

VI.—*Malthus*.—By Frederick G. Evelyn, Esq.

[Read 18th June, 1855.]

As the present age is honourably distinguished by efforts, well-meant, though not unfrequently misdirected, to ameliorate the condition of the labouring classes; as I believe an all-important step in that direction to be a general acquiescence in the soundness of the views enunciated by Malthus, in his "Essay on Population;" and as those views, having encountered a fierce opposition on their first promulgation, have been recently assailed by Mr. Rickards, Professor of Political Economy in the University of Oxford, and are habitually disposed of in a parenthesis at meetings of this Society, by two of its most distinguished members, Drs. Lawson and Hancock, under the complimentary designation of "that exploded fallacy," or "exploded Malthusianism,"—in the teeth of the fact that the names of the two first of living British Economists, Mill and Senior, are inscribed on the Malthusian banner—under these circumstances, I feel no apology to be necessary for soliciting your attention, while I endeavour to point out (1.) what the theory of Malthus is; (2.) its evidence; (3.) its practical importance; and, (4.) finally, the attempts that have been made to impugn its truth.

1. The theory of Malthus is comprised in a very few words. It is briefly this, that there is a capacity of increase in population beyond what there is in the means of subsistence; that accordingly, if the human species actually increase up to its capacity of increase, the means of subsistence must be outrun in the race, "as the tortoise by the hare," in which case the surplus population must be cut off by some one or other of the various modes by which human life is prematurely shortened; and that the only mode of guarding against a contingency so disastrous, is to keep down the actual increase of mankind below its capacity of increase; so that, although the capacity of increase in population exceed the capacity of increase in the means of subsistence, the actual increase of the latter may exceed that of the former.

This statement of what the theory of Malthus is, also indicates what it is *not*; "rectum enim et sui index est et obliqui." It is not, for example, as represented by Dr. Lawson, in a paper read before this Society in 1849, entitled, *The Over-Population Fallacy*, "that population *increases* in a geometric ratio, subsistence in an arithmetical only, and therefore population *increases* faster than subsistence." Malthus does not say so. What he says is, that population *is capable of this more rapid increase*, while he points out the only effectual means of ensuring that it shall, *in fact, increase less rapidly*.

2. Having stated what the theory is, I next proceed to consider its evidence; the grounds upon which Malthus attributes this greater *potential* increase to population than to the means of subsistence, ascribing to the former a tendency to increase in a geometric ratio,

or as the numbers, 1, 2, 4, 8; and to subsistence a tendency to increase in an arithmetical ratio, or as the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4. To ascertain the propriety of this distinction, we must compare the power of increase in man with the power of increase in the means of subsistence. On the first term of the comparison—the power of increase in man—it is unnecessary that I should dwell at any length; as the opponents of Malthus, so far as I am aware, fully grant all that has been urged by him respecting every animal's *infinite* power of multiplication. They admit that he does not overrate this power in the human species, in representing it as capable of doubling its numbers every period of twenty-five years; and that, accordingly, the strength of the power is illustrated, with sufficient accuracy, by the statement that in man there is a capacity of increase in a geometric ratio. In other words; they allow the fecundity of man to be a *constant*, so that, if the present population of the world were quadrupled or decupled, the resulting population could be doubled in twenty-five years with as much facility, *so far as the fecundity of man is concerned*, as the existing number of the earth's inhabitants. Let us now turn to the other term of the comparison, the capacity of increase in the means of subsistence. Can man's food be *infinitely* increased by force of the fecundity of the great mother that produces it, as we see the human species can by force of its fecundity? The ultimate source of subsistence is the earth. We need not take into account the food afforded to man by the lower animals, for it is the earth that supplies them with food. As, in estimating the capacity of increase in human beings, we look to the constitution or physiology of human nature; so, in estimating the capacity of increase in the means of subsistence, we must look to the qualities of the land. In the first place, the land is limited in quantity. From this quality of the land, it at once follows that the means of subsistence cannot be *infinitely* increased. For there must be some *maximum* of agricultural skill, however far we may be from it at present; and if we suppose this *maximum* skill applied to the entire globe, the quantity of produce capable of being extracted by it is plainly not *infinite*. For it is clear that the produce which it could extract from every individual acre is *finite*, and the sum of a number of finite elements can never be *infinite*. But although on this hypothesis, all further increase of food would be impossible, the power of increase in population would be as great as when our first parents had the world to themselves. Did this statement, however, embrace the entire truth, as we are so far from having realised the hypothesis, we might safely leave the consideration of the matter to remote posterity. But it imperatively demands *our* attention, because, however remote that *ultimate* barrier, the nearer we approximate to it, the greater is the difficulty, in the absence of disturbing causes, of obtaining an increased supply of food; it being the law of production from the land, that, "in any given state of agricultural skill, the application of additional labour and capital to land yields a less proportionate return; doubling the outlay does not double the produce." The proof that has been given of the truth of this law is very simple. The mere fact that inferior land is cultivated evinces its truth; since, did the additional return on the *most fertile* land continue proportionate to the

