that any economic injuries which they may suffer, from whatever cause, will, in the order of nature, be in this way repaired. Instead of it being true, however, that the laboring class tend thus to resist and resent any lowering of the standard of subsistence, the fact is that never is the procreative force more active than when the conditions of life become meager and squalid; when the reserve of the summer against the winter, of the good year against the bad, is swept away by the clamorous necessities of to-day; when alike enjoyment of the present and hope for the future are at their lowest point. Never had the marrying age been earlier, or christenings more frequent in Ireland than when, just upon the verge of the great famine, Earl Devon's Commission, in 1844, thus described the condition of the peasantry: "In many districts, their daily food is the potato; their only beverage, water; their cabins are seldom a protection against the weather; a bed or a blanket is a rare luxury; and, in nearly all, their pig and manure heap constitute their only property."

The state of the population of India and China affords a conclusive proof that there is not sufficient virtue in economic forces to keep population above the plane of extreme misery, if once it falls below the plane of comfort and decency. On the contrary, a moral weakness or recklessness is induced which tends strongly and swiftly to carry population to the point of industrial distress. Then, indeed, famine makes its appearance, as periodically in India, to set bounds to increase of numbers; but, for the reasons that have been stated, this force does not operate, as in the animal kingdom exclusive of man, to cut off only the least active, aggressive, intelligent, or self-reliant. The effect of famine, and of the diseases generated by famine, operating upon population across the barrier imposed by the solidarity of the family, is to lower the physical tone, to taint the blood, and weaken the will-power of the entire body, making it increasingly difficult, from generation to generation, to restore the lost conditions of economic well-being.

CHAPTER II.

THE APPEARANCE OF NEW ECONOMIC WANTS.

395. An Ascending Scale of Personal Consumption.—We have thus far dwelt on the effects of an increase of numbers beyond the limits of subsistence, as the latter are determined by the law of diminishing returns in agriculture. We have seen, that since the procreative force increases rather than diminishes in the face of poverty and squalor, there is no natural resting-place for population, if once it passes below the plane of ample subsistence, until it reaches the point where it meets the "positive checks" of famine and disease and, it may be added, of war.* This principle of population, to which we give the name, Malthusianism, was first clearly enunciated and fully illustrated by Mr. Malthus, in the last year of the last century, although intimated in the writings of earlier economists, especially of the Italian Ortes.

Let us now consider the relations of subsistence and population, on an ascending scale of personal consumption. We have seen that population will go on increasing as fast and as far as food is provided to support it, all increase of wealth surely taking the form of an increase of numbers, unless other and more imperative demands are made upon the income of the family. But let us suppose that, at the point where a competent subsistence is provided to maintain the whole population in health and strength to labor, and in freedom from all discomfort resulting from privation of things absolutely necessary, the want of something beyond this comes to be strongly felt by the individual members of the community.†

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* "It is impossible," says Senior, "that a positive check so goading and remorseless as famine, should prevail without bringing in her train all the others. Pestilence is her uniform companion, and murder and war are her followers."

† "The much greater number and the longer continuance of his wants," says Prof. Roscher, "are amongst the most striking differences between man and the brute. While the lower animals have no wants but neces-

396. Diversity of Early Economic Desires.—What that want may be does not matter for the purposes of the present discussion ; and, indeed, it would not be likely to be the same in the case of all communities. In one, the first want felt, after the absolute requirements for the support of life and laboring power are satisfied, is of ornament and decoration. Even when men are hardly covered from the cold and scantily nourished, the passion for display makes its appearance in forms that are ludicrous enough to the eye of the civilized man, but which have a most serious meaning to the barbarian and engross his faculties as completely as widely different objects do the faculties of the Parisian. In another community, the first want felt after the claims of immediate bare subsistence are met, is of a store for the future and a provision against the caprices of the seasons and the casualties of life. Just as the ant—the ant of fable, at least, if not of the naturalist—differs from the butterfly, so have certain tribes of men, in the earliest condition to which we can trace them, differed from others in this respect of care for the coming time. The first want emerging in the life of another community may be of wealth to be expended in worship and in honor of the national or local deity. Millions of men may consent to live squalidly that a few temples may shine like the sun, their altars smoke with unending sacrifices, their priests walk resplendent with embroidered and jeweled vestments. In still other communities, the new want may take the form of a love, no longer of ornament, but of comely dress, or of desire for a diversified diet, or of a taste for leisure, or of a craving for some costly drug or drink, like the opium of the East Indian and the Chinaman or the fire-water of the North American Indian.

