifications; but I have never said that I expected either, much less both, of these duties to be completely fulfilled. In this, and a number of other cases, it may happen that the violation of one of two duties will enable a man to perform the other with greater facility; but if they be really both duties, and both practicable, no power *on earth* can absolve a man from the guilt of violating either. This can only be done by that God, who can weigh the crime against the temptation, and will temper justice with mercy. The moralist is still bound to inculcate the practice of both duties; and each individual must be left to act under the temptations to which he is exposed, as his conscience shall dictate. Whatever I may have said in drawing a picture *professedly* visionary, for the sake of illustration; in the practical application of my principles I have taken man as he is, with all his imperfections on his head. And thus viewing him, and knowing that some checks to population must exist, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying, that the prudential check to marriage is better than premature mortality. And in this decision I feel myself completely justified by experience.

In every instance that can be traced, in which an improved government has given to its subjects a greater degree of foresight, industry, and personal dignity, these effects, under similar circumstances of increase, have invariably been accompanied by a diminished proportion of marriages. This is a proof that an increase of moral worth in the general character is not, at least, *incompatible* with an increase of temptations with respect to one particular vice;

and the instances of Norway, Switzerland, England, and Scotland, adduced in the last chapter of the Essay, shew that, in comparing different countries together, a smaller proportion of marriages and births does not necessarily imply the greater prevalence even of this particular vice. This is surely quite enough for the legislator. He cannot estimate, with tolerable accuracy, the degree in which chastity in the single state prevails. His general conclusions must be founded on general results, and these are clearly in his favour.

To much of Mr. Young's plan, as he has at present explained it, I should by no means object. The peculiar evil which I apprehended from it, that of taking the poor from the consumption of wheat, and feeding them on milk and potatoes, might certainly be avoided by a limitation of the number of cottages; and I entirely agree with him in thinking, that we should not be deterred from making 500,000 families more comfortable, because we cannot extend the same relief to all the rest. I have, indeed, myself ventured to recommend a general improvement of cottages, and even the cow system on a limited scale; and, perhaps with proper precautions, a certain portion of land might be given to a considerable body of the labouring classes.

If the law which entitles the poor to support were to be repealed, I should most highly approve of any plan which would tend to render such repeal more palatable on its first promulgation: and, in this view, some kind of compact with the poor might be very desirable. A plan of letting land to labourers, under certain conditions, has lately been tried in the parish of Long Newnton, in Gloucestershire; and the result, with a general proposal founded on it, has been submitted to the public by Mr. Estcourt. The present success has been very striking; but, in this, and every other case of the kind, we should always bear in mind, that no experiment respecting a provision for the poor can be said to be complete till succeeding generations have arisen. I doubt if ever there has been an instance of any thing like a liberal institution for the poor, which did not succeed on its first establishment, however it might have failed afterwards. But this consideration should by no means deter us from making such experiments, when present good is to be obtained by them, and a future overbalance of evil is not justly to be apprehended. It should only make us less rash in drawing our inferences. With regard to the general question of the advantages to the lower classes of possessing land, it should be recol-

lected that such possessions are by no means a novelty. Formerly this system prevailed in almost every country with which we are acquainted, and prevails at present in many countries, where the peasants are far from being remarkable for their comforts, but are, on the contrary, very poor, and particularly subject to scarcities. With respect to this latter evil, indeed, it is quite obvious that a peasantry which depends principally on its possessions in land, must be more exposed to it than one which depends on the general wages of labour. When a year of deficient crops occurs in a country of any extent and diversity of soil, it is always partial, and some districts are more affected than others. But when a bad crop of grass, corn, or potatoes, or a mortality among cattle, falls on a poor man, whose principal dependence is on two or three acres of land, he is in the most deplorable and helpless situation. He is comparatively without money to purchase supplies, and is not for a moment to be compared with the man who depends on the wages of labour, and who will, of course, be able to purchase that portion of the general crop, whatever it may be, to which his relative situation in the society entitles him. In Sweden, where the farmers' labourers are paid principally in land, and often keep two or three cows, it is not uncommon for the peasants of one district to be almost starving, while their neighbours at a little distance are living in comparative plenty. It will be found indeed generally, that, in almost all the countries which are particularly subject to scarcities and famines, either the farms are very small, or the labourers are paid principally in land. China, Indostan, and the former state of the Highlands of Scotland, furnish some proofs among many others of the truth of this observation; and in reference to the small properties of France, Mr. Young himself, in his Tour, particularly notices the distress arising from the least failure of the crops; and observes, that such a deficiency, as in England possesses almost without notice, in France is attended with dreadful calamities.

Should any plan, therefore, of assisting the poor by land be adopted in this country, it would be absolutely essential to its ultimate success, to prevent them from making it their principal dependence. And this might probably be done by attending strictly to the two following rules. Not to let the division of land be so great as to interrupt the cottager essentially in his usual labours; and always to stop in the farther distribution of land and cottages, when the price of

labour, independently of any assistance from land, would not, at the average price of corn, maintain three, or, at least, two children. Could the matter be so ordered, that the labourer, in working for others, should still continue to earn the same real command over the necessaries of life that he did before, a very great accession of comfort and happiness might accrue to the poor from the possession of land, without any evil that I can foresee at present. But if these points were not attended to, I should certainly fear an approximation to the state of the poor in France, Sweden, and Ireland; nor do I think that any of the partial experiments that have yet taken place afford the slightest presumption to the contrary. The result of these experiments is, indeed, exactly such as one should have expected. Who could ever have doubted that, if, without lowering the price of labour, or taking the labourer off from his usual occupations, you could give him the produce of one or two acres of land and the benefit of a cow, you would decidedly raise his condition? But it by no means follows that he would retain this advantage, if the system were so extended, as to make the land his principal dependence, to lower the price of labour, and, in the language of Mr. Young, to take the poor from the consumption of wheat and feed them all milk and potatoes. It does not appear to me so marvellous as it does to Mr. Young that the very same system, which in Lincolnshire and Rutlandshire may produce now the most comfortable peasantry in the British dominions, should in the end, if extended without proper precautions, assimilate the condition of the labourers of this country to that of the lower classes of the Irish.