additional outlay, *less fertile* land could not be taken into cultivation; as this would be to have recourse to an inferior machine while one of superior efficacy is still available. From this law, then, coupled with what has been said of the fecundity of man, the truth of Malthus' theory at once follows. The fecundity of man is *constant*, millions being as easily doubled as hundreds; while the fecundity of the earth is a *diminishing fecundity*, "every addition made to the quantity of food periodically produced making in general a further periodical addition more difficult."

3. As to the practical importance of this theory, Dr. Lawson states in his Lecture on Population, that the celebrated dictum of Malthus, "that there is a tendency in population to increase faster than subsistence," is of no practical moment unless it be true, not in the sense that *there is a capacity of this greater increase in population*, but in the sense that *this greater increase is actually to be expected*. Now we have no warrant, he justly remarks, from experience, to entertain any such expectation; as we find that, *in point of fact*, subsistence increases faster than population, the bulk of the people at the present day enjoying far greater comforts than their ancestors.

But surely this argument proves too much. It involves the principle that because, in the natural course of things, checks arise to counteract the action of a cause which, if unchecked, would produce disastrous results, therefore we may safely ignore the existence of the cause, and refrain from all systematic endeavours to increase the force of its counteracting checks. The capacity of increase in man is a cause which, if unchecked, would produce disastrous results—an excess of population over subsistence. Checks arise, in the progress of civilization, which may, in the main, be reduced to two—prudence, and agricultural improvements: the former keeping down the number of applicants for subsistence; the latter increasing its quantity, not only without an *increased*, but sometimes with even a *diminished* proportionate expense. But though these checks arise spontaneously to a certain extent, they are far from operating as forcibly as it is desirable they should. The labouring classes (it is their case only I am considering in this brief sketch), unquestionably enjoy more of the comforts of life, than did those in the same rank 100 years since. But if their present state be wretched, I cannot see that it is any great consolation to them to know that the position of their ancestors was more wretched still. They would be in the enjoyment of much greater comfort, if either their rate of increase was slower, or agricultural improvements greater, without a corresponding increase of population. To strengthen the second of these checks, systematic efforts *have* been made; agricultural-improvement societies existing throughout the land for many years. But as regards the first, so far from any general attempts being made to strengthen it, all the efforts of mankind, as Mr. Mill points out, have been concentrated in the opposite direction. And yet, as Dr. Chalmers justly notices, it is much more rational to attend to it than to the other, for the practice of prudence is in man's power, while he cannot command agricultural improvement. It is on this check that Malthus insists.

And unless it can be shown that the labouring classes possess such an ample stock of this virtue, that all attempts to increase it are superfluous, the practical importance of the theory of Malthus cannot be overrated. But it needs no formal proof that, among the lower orders, prudence is a virtue "more honoured in the breach than the observance." Every means should be taken to increase its growth, and *a fortiori* every thing rejected which would lessen the necessity for its cultivation. On these principles, it seems to me, the recommendation contained in a paper entitled, "The Work-house as a mode of relief for Widows and Orphans," which Dr. Hancock read before this society on a recent occasion, is objectionable in the extreme, as plainly tending to increase the number of imprudent marriages.