Writers on economics have, indeed, endeavored to establish something like an order of natural succession for the various wants emerging in human experience : thus Prof. Senior says

sities, and while their aggregate wants, even in the longest series of generations, admit of no qualitative increase, the circle of man's wants is susceptible of indefinite extension. And, indeed, every advance in culture made by man finds expression in an increase in the number and in the keenness of his rational wants."

that man's "first object is to vary his food ;" "the next desire is variety of dress ;" "last comes the desire to build, to ornament and to furnish ;" I deem it, however, more consonant with what is known of communities having only a small margin of living, to hold that the appearance of economic desires, beyond the need of bare subsistence, is governed by the moral and social characteristics of each race or tribe of men.

397. Economic Wants Antagonize the Procreative Force.—Whatever be the passion or desire which is first developed in the mind of any community, it makes a demand upon the existing body of goods, or upon the current production of wealth, which at once antagonizes the strong and urgent disposition, which has been indicated, to the consumption of wealth in the support of an increasing population. The newly awakened passion or desire can not be gratified out of the existing fund of wealth, unless the procreative force receive a check. Whether this shall be done or not, is a question upon the answer to which depends the whole economic future of the community.

Any economic want may act in restraint of population in one or more of three ways : first, by diminishing the numbers of the marrying class, inducing celibacy among those who do not find the way to obtain an income adequate to the support of a family ; secondly, by procrastinating marriage ; and thirdly, by diminishing the birth-rate within the married state. The forces which operate in restraint of population may take any one of these three ways, or take them all, in which latter case the reduction of the ratio of increase will be very marked. If for example, the number of married pairs in a given community were brought down from 100 to 80, by the spread of celibacy ; if, through later marriages, the child-bearing period for each married pair were reduced from twenty years to fifteen, and if the interval between births were extended from two years to three, the number of children born under the latter state of things would be, to the number born under the former state, as 40 to 100.

398. A Diversified Diet.—Whatever be the want most commonly felt, after the requirements of mere subsistence are

met, there can, I think, be no question that the want which has been efficient on the largest scale, at once in promoting labor for its gratification, and in restricting the increase of population, is the craving for a diversified diet. Once let the traditional sole diet of the barbarian, be it fish, or flesh, or grain, be crossed with some other species of food, exciting thus the pleasure which resides in variety, and an economic force has been introduced into the life of the community which is capable of producing mighty results.

Without claiming to speak with authority as a student of sociology, I should say that this has been the lever by which more tribes and races of men have been raised and kept, one degree, at least, above the condition of a population pressing all the time, at all points, upon the limits of subsistence, than by any other.

A diversified diet, although doubtless it contributes, in a degree, to health and vigor, is yet a pure luxury in the sense that it is never sought on the former account, but wholly because of the gratification of appetite thereby secured. It will seem strange to those who have not studied the question of population, that an appetite for objects of luxury should be spoken of as having greater power to overcome the disposition to indolence and the disposition to excessive procreation, than the fear of privation and actual misery. Yet so it is; and as we go up the scale of human wants and desires, as viewed by the moralist, we shall find that, in general, the higher the want or desire, ethically considered, the stronger it proves to be. Mere sentiments, involving no gratification to any bodily sense, impel men to exertions the most painful and protracted, and hold in check the most masterful passion of the human kind, that passion which defies abject physical want and laughs in the face of famine and pestilence.