It is generally dangerous and impolitic in a government to take it upon itself to regulate the supply of any commodity in request; and probably the supply of labourers forms no exception to the general rule. I would on no account, therefore propose a positive law to regulate their increase; but as any assistance which the society might give them cannot, in the nature of doings, be unlimited, the line may fairly be drawn where we please; and with regard to the increase from this point, every thing would be left as before to individual exertion and individual speculation. If any plan of this kind were adopted by the government I cannot help thinking that it might be made the means of giving the best kind of encouragement and reward to those who we employed in our defence. If the period of enlisting were only for

a limited time, and at the expiration of that time every person who had conducted himself well were entitled to a house and a small portion of land, if a country labourer, and to a tenement in a town and a small pension, if an artificer (all inalienable), a very strong motive would be held out to young men, not only to enter into the service of their country, but to behave well in that service; and, in a short time, there would be such a martial population at home as the unfortunate state of Europe seems in a most peculiar manner to require. As it is only limited assistance that the society can possibly give, it seems in every respect fair and proper that, in regulating this limit, some important end should be attained.

If the poor-laws be allowed to remain exactly in their present state, we ought, at least, to be aware to what cause it is owing, that their effects have not been more pernicious than they are observed to be; that we may not complain of, or alter those parts, without which we should really not have the power of continuing them. The law which obliges each parish to maintain its own poor is open to many objections. It keeps the overseers and churchwardens continually on the watch to prevent new comers, and constantly in a state of dispute with other parishes. It thus prevents the free circulation of labour from place to place, and renders its price very unequal in different parts of the kingdom. It disposes all landlords rather to pull down than to build cottages on their estates; and this scarcity of habitations in the country, by driving more to the towns than would otherwise have gone, gives a relative discouragement to agriculture, and a relative encouragement to manufactures. These, it must be allowed, are no inconsiderable evils; but if the cause which occasions them were removed, evils of much greater magnitude would follow. I agree with Mr. Young in thinking that there is scarcely a parish in the kingdom, where, if more cottages were built, and let at any tolerably moderate rents they would not be immediately filled with new couples. I even agree with him in thinking that, in some places, this want of habitations operates too strongly in preventing marriage. But I have not the least doubt that, considered generally, its operation in the present state of things is most beneficial; and that it is almost exclusively owing to this cause that we have been able so long to continue the poor-laws. If any man could build a hovel by the road-side, or on the neighbouring waste, without molestation; and yet were secure that he

and his family would always be supplied with work and food by the parish, if they were not readily to be obtained elsewhere; I do not believe that it would be long before the physical impossibility of executing the letter of the poor-laws would appear. It is of importance, therefore, to be aware that it is not because this or any other society has really the power of employing and supporting all that might be born, that we have been able to continue the present system; but because by the indirect operation of this system, not adverted to at the time of its establishment and frequently reprobated since, the number of births is always very greatly limited, and thus reduced within the pale of possible support.

The obvious tendency of the poor-laws is certainly to encourage marriage; but a closer attention to all their indirect as well as direct effects may make it a matter of doubt to what extent they really do this. They clearly tend, in their general operation, to discourage sobriety and economy, to encourage idleness and the desertion of children, and to put virtue and vice more on a level than they otherwise would be; but I will not presume to say positively that they greatly encourage population. It is certain that the proportion of births in this country compared with others in similar circumstances is very small; but this was to be expected from the superiority of the government, the more respectable state of the people, and the more general diffusion of a taste for cleanliness and conveniences. And it will readily occur to the reader, that owing to these causes, combined with the twofold operation of the poor-laws, it must be extremely difficult to ascertain, with any degree of precision, what has been their effect on population.

The only argument of a general nature against the Essay, which strikes me as having any considerable force, is the following. It is against the application of its principles, not the principles themselves, and has not, that I know of, been yet advanced in its present form. It may be said that, according to my own reasonings and the facts stated in my work, it appears that the diminished proportion of births, which I consider as absolutely necessary to the permanent improvement of the condition of the poor, invariably follows an improved government, and the greater degree of personal respectability which it gives to the lower classes of society. Consequently allowing the desirableness of the end, it is not necessary, in order to obtain it,

to risk the promulgation of any new opinions which may alarm the prejudices of the poor, and the effect of which we cannot with certainly foresee; but we have only to proceed in improving our civil polity, conferring the benefits of education upon all, and removing every obstacle to the general extension of all those privileges and advantages which may be enjoyed in common; and we may be quite sure that the effect, to which I look forward, and which can alone render these advantages permanent, will follow.

I acknowledge the truth and force of this argument, and have only to observe, in answer to it, that it is difficult to conceive, that we should not proceed with more celerity and certainly towards the end in view, if the principal causes, which tend to promote or retard it, were generally known. In particular, I cannot help looking forward to a very decided improvement in the habits and temper of the lower classes, when their real situation has been clearly explained to them; and if this were done gradually and cautiously, and accompanied with proper moral and religious instructions, I should not expect any danger from it. I am always unwilling to believe, that the general dissemination of truth is prejudicial. Cases of this kind are undoubtedly conceivable; but they should be admitted with very great caution. If the general presumption in favour of the advantage of truth were once essentially shaken, all ardour in its cause would share the same fate; and the interests of knowledge and virtue most decidedly suffer. It is, besides, a species of arrogance not lightly to be encouraged, for any man to suppose that he has penetrated further into the laws of nature than the great Author of them intended, further than is consistent with the good of mankind.

Under these impressions I have freely given my opinions to the public. In the truth of the general principles of the Essay I confess that I feel such a confidence, that, till something has been advanced against them very different indeed from any thing that has hitherto appeared, I cannot help considering them as incontrovertible. With regard to the application of these principles, the case is certainly different; and as dangers of opposite kinds are to be guarded against, the subject will, of course, admit of much latitude of opinion. At all events, however, it must be allowed that, whatever may be our determination respecting the advantages or disadvantages of endeavouring to circulate the truths on this subject among the poor, it most

be highly advantageous that they should be known to all those who have it in their power to influence the laws and institutions of society. That the body of an army should not in all cases know the particulars of their situation may possibly be desirable; but that the leaders should be in the same state of ignorance will hardly, I think, be contended.

If it be really true, that without a diminished proportion of births we cannot attain any *permanent* improvement in the health and happiness of the mass of the people, and cannot secure that description of population, which, by containing a larger share of adults, is best calculated to create fresh resources, and consequently to encourage a continued increase of efficient population; it is surely of the highest importance that this should be known, that, if we take no steps directly to promote this effect, we should not, under the influence of the former prejudices on this subject, endeavour to counteract it. And if it be thought unadvisable, to abolish the poor-laws, it cannot be doubted, that a knowledge of those general principles, which render them inefficient in their humane intentions, might be applied so far to modify them and regulate their execution, as to remove many of the evils with which they are accompanied, and make them less objectionable.