4. I now proceed to consider the objections that have been made to the theory of Malthus. I am met, in the first instance, by two of the *a priori* class. Dr. Lawson argues that it cannot be true because it is comparatively new; while a whole host of objectors, among them Professor Rickards, infer its falsehood from its supposed incompatibility with the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Of these in order.

Here is Dr. Lawson's first parallel in his siege of Malthus. "It is an ancient opinion," he writes, in his third Lecture, "and if an error, an error so venerable that we could hardly see it dissipated without some feelings of regret, that men are the strength of a state; and the increase of the species has been ever looked on as a national as well as an individual blessing. The Jews, Greeks, and Romans discountenanced celibacy, and I need cite no authority to prove that such have been the prevailing notions from the earliest times, down at least to the Vicar of Wakefield's day, who thought that "a man did more service to the state who married and brought up a family, than if he lived single, and talked of population." It has been reserved for the ingenuity and originality of modern times to detect and point out the fallacy of these notions, and to show that all our progenitors have confounded their curses with their blessings." Now, not to dwell on the glaring inconsistency between this passage and subsequent parts of the same Lecture, in which he deprecates all artificial encouragement of population,—the premiss supplied in the above passage being, the increase of the species is *per se* a blessing, and therefore it should not receive artificial encouragement,—not to dwell on this palpable *non sequitur*, is it not inconceivable that Dr. Lawson should have recourse to an argument so fatal to himself and his fellow Political Economists; that he should wield a weapon which, for one blow it inflicts on his opponent, deals a score to himself? What have the writers on economic science ever done, save point out the fallacy of notions long and widely prevalent? It is an ancient opinion, and if an error a venerable one, that wealth consists of the precious metals. It is an ancient opinion, and if an error a venerable one that, while a private individual, who makes for himself what he can procure at less cost from another, is a fool for his pains, what is folly in the individual is wisdom in the nation. In these, and numberless other instances, Dr. Lawson holds, in common with all economists, that "our progenitors *have* confounded

their curses with their blessings." His sneer then at "the ingenuity and originality of modern times" is eminently suicidal. Opinions can acquire no title *by prescription*: it matters not how lengthened or extended their occupation may have been; if they cannot, when called upon, produce their *title-deeds*, *i. e.* adequate evidence, they must yield up possession to those which can.

The objection to the views of Malthus, as inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of Providence, is as follows. If there be in population a natural tendency to increase faster than food, it follows that if man increase naturally, *i. e.* as led by the constitution given him by God, misery will be the consequence; and we cannot suppose that a Being supremely good would attach such a result to obedience to his behests. Now this objection altogether overlooks the important distinction pointed out by Bishop Butler between natural conduct in a man, and natural conduct in a brute. A brute acts naturally in following his passions to the utmost, there being nothing else to guide him. A man does *not* act naturally in following to the utmost his passions, as *he has* higher guides, reason and conscience; and no gratification of passion on his part can be called natural, which contravenes the sentence of these dominant faculties. But reason foresees, if Malthus be right, that an actual increase up to man's capacity of increase must lead to misery, and reason and conscience alike condemn conduct of which misery is the foreseen consequence. An actual increase, therefore, up to man's capacity of increase, is *not natural but unnatural*. But, it may be said, granting this to be true, on the supposition that the constitution of man and the external world is as Malthus represents, yet how are we to account for their being so constituted? Why should an all-wise and good Being have established this apparent discord between the fecundity of man and the fecundity of the earth? A little reflection will enable us to solve this difficulty. Suppose, the fecundity of man continuing as at present, the law of production from land were not as I have stated, but that every additional outlay yielded a proportionate return. In this case, nothing would stop the torrent of population till it was brought to a stand from want of space. Every acre that was not required for cultivation would be covered with a mass of densely-congregated human beings. Horace contemplates gloomily the rapid encroachments made on tillage by the demesnes and palaces of the great:

Jam pauca aratro jugera regię
Moles relinquunt.

But surely the complete reverse of this picture is far from pleasing; not an acre suffered to escape the plough; not a flower or shrub allowed to stand, unless it be, not merely "pleasant to the eyes," but also "good for food."