399. Decencies.—Of narrower range in its application to tribes and races of men than the desire of a diversified diet, but of greater intensity and persistency within that range, is the desire of what we may call decencies, meaning thereby those things which are prescribed or required by public opinion. It is evident that the term decencies, in economics, must

have a very various application to different communities and to different classes within the same community.

"The question whether a given commodity is to be considered as a decency or a luxury, is obviously one to which no answer can be given, unless the place, the time and the rank of the individual using it be specified. The dress which in England was only decent a hundred years ago, would be almost extravagant now; while the house and furniture which now would afford merely decent accommodations to a gentleman, would then have been luxurious for a peer.

"The causes which entitle a commodity to be called a necessary, are more permanent and more general. They depend partly upon the habits in which the individual in question has been brought up, partly on the nature of his occupation, on the lightness or severity of the labors and hardships that he has to undergo, and partly on the climate in which he lives.

"Shoes are necessaries to all the inhabitants of England. Our habits are such that there is not an individual whose health would not suffer from the want of them. To the lowest class of the inhabitants of Scotland they are luxuries. Custom enables them to go barefoot without inconvenience and without degradation. When a Scotchman rises from the lowest to the middling classes of society, they become to him decencies. He wears them to preserve, not his feet, but his station in life. To the highest class, who have been accustomed to them from infancy, they are as much necessaries as they are to all classes in England.

"To the highest classes in Turkey, wine is a luxury, and tobacco a decency. In Europe, it is the reverse. The Turk drinks and the European smokes, not in obedience but in opposition both to the rules of health and to the forms of society. But wine in Europe and the pipe in Turkey are among the refreshments to which a guest is entitled, and which it would be as indecent to refuse in the one country as to offer in the other.

"A carriage is a decency to a woman of fashion, a necessary to a physician, and a luxury to a tradesman." *

* N. W. Senior.

400. The Desire of Decencies the Great Preventive Check to Population.—Whatever dignity the moralist may assign to the disposition to conform to the prevailing sentiments of the community, the economist must recognize this as the most effective motive which operates either to urge men to labor for the production of wealth, or to check the increase of population after the condition of "diminishing returns" has been reached. It is in the latter respect that we have here especially to do with it. "The great preventive check," says the wise economist so oft quoted in this chapter, "is the fear of losing decencies." If by this is to be understood the check which is of greatest potency where it operates at all, the remark is perfectly just. But, in fact, it is only in few communities that this cause operates with sufficient force to restrict population within the limits of the highest *per capita* production. In England, among the working classes reproduction has gone on with the least possible regard to its effect upon the standard of living. In France, on the other hand, even the peasantry are so fully alive to the inexpediency of a rapid multiplication, and are so temperate and prudent, that the excess of births over deaths has been reduced to a minimum. In the States of the American Union, the increase of population was, until recently, everywhere encouraged by the fact that the country had not reached the condition of diminishing returns, but, on the contrary, as is always the case before that condition is reached, foreign immigration and native growth in numbers alike added to the power and wealth of the several communities. Within the past twenty-five years, the rate of natural increase in the Northeastern States has encountered a decided check, due to the rising standard of living in communities whose productive capabilities are already fully developed.

401. Influence of a Popular Tenure of the Soil Upon Population.—There can be no question that the influence exerted upon population by a popular tenure of the soil is very conservative. The reasons therefor are thus stated by M. Sismondi:

"In the countries in which cultivation by small proprietors

still continues, population increases regularly and rapidly until it has attained its natural limits: that is to say, inheritances continue to be divided and subdivided among several sons as long as, by an increase of labor, each family can extract an equal income from a smaller portion of land. A father who possessed a vast extent of natural pasture, divides it among his sons, and they turn it into fields and meadows; his sons divide it among their sons, who abolish fallows; each improvement in agricultural knowledge admits of another step in the subdivision of property.