There is only one subject more which I shall notice, and that is rather a matter of feeling than of argument. Many persons, whose understandings are not so constituted that they can regulate their belief or disbelief by their likes or dislikes, have professed their perfect conviction of the truth of the general principles contained in the Essay; but, at the same time, have lamented this conviction, as throwing a darker shade over our vices of human nature, and tending particularly to narrow our prospects of future improvement. In these feelings I cannot agree with them. If, from a review of the past, I could not only believe that a fundamental and very extraordinary improvement in human society was possible, but feel a firm confidence that it would take place, I should undoubtedly be grieved to find, that I had overlooked some cause, the operation of which would at once blast my hopes. But if the contemplation of the past history of mankind, from which alone we can judge of the future, renders it almost impossible to feel such a confidence, I confess that I had much rather believe that some real and deeply-seated difficulty ex-

isted, the constant struggle with which was calculated to rouse the natural inactivity of man, to call forth his facilities, and invigorate and improve his mind; a species of difficulty, which it must be allowed is most eminently and peculiarly suited to a state of probation; than that nearly all the evils of life might with the most perfect facility be removed, but for the perverseness and wickedness of those who influence human institutions.

A person who held this latter opinion must necessarily live in a constant state of irritation and disappointment. The ardent expectations, with which he might begin life, would soon receive the most cruel check. The regular progress of society, under the most favourable circumstances, would to him appear slow and unsatisfactory; but instead even of this regular progress, his eye would be more frequently presented with retrograde movements, and the most disheartening reverses. The changes, to which he had looked forward with delight, would be found big with new and unlooked-for evils; and the characters, on which he had reposed the most confidence, would be seen frequently deserting his favourite cause, either from the lessons of experience or the temptations of wealth and power. In this state of constant disappointment, he would be but too apt to attribute every thing to the worst motives; he would be inclined to give up the cause of improvement in despair; and judging of the whole from a part, nothing but a peculiar goodness of heart and amiableness of disposition could preserve him from that sickly and disgusting misanthropy, which is but too frequently the end of such characters.

On the contrary, a person who held the other opinion, as he would set out with more moderate expectations, would of course be less liable to disappointment. A comparison of the best with the worst states of society, and the obvious inference from analogy, that the best were capable of further improvement, would constantly present to his mind a prospect sufficiently animating to warrant his most persevering exertions. But aware of the difficulties with which the subject was surrounded, knowing how often in the attempt to attain one object some other had been lost, and that, though society had made rapid advances in some directions, it had been comparatively stationary in others, he would be constantly prepared for failures. These failures, instead of creating despair, would only create knowledge; instead of checking his ardour, would give it a wiser and more

successful direction; and, having founded his opinion of mankind on broad and general grounds, the disappointment of any particular views would not change this opinion; but even in declining age he would probably be found believing as firmly in the reality and general prevalence of virtue as in the existence and frequency of vice; and to the last, looking forward with a just confidence to those improvements in society, which the history of the past, in spite of all the reverses with which it is accompanied, seems clearly to warrant.

It may be true that, if ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise; but if ignorance be not bliss, as in the present instance; if all false views of society must not only impede decidedly the progress of improvement, but necessarily, terminate in the most bitter disappointments to the individuals who formed them; I shall always think that the feelings and prospects of those, who make the justest estimates of our future expectations, are the most consolatory; and that the characters of this description are happier themselves, at the same time that they are beyond comparison more likely to contribute to the improvement and happiness of society.

Appendix II, 1817

Since the publication of the last edition of this Essay in 1807, two Works have appeared, the avowed objects of which are directly to oppose its principles and conclusions. These are the *Principles of Population and Production*, by Mr. Weyland; and *an Inquiry into the Principle of Population*, by Mr. James Grahame. I would willingly leave the question as it at present stands to the judgment of the public, without any attempt on my part to influence it further by a more particular reply; but as I professed my readiness to enter into the discussion of any serious objections to my principles and conclusions, which were brought forward in a spirit of candour and truth; and as one at least of the publications above mentioned may be so characterised, and the other is by no means deficient in personal respect; I am induced shortly to notice them.

I should not however have thought it necessary to advert to Mr. Grahame's publication, which is a slight work without any very distinct object in view, if it did not afford some strange specimens of misrepresentation, which it may be useful to point out.

Mr. Grahame in his second chapter, speaking of the tendency exhibited by the law of human increase to a redundance of population, observes, that some philosophers have considered this tendency as a mark of the foresight of nature, which has thus provided a ready supply for the waste of life occasioned by human vices and passions; while "others, of whom Mr. Malthus is the leader, regards the vices and follies of human nature, and their various products, famine, disease and war as *benevolent remedies* by which nature has enabled human beings to correct the disorders that would arise from that redundance of population which the unrestrained operation of her laws would create."

These are the opinions imputed to me and the philosophers with whom I am associated. If the imputation were just, we have certainly on many accounts great reason to be ashamed of ourselves. For what are we made to say? In the first place, we are stated to assert that famine is a benevolent remedy for *want of food*, as redundance of population admits of no other interpretation than that of a people ill

supplied with the means of subsistence, and consequently the benevolent remedy of famine here noticed can only apply to the disorders arising from scarcity of food.

Secondly; we are said to affirm that nature enables human beings by means of diseases to correct the disorders that would arise from a redundance of population;—that is, that mankind willingly and purposely create diseases, with a view to prevent those diseases which are the necessary consequence of a redundant population, and are not worse or more mortal than the means of prevention. And thirdly, it is imputed to us generally, that we consider the vices and follies of mankind as benevolent remedies for the disorders arising from a redundant population; and it follows as a matter of course that these vices ought to be encouraged rather than reprobated.

It would not be easy to compress in so small a compass a greater quantity of absurdity, inconsistency, and unfounded assertion.

The two first imputations may perhaps be peculiar to Mr. Grahame; and protection from them may be found in their gross absurdity and inconsistency. With regard to the third, it must be allowed that it has not the merit of novelty. Although it is scarcely less absurd than the two others, and has been shewn to be an opinion nowhere to be found in the Essay, nor legitimately to be inferred from any part of it, it has been continually repeated in various quarters for fourteen years, and now appears in the pages of Mr. Grahame. For the last time I will now notice it; and should it still continue to be brought forward, I think I may be fairly excused from paying the slightest further attention either to the imputation itself, or to those who advance it. If I had merely stated that the tendency of the human race to increase faster than the means of subsistence was kept to a level with these means by some or other of the forms of vice and misery, and that these evils were absolutely unavoidable, and incapable of being diminished by any human efforts; still I could not with any semblance of justice be accused of considering vice and misery as the remedies of these evils, instead of the very evils themselves. As well nearly might I be open to Mr. Grahame's imputations of considering the famine and disease necessarily arising from a scarcity of food as a benevolent remedy for the evils which this scarcity occasions. But I have not so stated the proposition. I have not considered the evils of vice and misery arising from a redundant

population as unavoidable, and incapable of being diminished. On the contrary, I have pointed out a mode by which these evils may be removed or mitigated by removing or mitigating their cause. I have endeavoured to shew that this may be done consistently with human virtue and happiness. I have never considered any possible increase of population as an evil, except as far as it might increase the proportion of vice and misery. Vice and misery, and these alone, are the evil, which it has been my great object to contend against. I have expressly proposed moral restraint as their rational and proper remedy; and whether the remedy be good or bad, adequate or inadequate, the proposal itself, and the stress which I have laid upon it, is an incontrovertible proof that I never can have considered vice and misery as themselves remedies.