There is a pleasure in the pathless wood:
There is society where none intrude.

Of such pleasure and society would man be debarred on the hypothesis I am considering. But it is not merely pleasure that man derives from being occasionally alone, he also draws from it improvement; for,

Wisdom's self

Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude :
Where, with her best nurse contemplation,
She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,
That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all too ruffled and sometimes impaired.

Again : suppose the fecundity of the earth to continue as at present, but the fecundity of man to be lessened. In this case, the incentives to industry would be *pro tanto* weakened, and it can scarce be pretended they are too strong at present. In the words of Malthus, "The desire of the means of subsistence would be comparatively confined in its effects, and would fail of producing that general activity so necessary to the improvement of the human faculties, were it not for the strong and universal effort of population to increase more rapidly than its supplies."

I now proceed to objections of another kind. The theory is impugned as contradicted by fact. So far, it is said, is it from being true that population has a tendency to increase faster than food, that food has a tendency to increase faster than population ; as appears from a comparison between the state of mankind now and in the earlier ages. This objection arises from a misconception of Malthus' use of the word "tendency." That word, as the Archbishop of Dublin has pointed out, is ambiguous ; sometimes meaning "the existence of a cause which, if operating unimpeded, would produce a certain result ;" sometimes, "the existence of such a state of things, that the result may be expected."* Now it is clear, from Malthus' correspondence with Mr. Senior, that it was in the *first*

* It is right to notice here a mischievous perversion of an illustration employed by Archbishop Whately for a perfectly legitimate purpose. In the passage above referred to, from his 9th lecture on Political Economy, to illustrate the difference between the two senses of the word "tendency," he says, that in the *first sense* "it may be said, with truth, that the earth, or any other body moving round a centre, has a tendency to fly off at a tangent, i. e., the centrifugal force operates in that direction, though it is controlled by the centripetal ; and, again, that population has a tendency to increase beyond subsistence ; i. e. there are in man propensities which, if unrestrained, lead to that result." While, if the word "tendency" be used in the *second sense*, the contradictories of these propositions are true. "Now," says the anti-Malthusian, "you say it is in the *first sense* Malthus employs the word, when he states that population has a tendency to increase beyond subsistence. Grant the proposition to be true, of what practical importance is it, any more than the parallel statement that the earth has a tendency to fly off at a tangent ? We do not, on account of the truth of the latter proposition, discompose ourselves in the least, or think it necessary to take any precautions to ensure that the earth shall remain in its orbit. Why then discompose ourselves about the former ; why take any trouble to provide that population shall remain behind the means of subsistence ?" The fallacy of this reasoning is transparent. We take no trouble to ensure that the centrifugal force shall equilibrate the centripetal, because these two forces are altogether beyond our control, for evil or good ; nothing we can do can affect them in the slightest degree. Not so as regards the checks to an increase of population beyond subsistence. These are in our power, and in our power exclusively. And unwise conduct on our part may, by removing or weakening them, bring about either completely or partially the catastrophe between which and us they are the sole barriers. But, as civilization advances, there is less and less chance of this catastrophe, because there is less and less chance of such unwise conduct. The opponents of Malthus, because they are told that food will increase faster than population, in consequence of the existence of certain checks to the power of population, strangely conclude that the same favourable results will follow after they have removed the checks.

sense, and in that alone, he employed the word; while in the objection it is used in the *second* sense. Malthus distinctly admits that, the word being used in *this* sense, food has a tendency to increase faster than population, *i. e.*, that with the progress of civilization, we have every reason to expect that the actual increase of food will bear a greater and greater proportion to the actual increase of population. But why? Precisely because there is reason to expect that, as civilization advances, men will be less influenced by passion and more by reason; *i. e.* so far as the matter before us is concerned, will become more and more *practical Malthusians*, however they may denounce his theory; will do homage to him by their conduct, even though with their lips they may blaspheme his name.