"But there is no danger that the proprietor will bring up children to make beggars of them.

"He knows exactly what inheritance he has to leave them; he knows that the law* will divide it equally among them; he sees the limits beyond which partition would make them descend from the rank which he himself has filled; and a just family pride, common to the peasant and the prince, makes him abstain from summoning into life children for whom he can not properly provide. If more are born, at least they do not marry, or they agree among themselves which of the several brothers shall perpetuate the family."

The power of population strictly to limit itself, under the impulse to preserve family estates from undue subdivision, by the means adverted to in the closing sentence of the paragraph quoted, is strikingly illustrated by Prof. Cliffe Leslie in the facts which he adduces regarding the population of Auvergne, in France. In the mountains, it appears, the people cling with remarkable tenacity to the conservation of the inheritance unbroken. The daughters willingly consent to take vows and renounce all part in the common estate; or, if they contract marriage, agree to leave to the head of the family their individual shares of the inheritance. It is the same with the sons, of whom some become priests; others emigrate, consenting never to claim any part of the property. One of the sons remains at home, working with the father and

*The law of so-called partible succession, prevailing widely over the western part of Continental Europe.

mother, and becomes in time the proprietor of the ancestral estate. Thus the principle of equal partition, established by law, is eluded by the connivance of the family, it seldom occurring that the other children assert their claims, so fully accepted is this usage in the manners of the mountains.

Prof. Leslie, after giving the foregoing as the substance of an official report, adds: "The renunciation by the emigrants of their share in the family property certainly shows, if not an extraordinary imperviousness to new ideas, an extraordinary tenacity of old ones; and, in particular, of two ideas which are among the oldest in human society—subordination to the male head of the family, and conservation of the family property unbroken."

From the *London Times*,* I take the following testimony to the influence of an extensive ownership of land in antagonizing the procreative force, and in winning for improved living, comfort, luxury, and security of condition, what would otherwise be usurped and wasted upon increase of population, with resulting squalor and poverty:

"Over the greater part of France the standard of comfort and well-being has been increasing ever since the termination of the great war, in 1815. The country had been so drained and impoverished by the wars of Napoleon and by a century and a half of bad government, that the general misery of the population was indescribable, and the poverty even of the landed proprietors and middle classes was very great. . . . . For many years comfort and well-being, and even luxury, have made their way into the households of all classes in France. The standard of living has risen enormously. The habits of saving and thrift have not been neglected. In the art of managing and regularizing their lives, the French people are unrivaled and the object of every family is to live well and to save, at the same time, so as to be able to leave their sons and daughters in as good a position as themselves, at all events, and in a better, if possible. . . . . Among people with such habits and such views of life, the risk and expenditure

*January 25, 1883.

attendant upon a large family are naturally regarded with horror. 'Since two or three children give us sufficient enjoyment of the pleasures of paternity, why,' the greater number of Frenchmen argue, 'should we have more? With two or three children we can live comfortably, and save sufficient to leave our children as well off as ourselves; a greater number would involve curtailment of enjoyments both for ourselves and our children.'"

402. Attacks Upon the Doctrine of Malthus.—The views respecting the relations of population and subsistence contained in the foregoing paragraphs are essentially those which are known as Malthusian. Mr. Malthus unquestionably committed some errors of statement and faults of reasoning in his original enunciation of the principles of population, as is likely to be the case on the first promulgation of great economic or social laws; and during his whole life he was closely followed by criticism and abuse. Since Mr. Malthus' death has taken all personal interest out of the controversy over the principles of population, and Malthusianism has come to be merely a name for a body of doctrine, the views here presented have been a butt for the headless arrows of beginners in economics and of sundry sentimental sociologists.