But not only does the general tenour of my work, and the specific object of the latter part of it, clearly shew, that I do not consider vice and misery as remedies; but particular passages in various parts of it are so distinct on the subject, as not to admit of being misunderstood by the most perverse blindness.

It is therefore quite inconceivable that any writer with the slightest pretension to respectability should venture to bring forward such imputations; and it must be allowed to shew either such a degree of ignorance, or such a total want of candour, as utterly to disqualify him for the discussion of such subjects.

But Mr. Grahame's misrepresentations are not confined to the passage above referred to. In his introduction he observes that, in order to check a redundant population, the evils of which I consider as much nearer than Mr. Wallace, I "recommend immediate recourse to human efforts, to the restraints prescribed by Condorcet, for the correction or mitigation of the evil." This is an assertion entirely without foundation. I have never adverted to the check suggested by Condorcet without the most marked disapprobation. Indeed I should always particularly reprobate any artificial and unnatural modes of checking population, both on account of their immorality and their tendency to remove a necessary stimulus to industry. If it were possible for each married couple to limit by a wish the number of their children, there is certainly reason to fear that the indolence of the human race would be very greatly increased; and that neither the population of individual countries, nor of the whole earth, would ever reach its natural and

proper extent. But the restraints which I have recommended are quite of a different character. They are not only pointed out by reason and sanctioned by religion, but tend in the most marked manner to stimulate industry. It is not easy to conceive a more powerful encouragement to exertion and good conduct than the looking forward to marriage as a state peculiarly desirable: but only to be enjoyed in comfort, by the acquisition of habits of industry, economy, and prudence. And it is in this light that I have always wished to place it.

In speaking of the poor-laws in this country, and of their tendency (particularly as they have been lately administered) to eradicate all remaining spirit of independence among our peasantry, I observe that, "hard as it may appear in individual instances, dependent poverty ought to be held disgraceful;" by which of course I only mean that such a proper degree of pride as will induce a labouring man to make great exertions as in Scotland, in order to prevent himself or his nearest relations from falling upon the parish, is very desirable, with a view to the happiness of the lower classes of society. The interpretation which Mr. Grahame gives to this passage is, that the rich "are so to imbitter the pressure of indigence by the stings of contumely, that men may be driven by their pride to prefer even the refuge of despair to the condition of dependence!!"—a curious specimen of misrepresentation and exaggeration.

I have written a chapter expressly on the practical direction of our charity; and in detached passages elsewhere have paid a just tribute to the exalted virtue of benevolence. To those who have read these parts of my work, and have attended to the general tone and spirit of the whole, I willingly appeal, if they are but tolerably candid, against these charges of Mr. Grahame, which intimate that I would root out the virtues of charity and benevolence without regard to the exaltation which they bestow on the moral dignity of our nature; and that in my view the "rich are required only to harden their hearts against calamity, and to prevent the charitable visitings of their nature from keeping alive in them that virtue which is often the only moral link between them and their fellow-mortals." It is not indeed easy to suppose that Mr. Grahame can have read the chapter to which I allude, as both the letter and spirit of it contradict, in the most express and remarkable manner, the imputations conveyed in the above passages.

These are a few specimens of Mr. Grahame's misrepresentations, which might easily be multiplied; but on this subject I will only further remark that it shews no inconsiderable want of candour to continue attacking and dwelling upon passages which have ceased to form a part of the work controverted. And this Mr. Grahame has done in more instances than one, although he could hardly fail to know that he was combating expressions and passages which I have seen reason to alter or expunge.

I really should not have thought it worth while to notice these misrepresentations of Mr. Grahame, if, in spite of them, the style and tone of his publication had not appeared to me to be entitled to more respect than most of my opponents.

With regard to the substance and aim of Mr. Grahame's work, it seems to be intended to shew that emigration is the remedy provided by nature for a redundant population; and that if this remedy cannot be adequately applied, there is no other that can be proposed, which will not lead to consequences worse than the evil itself. These are two points which I have considered at length in the Essay; and it cannot be necessary to repeat any of the arguments here. Emigration, if it could be freely used, has been shewn to be a resource which could not be of long duration. It cannot therefore under any circumstances be considered as an adequate remedy. The latter position is a matter of opinion, and may rationally be held by any person who sees reason to think it well founded. It appears to me, I confess, that experience most decidedly contradicts it; but to those who think otherwise, there is nothing more to be said than that they are bound in consistency to acquiesce in the necessary consequences of their opinion. These consequences are, that the poverty and wretchedness arising from a redundant population, or, in other words, from very low wages and want of employment, are absolutely irremediable, and must be continually increasing as the population of the earth proceeds; and that all the efforts of legislative wisdom and private charity, though they may afford a wholesome and beneficial exercise of human virtue, and may occasionally alter the distribution and vary the pressure of human misery, can do absolutely nothing towards diminishing the general amount or checking the increasing weight of this pressure.

Mr. Weyland's work is of a much more elaborate description than that of Mr. Grahame. It has also a very definite object in view: and although, when he enters into the details of his subject, he is compelled entirely to agree with me respecting the checks which practically keep down population to the level of the means of subsistence, and has not in fact given a single reason for the slow progress of population in the advanced stages of society, that does not clearly and incontrovertibly come under the heads of moral restraint, vice, or misery; yet it must be allowed that he sets out with a bold and distinct denial of my premises, and finishes, as he ought to do from such a beginning, by drawing the most opposite conclusions.

After stating fairly my main propositions, and adverting to the conclusion which I have drawn from them, Mr. Weyland says, "Granting the premises, it is indeed obvious that this conclusion is undeniable."

I desire no other concession than this; and if my premises can be shewn to rest on unsolid foundations, I will most readily give up the inferences I have drawn from them.

To determine the point here at issue it cannot be necessary for me to repeat the proofs of these premises derived both from theory and experience, which have already so fully been brought forwards. It has been allowed that they have been stated with tolerable clearness; and it is known that many persons have considered them as unassailable, who still refuse to admit the consequences to which they appear to lead. All that can be required therefore on the present occasion is to examine the validity of the objections to these premises brought forward by Mr. Weyland.