The next objection I shall notice is one which, if well-founded, would be subversive of the entire theory, being a denial of the law on which it is based, the diminishing fecundity of the earth. Most objectors, Dr. Lawson among the number, finding it impossible to deny this law, admit it; but, most inconsistently, as it seems to me, deny the theory directly based upon it. Professor Rickards, with much greater consistency as I think, perceiving this to be the key of the position, admits that if the law be granted, the theory cannot be denied. He won't admit the theory; so he boldly takes the bull by the horns, and denies the law. He thus imitates the prudent conduct of the Philistines, who did not attempt to lay rude hands on Sampson till they had deprived him of that wherein his strength lay—his hair; while Dr. Lawson leaves Sampson his hair, and yet is sanguine enough to think he can vanquish him. In his paper of 1849, already quoted, Dr. Lawson admits it to be "a well-known and familiar fact that, after a certain amount of cultivation has taken place, it is impossible to go on, year after year, increasing the produce in a constant ratio." What, according to Dr. Lawson, is "a well-known and familiar fact," according to Professor Rickards is to be set down in the category of popular fallacies. When his enemies thus fall out, I can have little doubt but that Malthus will, sooner or later, come by his own. As for Professor Rickards, I admire his sagacity in perceiving that, if Malthus be left this fulcrum, all attempts to restrain him from moving the world must prove futile; I admire his more than Quixotic gallantry in endeavouring to carry, almost single-handed, this impassable barrier behind which his opponent is securely intrenched; but on the possession of discretion, in that he ventures on an enterprise so desperate, I can as little congratulate the professor as the knight.

We shall now see with what amount of success he prosecutes the attack. I have already referred to the simple proof given by Mr. Senior and others, that, "agricultural skill remaining the same, additional labour employed on the cultivation of land, within a given district, produces a less proportionate return." "To convince ourselves of this," says Mr. Senior, "it is only necessary to recollect that, if it were false, no land except the very best could ever be cultivated; since, if the return from a single farm were to increase in full proportion to any amount of increased labour bestowed on it, the produce of that one farm might feed the whole population of England." How does Professor Rickards meet this? He says that

the *reductio ad absurdum*, that one farm might supply food to the whole of England, does not follow from a denial of the law; for that a single farm could not supply *space* to the number of labourers that would be required to raise such a produce. This objection touches *the mere wording* of Mr. Senior's proof, leaving it unscathed in essentials. The law remains unshaken, if less fertile land is ever taken into cultivation, *as long as there is space for additional labourers on more fertile land*. But that less fertile land is taken into cultivation before land of greater fertility is thus crowded with labourers, is too obvious to require proof. The most fertile farm in the whole of England undoubtedly has not as many labourers upon it *as it could find space for*. Professor Rickards concludes as follows his criticism of Mr. Senior's proof of the law in question:—"If the given district of which Mr. Senior speaks be a single farm, no doubt the point at which the increased return ceases to maintain proportion with the increased outlay, will soon be attained. Not so, if the given district be the entire territory of a state; and it is with such communities that we are here concerned." Is not this absurd in the extreme? Is it not to attribute to an aggregate, consisting of a number of individual farms, a productiveness greater than the productiveness of the sum of its component parts? I had occasion lately to compliment Professor Rickards on his consistency, but what amazing inconsistency is here! How can there be one law of productiveness for each one of a number of units, and a different law for the aggregate made up of these units? What is the productiveness of the aggregate, except the productiveness of $A + B + C$, the several elementary parts? Having in this manner, as he flatters himself, demolished Mr. Senior's proof; sensible that it would be illogical to infer the falsehood of the law from the unsoundness of the argument employed to prove its truth, he proceeds to establish its falsehood *absolutely*. Is he more successful in this attempt? We shall see. "If," he says, "this law exist, we are entitled to ask, when and where has it been found in operation?"—"It does not hold good in England. In England it seems to be admitted, or, at all events, it can be abundantly proved, that if we take any two periods sufficiently distant to afford a fair test, whether fifty, a hundred, or five hundred years, the productiveness of the land relatively to the labour employed upon it has become progressively greater and greater." Now observe. This gentleman has undertaken to disprove a law *which is, in express terms, limited on a condition*, ("agricultural skill remaining the same,") and he lays the flattering unction to his soul that he has done so, by showing it not to hold in *the absence of the condition whereon it is limited*; it being impossible that agricultural skill can have remained stationary for one hundred or five hundred years. But it may be said, admitting the law, of what practical importance is it, *when its condition does not exist in point of fact*, agricultural skill not being stationary, but progressive? The answer to this is, that the law is a certainty, is always sure to produce its effect in the absence of disturbing causes, *i. e.*, of agricultural improvements, while the presence of these antagonistic influences is contingent. I have no doubt, indeed, that we shall continue to advance in civilization; *but the time at which, and the extent to which the improvements will take place, are uncertain*.