Meanwhile the doctrine (1) that there resides in nearly all races and tribes of men a strong, urgent, persistent disposition to carry the increase of population beyond the limits of adequate subsistence; (2) that very few, even among the noblest of modern communities, have shown the capability to check reproduction at the line of the highest *per capita* production of food, clothing, shelter and fuel; (3) that, if this line be once over-passed, the procreative force proceeds thereafter with augmented force; (4) that, if the desire of luxuries and decencies does not prevail to stop the increase of population, the fear of losing necessaries, and even the actual experience of privation and suffering almost certainly will fail to do so; (5) that, through the dominion of this imperious instinct, nearly all the communities of men are under the constant imminence of being swept away into misery, squalor and disease, this doctrine which we term Malthusianism has stood unshat-

tered, impregnable, amid all the controversy that has raged around it.

403. Prof. Senior's Statement.—I can not forbear again to quote this eminently wise economist, to whose criticisms, indeed, Mr. Malthus owed the correction of some of the faults of his original statement of the principles of population. Prof. Senior says:

"Although we believe that, as civilization advances, the pressure of population upon subsistence is a decreasing evil, we are far from denying the prevalence of this pressure in all long settled countries: indeed, in all countries except those which are the seats of colonies applying the knowledge of an old country to an unoccupied territory.

"We believe that there are few portions of Europe the inhabitants of which would not be richer if their numbers were fewer, and would not be richer hereafter if they were now to retard the rate at which their population is increasing."

CHAPTER III.

CONSUMPTION: THE DYNAMICS OF WEALTH.

404. The Potato Philosophy of Wages.—We have, thus far, spoken of economic wants, mainly in their effects as retarding the increase of numbers. Until an adequate check, of a sufficiently persistent character, has been secured here, the economist who fully appreciates the consequences of over-population can hardly fail to recognize almost every economic want, whatever its origin or its object, and however little either may be approved by the moralist or physiologist, as being better than none.

It has been from this point of view, that the English writers have insisted so strongly that cheap food is a thing to be deprecated.

Thus Mr. J. R. McCulloch says:—"When the standard of natural or necessary wages is high—when wheat and beef, for

example, form the principal part of the food of the laborer, and porter and beer the principal part of his drink, he can bear to retrench in a season of scarcity. Such a man has room to fall; he can resort to cheaper sorts of food—to barley, oats, rice and potatoes. But he who is habitually fed on the cheapest food has nothing to resort to, when deprived of it. Laborers placed in this situation are absolutely cut off from every resource. You can take from an Englishman; but you can not take from an Irishman. The latter is already so low, he can fall no lower; he is placed on the very verge of existence; his wages, being regulated by the price of potatoes,* will not buy wheat, or barley, or oats; and whenever, therefore, the supply of potatoes fails, it is next to impossible that he should escape falling a sacrifice to famine."

And Prof. Thorold Rogers says: "A community which subsists habitually on dear food is in a position of peculiar advantage, when compared with another which lives on cheap food, one for instance, which lives on wheat, as contrasted with another which lives on rice or potatoes; and this, quite apart from the prudence or incautiousness of the people."

405. Better Things Than Dear Food.—Clearly, the basis of this reasoning is the Malthusian doctrine. These economists recognize the strong probability, the almost certainty, that a people will carry their increase closely up to the limits of subsistence according to the kind of food they use, whatever that may be. If it be the lowest and cheapest, like rice in India and potatoes in Ireland, the failure of the crop means starvation, no adequate reserve being expected to be provided, on a sufficient scale, by the population of any country. If the kind of food be higher and dearer, the masses may, in the event of a failure of the crop or crops concerned, fall back for the time upon the lower and the cheaper.

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* Dr. Travers Twiss states that it was calculated prior to the famine, that two-thirds of the population of Ireland lived wholly on potatoes. Sir Arch. Alison says: "Three times the number of persons can be fed on an acre of potatoes who can be maintained on an acre of wheat in ordinary seasons."