Mr. Weyland observes, "that the origin of what are conceived to be the mistakes and false reasonings, with respect to the principle of population, appears to be the assumption of a tendency to increase in the human species, the quickest that can be proved possible in any particular state of society, as that which is natural and theoretically possible in all; and the characterizing of every cause which tends to prevent such quickest possibly rate as checks to the natural and spontaneous tendency of population to increase; but as checks evidently insufficient to stem the progress of an overwhelming torrent. This seems as eligible a mode of reasoning, as if one were to assume the height of the Irish giant in the natural standard of the stature of men,

and to call every reason, which may be suggested as likely to prevent the generality of men from reaching it, checks to their growth."

Mr. Weyland has here most unhappily chosen his illustration, as it is in no respect applicable to the case. In order to illustrate the different rates at which population increases in different countries, by the different heights of men, the following comparison and inference would be much more to the purpose.

If in a particular country we observed that all the people had weights of different sizes upon their heads, and that invariably each individual was tall or short in proportion to the smallness or greatness of the pressure upon him; that every person was observed to grow when the weight he carried was either removed or diminished, and that the few among the whole people who were exempted from this burden, were very decidedly taller than the rest; would it not be quite justifiable to infer, that the weights which the people carried were the cause of their being in general so short; and that the height of those without weights might fairly be considered as the standard to which it might be expected that the great mass would arrive, if their growth were unrestricted?

For what is it in fact, which we really observe with regard to the different rates of increase in different countries? Do we not see that in almost every state to which we can direct our attention, the natural tendency to increase is repressed by the difficulty which the mass of the people find in procuring an ample portion of the necessaries of life, which shews itself more immediately in some or other of the forms of moral restraint, vice, and misery? Do we not see that invariably the rates of increase are fast or slow, according as the pressure of these checks is light or heavy; and that in consequence Spain increases at one rate, France at another, England at a third, Ireland at a fourth, parts of Russia at a fifth, parts of Spanish America at a sixth, and the United States of North America, at a seventh? Do we not see that, whenever the resources of any country increase so as to create a great demand for labour and give the lower classes of society a greater command over the necessaries of life, the population of such country, though it might before have been stationary or proceeding very slowly, begins immediately to make a start forwards? And do we not see that in those few countries, or districts of countries, where the pressure arising from the difficulty of procuring the necessaries

and conveniences of life is almost entirely removed, and where in consequence the checks to early marriages are very few, and large families are maintained with perfect facility, the rate at which the population increases is always the greatest?

And when to these broad and glaring facts we add, that neither theory nor experience will justify us in believing either that the passion between the sexes, or the natural prolificness of women, diminishes in the progress of society; when we further consider that the climate of the United States of America is not particularly healthy, and that the qualities which mainly distinguish it from other countries, are its rapid production and distribution of the means of subsistence;—is not the induction as legitimate and correct as possible, that the varying weight of the difficulties attending the maintenance of families, and the moral restraint, vice, and misery which these difficulties necessarily generate, are the causes of the varying rates of increase observable in different countries; and that, so far from having any reason to consider the American rate of increase as peculiar, unnatural, and gigantic, we are bound by every law of induction and analogy to conclude that there is scarcely a state in Europe where, if the marriages were as early, the means of maintaining large families as ample, and the employments of the labouring classes as healthy, the rate of increase would not be as rapid, and in some cases, I have no doubt, even more rapid than in the United States of America.

Another of Mr. Weyland's curious illustrations is the following:—He says that the *physical tendency* of a people in a commercial and manufacturing to double their number in twenty-five years is "as absolutely gone as the tendency of a bean to shoot up further into the air, after it has arrived at its full growth;" and that to assume such a *tendency* is to build a theory upon a mere shadow, "which, when brought to the test, is directly at variance with experience of the fact; and as unsafe to act upon, as would be that of a general who should assume the force of a musket-shot to be double its actual range, and then should calculate upon the death of all his enemies as soon as he had drawn up his own men for battle within this line of assumed efficiency."

Now I am not in the least aware who it is that has assumed the *actual* range of the shot, or the actual progress of population in different countries, as very different from what it is observed to be; and

therefore cannot see how the illustration, as brought forward by Mr. Weyland, applies, or how I can be said to resemble his miscalculating general. What I have really done is this (if he will allow me the use of his own metaphor): having observed that the range of musket-balls, projected from similar barrels and with the same quantity of powder of the same strength, was, under different circumstances, very different, I applied myself to consider what these circumstances were; and, having found that the range of each ball was greater or less in proportion to the smaller or greater number of the obstacles which it met with in its course, or the rarity or density of the medium through which it passed, I was led to infer that the variety of range observed was owing to these obstacles; and I consequently thought it a more correct and legitimate conclusion, and one more consonant both to theory and experience, to say that the *natural tendency* to a range of a certain extent, or the force impressed upon the ball, was always the same, and the actual range, whether long or short, only altered by external resistance; than to conclude that the different distances to which the balls reached must proceed from some mysterious change in the *natural tendency* of each bullet at different times, although no observable difference could be noticed either in the barrel or the charge.

I leave Mr. Weyland to determine which would be the conclusion of the natural philosopher, who was observing the different velocities and ranges of projectiles passing through resisting media of different densities; and I do not see why the moral and political philosopher should proceed upon principles so totally opposite.

But the only arguments of Mr. Weyland against the *natural tendency* of the human race to increase faster than the means of subsistence, are a few of these illustrations which he has so unhappily applied, together with the acknowledged fact, that countries under different circumstances and in different stages of their progress, do really increase at very different rates.

Without dwelling therefore longer on such illustrations, it may be observed, with regard to the fact of the different rates of increase in different countries, that as long as it is a law of our nature that man cannot live without food, these different rates are as absolutely and strictly *necessary* as the differences in the power of producing food in countries more or less exhausted: and that to infer from these dif-

ferent rates of increase, as they are actually found to take place, that "population has a *natural tendency* to keep within the powers of the soil to afford it subsistence in every gradation through, which society passes," is just as rational as to infer that every man has a *natural tendency* to remain in prison who is necessarily confined to it by four strong walls; or that the pine of the crowded Norwegian forest has no *natural tendency* to shoot out lateral branches, because there is no room for their growth. And yet this is Mr. Weyland's first and grand proposition, on which the whole of his work turns!

But though Mr. Weyland has not proved, or approached towards proving, that the *natural tendency* of population to increase is not unlimited; though he has not advanced a single reason to make it appear probable that a thousand millions would not be doubled in twenty-five years just as easily as a thousand, if moral restraint, vice and misery, were equally removed in both cases; yet there is one part of his argument, which undoubtedly might, under certain circumstances, be true; and if true, though it would in no respect impeach the premises of the Essay, it would essentially affect some of its conclusions.