I now come to a most formidably-sounding objection, put forward both by Dr. Lawson and Professor Rickards; namely, that Malthus has talked of a proposition between two things of different denominations, a *capacity of increase* and an *actual increase*; that, instead of comparing either the *potential* increase of population with the *potential* increase of subsistence, or the *actual* increase of population with the *actual* increase of subsistence, he has compared the *potential* increase of the first with the *actual* increase of the second. I confess I am utterly at a loss to perceive a shadow of foundation for this charge. It seems clear to me that in both cases it is the *potential* increase of which Malthus spoke; in both cases, it is *abstract reasoning* that he has employed. But we must fix the meaning of our terms. What do we mean by the "potential increase" of anything? When we talk of applying "abstract reasoning" to the increase of man or of food, what is it we intend to convey? Is it, that it is possible to speculate on their increase *altogether* irrespective of facts? Certainly not. We must be given certain facts as the basis of our reasonings, the fecundity of man, on the one hand, and the fecundity of the earth, on the other. Having, by a reference to facts, supplied ourselves with these *data*, we can then, but not till then, compare the *potential* increase of man, i. e., *his increase, in a given time, so far forth as it depends on his fecundity*,—with the *potential* increase of subsistence, i. e., *its increase, in a given time, so far forth as it depends on the fecundity of the great parent of subsistence, the earth*: in other words, we can estimate what *would* be their increase in the absence of all checks to their respective capacities of increase. Now, this is precisely the course pursued by Malthus. *By a reference to facts*, the case of the American colonies, he finds the fecundity of man to be such, that he is capable of doubling his numbers every period of twenty-five years at the least; i. e. *that his potential increase is in a geometrical progression*. Again, *by a reference to facts*, he finds "that," in the words of Dr. Lawson, "after a certain amount of cultivation has taken place, it is impossible to go on year after year increasing the produce in a constant ratio, i. e. that food is capable of increasing not by way of multiplication, but of addition; *that its potential increase is in an arithmetical progression*". He then compares the two, and as a geometrical increases more rapidly than an arithmetical series, pronounces the *potential* increase of population to be greater than the *potential* increase of subsistence; for, as I have already remarked, he admits the *actual* increase of the latter to exceed that of the former. Why then do Dr. Lawson and Professor Rickards charge him with having considered not the *potential*, but the *actual* increase of subsistence? As to Dr. Lawson's reason I am not quite clear: but Professor Rickards prefers the accusation *because he takes into account the constitution of the earth*, though the same argument would equally prove him to have considered *the actual increase of population*; for he takes into account, as he needs must, *the constitution of man also*. That I may not misrepresent Professor Rickards, I give, in his own words, what he considers to be the mode of estimating the potential increase of subsistence:—"On the other hand," he says, "we may estimate the potential rate of increase of those

animals or substances which are adapted for human subsistence, assuming no obstacle to their multiplication to arise from the difficulty of finding hands to rear, or space upon the earth to nourish them." "Or space upon the earth to nourish them?" That is, assuming the constitution of the parent of subsistence to be other than it is. But if, because he did not make this assumption, it be asserted that it is the *actual* increase of subsistence which Malthus considered, it must also be maintained that he considered the *actual increase of population*, for neither did he assume the constitution of man to be other than it is. Any such assumption, in either case, would be manifestly improper, when the thing to be determined is the *actually existing* capacity of increase in man and subsistence; *not what would be the capacity of increase in each under other than existing circumstances*. And yet it is because he did not consider what would be the capacity of increase in subsistence under imaginary circumstances, that this charge has been brought against Malthus.