The argument may be stated shortly thus;—that the natural division of labour arising from a very advanced state of society, particularly in countries where the land is rich, and great improvements have taken place in agriculture, might throw so large a portion of the people into towns, and engage so many in unhealthy occupations, that the immediate checks to population might be too powerful to be overcome even by an abundance of food.

It is admitted that this is a possible case; and, foreseeing this possibility, I provided for it in the terms in which the second proposition of the Essay was enunciated.

The only practical question then worth attending to between me and Mr. Weyland is, whether cases of the kind above stated are to be considered in the light in which I have considered them in the Essay, as exceptions of very rare occurrence, or in the light in which Mr. Weyland has considered them, as a state of things naturally accompanying every stage in the progress of improvement. On either supposition, population would still be repressed by some or other of the forms of moral restraint, vice or misery; but the moral and political conclusions, in the actual state of almost all countries, would be es-

entially different. On the one supposition moral restraint would, except in a few cases of the rarest occurrence, be one of the most useful and necessary of virtues; and on the other, it would be one of the most useless and unnecessary.

This question can only be determined by an appeal to experience. Mr. Weyland is always ready to refer to the state of this country; and, in fact, may be said almost to have built his system upon the peculiar policy of a single state. But the reference in this case will entirely contradict his theory. He has brought forward some elaborate calculations to show the extreme difficulty with which the births of the country supply the demands of the towns and manufactories. In looking over them, the reader, without other information, would be disposed to feel considerable alarm at the prospect of depopulation impending over the country; or at least he would be convinced that we were within a hair's breadth of that formidable point of *nonreproduction*, at which, according to Mr. Weyland, the population *naturally* comes to a full stop before the means of subsistence cease to be progressive.

These calculations were certainly as applicable twenty years ago as they are now; and indeed they are chiefly founded on observations which were made at a greater distance of time than the period here noticed. But what has happened since? In spite of the enlargement of all our towns; in spite of the most rapid increase of manufactories, and of the proportion of people employed in them; in spite of the most extraordinary and unusual demands for the army and navy; in short, in spite of a state of things which, according to Mr. Weyland's theory, ought to have brought us long since to the point of *nonreproduction*, the population of the country has advanced at a rate more rapid than was ever known at any period of its history. During the ten years from 1800 to 1811, as I have mentioned in a former part of this work, the population of this country (even after making an allowance for the presumed deficiency of the returns in the first enumeration) increased at a rate which would double its numbers in fifty-five years.

This fact appears to me at once a full and complete refutation of the doctrine, that, as society advances, the increased indisposition to marriage and increased mortality in great towns and manufactories always overcome the principle of increase; and that, in the language

of Mr. Weyland, "population, so far from having an inconvenient tendency uniformly to press against the means of subsistence, becomes by degrees very slow in overtaking those means."

With this acknowledged and glaring fact before him, and with the most striking evidences staring him in the face, that even, during this period of rapid increase, thousands both in the country and in towns were prevented from marrying so early as they would have done, if they had possessed sufficient means of supporting a family independently of parish relief, it is quite inconceivable how a man of sense could bewilder himself in such a maze of futile calculations, and come to a conclusion so diametrically opposite to experience.

The fact already noticed, as it applies to the most advanced stage of society known in Europe, and proves incontrovertibly that the actual checks to population, even in the most improved countries, arise principally from an insufficiency of subsistence, and soon yield to increased resources, notwithstanding the increase of towns and manufactories, may I think fairly be considered as quite decisive of the question at issue.

But in treating of so general and extensive a subject as the Principle of Population, it would surely not be just to take our examples and illustrations only from a single state. And in looking at the other countries Mr. Weyland's doctrine on population is, if possible, still more completely contradicted. Where, I would ask, are the great towns and manufactories in Switzerland, Norway and Sweden, which are to act as *the graves of mankind*, and to prevent the possibility of a redundant population? In Sweden the proportion of the people living in the country is to those who live in towns as 13 to 1; in England this proportion is about 2 to 1; and yet England increases much faster than Sweden. How is this to be reconciled with the doctrine that the progress of civilization and improvement is always accompanied by a correspondent abatement in the natural tendency of population to increase? Norway, Sweden and Switzerland have not on the whole been ill governed; but where are the necessary "anticipating alterations," which, according to Mr. Weyland, arise in every society as the powers of the soil diminish, and "render so many persons unwilling to marry, and so many more, who do marry, incapable of reproducing their own numbers, and of replacing the deficiency in the remainder." What is it that in these countries indisposes people to

marry, but the absolute hopelessness of being able to support their families? What is it that renders many more who do marry incapable of reproducing their own numbers, but the diseases generated by excessive poverty—by all insufficient supply of the necessaries of life? Can any man of reflection look at these and many of the other countries of Europe, and then venture to state that there is no moral reason for repressing the inclination to early marriages: when it cannot be denied that the alternative of not repressing it must necessarily and unavoidably be premature mortality from excessive poverty? And is it possible to know that in few or none of the countries of Europe the wages of labour, determined in the common way by the supply and the demand, can support in health large families; and yet assert that population does not press against the means of subsistence, and that "the evils of a redundant population can never be necessarily felt by a country till it is actually peopled up to the full capacity of its resources.

Mr. Weyland really appears to have dictated his book with his eyes blindfolded, and his ears stopped. I have a great respect for his character and intentions; but I must say that it has never been my fortune to meet with a theory so uniformly contradicted by experience. The very slightest glance at the different countries of Europe shews with a force amounting to demonstration, that to all practical purposes the *natural tendency* of population to increase may be considered as a given quantity; and that the actual increase is regulated by the varying resources of each country for the employment and maintenance of labour, in whatever stage of its progress it may be, whether it is agricultural or manufacturing, whether it has few or many towns. Of course this actual increase, or the actual limits of population, must always be far short of the utmost powers of the earth to produce food; first, because we can never rationally suppose that the human skill and industry actually exerted are directed in the best *possible* manner towards the production of food; and secondly, because, as I have stated more particularly in a former part of this work, the greatest production of food which the powers of the earth would admit cannot possibly take place under a system of private property. But this acknowledged truth obviously affects only the actual quantity of food, and the actual number of people, and has not the most distant relation to the question respecting the *natural ten-*

dency of population to increase beyond the powers of the earth to produce food for it.

The observations already made are sufficient to shew that the four main propositions of Mr. Weyland, which depend upon the first, are quite unsupported by any appearances in the state of human society, as it is known to us in the countries with which we are acquainted. The last of these four propositions is the following:—"This tendency" (meaning the natural tendency of population to keep within the powers of the soil to afford it subsistence) "will have its complete operation so as constantly to maintain the people in comfort and plenty in proportion as religion, morality, rational liberty and security of person and property approach the attainment of a perfect influence."

In the morality here noticed, moral or prudential restraint from marriage is not included: and so understood, I have no hesitation in saying that this proposition appears to me more directly to contradict the observed laws of nature, than to assert that Norway might easily grow food for a thousand millions of inhabitants. I trust that I am disposed to attach as much importance to the effects of morality and religion on the happiness of society, even as Mr. Weyland; but among the moral duties, I certainly include a restraint upon the inclination to an early marriage when there is no reasonable prospect of maintenance for a family; and unless this species of virtuous self-denial be included in morality, I am quite at issue with Mr. Weyland; and so distinctly deny his proposition as to say that no degree of religion and morality, no degree of rational liberty and security of person and property, can, under the existing laws of nature, place the lower classes of society in a state of comfort and plenty.

With regard to Mr. Weyland's fifth and last proposition, I have already answered it in a note which I have added, in the present edition, to the last chapter of the third book, and will only observe here that an illustration to shew the precedence of population to food, which I believe was first brought forward by an anonymous writer, and appears so to have pleased Mr. Grahame as to induce him to repeat it twice, is one which I would willingly take to prove the very opposite doctrine to that which it was meant to support. The apprehension that an increasing population would starve unless a previous increase of food were procured for it, has been ridiculed by compar-

ing it with the apprehension that increasing numbers would be obliged to go naked unless a previous increase of clothes should precede their births. Now however well or illfounded maybe our apprehensions in the former case, they are certainly quite justifiable in the latter; at least society has always acted as if it thought so. In the course of the next twenty-four hours there will be about 800 children born in England and Wales; and I will venture to say that there are not ten out of the whole number that come at the expected time, for whom clothes are not prepared before their births. It is said to be dangerous to meddle with edged tools which we do not know how to handle; and it is equally dangerous to meddle with illustrations which we do not know how to apply, and which may tend to prove exactly the reverse of what we wish.

On Mr. Weyland's theory it will not be necessary further to enlarge. With regard to the practical conclusions which he has drawn from it in our own country, they are such as might be expected from the nature of the premises. If population, instead of leaving a tendency to press against the means of subsistence, becomes by degrees very slow in overtaking them, Mr. Weyland's inference that we ought to encourage the increase of the labouring classes by abundant parochial assistance to families, might perhaps be maintained. But if his premises be entirely wrong, while his conclusions are still acted upon, the consequence must be, a constantly increasing amount of unnecessary pauperism and dependence. Already above one-fourth of the population of England and Wales have been dependent upon parish relief; and if the system which Mr. Weyland recommends, and which has been so generally adopted in the midland counties, should extend itself over the whole kingdom, there is really no saying to what height the level of pauperism may rise. While the practice of making an allowance from the parish for every child above two is confined to the labourers in agriculture, whom Mr. Weyland considers as the breeders of the country, it is essentially unjust, as it lowers without compensation the wages of the manufacturer and artificer: and when it shall become just by including the whole of the working classes, what a dreadful picture does it present! what a scene of equality, indolence, rags and dependence, among one-half or three-fourths of the society! Under such a system to expect any essential benefit from *saving banks* or any other institutions to promote

industry and economy is perfectly preposterous. When the wages of labour are reduced to the level to which this system tends, there will be neither power nor motive to save.

Mr. Weyland strangely attributes much of the wealth and prosperity of England to the cheap population which it raises by means of the poor-laws; and seems to think that, if labour had been allowed to settle at its natural rate, and all workmen had been paid in proportion to their skill and industry, whether with or without families, we should never have attained that commercial and manufacturing ascendancy by which we have been so eminently distinguished.

A practical refutation of so ill founded an opinion may be seen in the state of Scotland, which in proportion to its natural resources has certainly increased in agriculture, manufactures and commerce, during the last fifty years, still more rapidly than England, although it may fairly be said to have been essentially without poor-laws.

It is not easy to determine what is the price of labour most favourable to the progress of wealth. It is certainly conceivable that it may be too high for the prosperity of foreign commerce. But I believe it is much more frequently too low; and I doubt if there has ever been an instance in any country of very great prosperity in foreign commerce, where the working classes have not had good money wages. It is impossible to sell very largely without being able to buy very largely; and no country can buy very largely in which the working classes are not in such a state as to be able to purchase foreign commodities.

But nothing tends to place the lower classes of society in this state so much as a demand for labour which is allowed to take its natural course, and which therefore pays the unmarried man and the man with a family at the same rate; and consequently gives at once to a very large mass of the working classes the power of purchasing foreign articles of consumption, and of paying taxes on luxuries to no inconsiderable extent. While, on the other hand, nothing would tend so effectually to destroy the power of the working classes of society to purchase either home manufactures or foreign articles of consumption, or to pay taxes on luxuries, as the practice of doling out to each member of a family an allowance, in the shape of wages and parish relief combined, just sufficient, or only a very little more than to furnish them with the mere food necessary for their maintenance.

To shew that, in looking forward to such an increased operation of prudential restraint as would greatly improve the condition of the poor, it is not necessary to suppose extravagant and impossible wages, as Mr. Weyland seems to think, I will refer to the proposition of a practical man on the subject of the price of labour; and certainly much would be done, if this proposition could be realized, though it must be effected in a very different way from that which he has proposed.

It has been recommended by Mr. Arthur Young so to adjust the wages of day-labour as to make them at all times equivalent to the purchase of a peck of wheat. This quantity, he says, was earned by country labourers during a considerable period of the last century, when the poor-rates were low, and not granted to assist in the maintenance of those who were able to work. And he goes on to observe that, "as the labourer would (in this case) receive 70 bushels of wheat for 47 weeks' labour, exclusive of five weeks for harvest; and as a family of six persons consumes in a year no more than 48 bushels; it is clear that such wages of labour would cut off every pretence of parochial assistance; and of necessity the conclusion would follow, that all right to it in men thus paid should be annihilated for ever."

An adjustment of this kind, either enforced by law, or used as a guide in the distribution of parish assistance, as suggested by Mr. Young, would be open to insuperable objections. At particular times it might be the means of converting a dearth into a famine. And in its general operation, and supposing no change of habits among the labouring classes, it would be tantamount to saying that, under all circumstances, whether the affairs of the country were prosperous or adverse; whether its resources in land were still great, or nearly exhausted; the population ought to increase exactly at the same rate,—a conclusion which involves an impossibility. If, however, this adjustment, instead of being enforced by law, were produced by the increasing operation of the prudential check to marriage, the effect would be totally different, and in the highest degree beneficial to society. A gradual change in the habits of the labouring classes would then effect the necessary retardation in the rate of increase, and would proportion the supply of labour to the effective demand, as society continued to advance, not only without the pressure of a diminishing quantity of food, but under the enjoyment of an in-

creased quantity of conveniences and comforts; and in the progress of cultivation and wealth, the condition of the lower classes of society would be in a State of constant improvement.

A peck of wheat a day cannot be considered in any light as excessive wages. In the early periods of cultivation, indeed, when corn is low in exchangeable value, much more is frequently earned; but in such a country as England, where the price of corn, compared with manufactures and foreign commodities, is high, it would do much towards placing the great mass of the labouring classes in a state of comparative comfort and independence; and it would be extremely desirable, with a view to the virtue and happiness of human society, that no land should be taken into cultivation that could not pay the labourers employed upon it to this amount.

With these wages as the average minimum, all those who were unmarried, or, being married, had small families, would be extremely well off; while those who had large families, though they would unquestionably be subjected sometimes to a severe pressure, would in general be able, by the sacrifice of conveniences and comforts, to support themselves without parish assistance. And not only would the amount and distribution of the wages of labour greatly increase the stimulus to industry and economy throughout all the working classes of the society, and place the great body of them in a very superior situation, but it would furnish them with the means of making an effectual demand for a great amount of foreign commodities and domestic manufactures, and thus, at the same time that it would promote individual and general happiness, would advance the mercantile and manufacturing prosperity of the country.

Mr. Weyland, however, finds it utterly impossible to reconcile the necessity of moral restraint either with the nature of man, or the plain dictates of religion on the subject of marriage. Whether the check to population, which he would substitute for it, is more consistent with the nature of a rational being, the precepts of revelation, and the benevolence of the Deity, must be left to the judgment of the reader. This check, it is already known, is no other than the unhealthiness and mortality of towns and manufactories. And though I have never felt any difficulty in reconciling to the goodness of the Deity the necessity of practising the virtue of moral restraint in a state allowed to be a state of discipline and trial; yet I confess that I could make no

attempt to reason on the subject, if I were obliged to believe, with Mr. Weyland, that a large proportion of the human race was doomed by the inscrutable ordinations of Providence to a premature death in large towns.

If indeed such peculiar unhealthiness and mortality were the proper and natural check to the progress of population in the advanced stages of society, we should justly have reason to apprehend that, by improving the healthiness of our towns and manufactories, as we have done in England during the last twenty years, we might really defeat the designs of Providence. And though I have too much respect for Mr. Weyland to suppose that he would deprecate all attempts to diminish the mortality of towns, and render manufactories less destructive to the health of the children employed in them; yet certainly his principles lead to this conclusion, since his theory has been completely destroyed by those laudable efforts which have made the mortality of England—a country abounding in towns and manufactories, less than the mortality of Sweden—a country in a state almost purely agricultural.

It was my object in the two chapters on *Moral Restraint*, and its *Effects on Society*, to shew that the evils arising from the principle of population were exactly of the same nature as the evils arising from the excessive or irregular gratification of the human passions in general; and that from the existence of these evils we had no more reason to conclude that the principle of increase was too strong for the purpose intended by the Creator, than to infer, from the existence of the vices arising from the human passions, that these passions required diminution or extinction, instead of regulation and direction.

If this view of the subject be allowed to be correct, it will naturally follow that, notwithstanding the acknowledged evils occasioned by the principle of population, the advantages derived from it under the present constitution of things vary very greatly overbalance them.

A slight sketch of the nature of these advantages, as far as the main object of the Essay would allow, was given in the two chapters to which I have alluded; but the subject has lately been pursued with great ability in the Work of Mr. Sumner on the Records of the Creation; and I am happy to refer to it as containing a masterly development and completion of views, of which only an intimation could be given in the Essay.

I fully agree with Mr. Sumner as to the beneficial effects which result from the principle of population, and feel entirely convinced that the natural tendency of the human race to increase faster than the possible increase of the means of subsistence could not be either destroyed or essentially diminished without diminishing that hope of rising and fear of falling in society, so necessary to the improvement of the human faculties and the advancement of human happiness. But with this conviction on my mind, I feel no wish to alter the view which I have given of the evils arising from the principle of population. These evils do not lose their name or nature because they are overbalanced by good; and to consider them in a different light on this account, and cease to call them evils, would be as irrational as the objecting to call the irregular indulgences of passion vicious, and to affirm that they lend to misery, because our passions are the main sources of human virtue and happiness.

I have always considered the principle of population as a law peculiarly suited to a state of discipline and trial. Indeed I believe that, in the whole range of the laws of nature with which we are acquainted, not one can be pointed out which in so remarkable a manner tends to strengthen and confirm this scriptural view of the state of man on earth. And as each individual has the power of avoiding the evil consequences to himself and society resulting from the principle of population by the practice of a virtue clearly dictated to him by the light of nature, and sanctioned by revealed religion, it must be allowed that the ways of God to man with regard to this great law of nature are completely vindicated.

I have, therefore, certainly felt surprise as well as regret that no inconsiderable part of the objections which have been made to the principles and conclusions of the Essay on Population has come from persons for whose moral and religious character I have so high a respect, that it would have been particularly gratifying to me to obtain their approbation and sanction. This effect has been attributed to some expressions used in the course of the work which have been thought too harsh, and not sufficiently indulgent to the weaknesses of human nature, and the feelings of Christian charity.

It is probable, that having found the bow bent too much one way, I was induced to bend it too much the other, in order to make it straight. But I shall always be quite ready to blot out any part of the

work which is considered by a competent tribunal as having a tendency to prevent the bow from becoming finally straight, and to impede the progress of truth. In deference to this tribunal I have already expunged the passages which have been most objected to, and I have made some few further corrections of the same kind in the present edition. By these alterations I hope and believe that the work has been improved without impairing its principles. But I still trust that whether it is read with or without these alterations, every reader of candour must acknowledge that the practical design uppermost in the mind of the writer, with whatever want of judgment it may have been executed, is to improve the condition and increase the happiness of the lower classes of society.

Appendix III, 1825

Since the last edition of this Work was published, an answer from Mr. Godwin has appeared; but the character of it, both as to matter and manner, is such, that I quite sure every candid and competent inquirer after truth will agree with me in thinking that it does not require a reply. To return abusive declamation in kind would be as unedifying to the reader as it would be disagreeable in me; and to argue seriously with one who denies the most glaring and best attested facts respecting the progress of America, Ireland, England, and other states, and brings forward Sweden, one of the most barren and worst-supplied countries of Europe, as a specimen of what would be the natural increase of population under the greatest abundance of food, would evidently be quite vain with regard to the writer himself, and must be totally uncalled for by any of his readers whose authority could avail in the establishment of truth.