I next consider what Dr. Lawson pronounces to be "the great mistake" made by the Malthusian school. "They, for the time," he says, "regard man in only one point of view, as a consumer, forgetting that he is a producer also. It is quite obvious that if the same supply of products could be ensured, and that the number of those who were to use them were diminished, the condition of the community would be improved, for every individual would have a greater share than before: but what warrant have we for supposing that the same supply would continue to be furnished after our numbers were diminished? This is an enquiry they forget to make." Now, it seems to me that it is Dr. Lawson who drank of the waters of the Lethe, and not his opponents. They have not been blind to the obvious fact that, in any given state of the efficiency of labour, if the number of labourers be diminished, the *absolute* amount of the produce must be diminished also. But they are aware that it is not on the *absolute* amount of the produce the comfort of a community depends, but on its *relative* amount, on its amount compared with the number of those that are to consume it; and they see that although, with a diminution of the number of labourers, the *absolute* amount of the produce will be diminished, yet its *relative* amount, and therefore the comfort of the community, will be increased. Now, Dr. Lawson seems altogether to have forgotten this; although it follows at once from that law to which I have had occasion to refer so frequently, and which is admitted by Dr. Lawson,—the law of the earth's diminishing fecundity. For if increasing the labour does not proportionately increase the produce, diminishing the labour does not proportionately diminish the produce.

The fact that the theory of Malthus has been abused has been employed as an argument against it. In opposition to measures advocated on the ground that they will increase the comfort of the people generally, persons have been found to argue that the increased comfort would be only temporary, inasmuch as the people are satisfied with their present state, otherwise they would not have multiplied down to it; that therefore an improvement in that

state would cause them to multiply more rapidly; and that as, according to the theory of Malthus, subsistence would not be proportionately increased, they would ultimately be no better off than before. Now the theory of Malthus lends no countenance to this conclusion. It indeed supplies a true major premiss to the argument; namely, that if, after the improvement, "the habitual standard of comfort of the labouring classes" be not raised, they will ultimately be as wretched as before. But it is not responsible for the false minor, that this standard will necessarily not be raised; nor consequently for the false conclusion, that the bulk of the people will after a short time derive no benefit whatsoever from the improvement.

Dr. Lawson winds up his Lecture on Population by expressing it as his opinion, "that the march of population may safely be left to the guidance of that Providence, who so controls the actions of individuals as to work out the results which, in His wisdom, are designed." This language, though dictated, I am well aware, by the most excellent motives, seems to me *in itself* repugnant to the dictates of reason and piety. It is repugnant to the dictates of reason, because it maintains the irresponsibility of man in a particular instance which has nothing to distinguish it from those cases in which he is confessedly responsible. I can see no argument to prove this *special* irresponsibility, which would not equally establish the *general* irresponsibility of man. What would be thought of the wisdom of the man who would sit down with his hands before him, and say, "The task of providing me with food may safely be left to Providence." And yet what possible reason can be assigned for taking no concern about the increase of man, which would not equally justify indifference respecting the increase of man's food? In fact, if either were to be disregarded, it would be much more reasonable to disregard the latter than the former; for the increase of subsistence does not depend exclusively on man, while the increase of his numbers does. The language I have quoted appears to me "repugnant to the dictates of piety," inasmuch as it recalcitrates against a burden which Heaven has plainly placed upon man's shoulders. "*Plainly placed,*" I say; for that the Almighty has intended that man should *himself* regulate his own increase, is clear from the fact that he has entrusted him with full power of regulating it. Dr. Lawson's language, moreover, implies that if from the mode in which this power is exercised, misery follows, man is in nowise to blame for this resulting misery, which is to be set down among the inscrutable dispensations of Providence. But what is this save, in the language of Bishop Butler, to "*charge God foolishly,* by ascribing that to him, or the nature he has given us, which is owing wholly to our own abuse of it?" What is it but to "make our fortunes, and to call them fate?" In one sense of the words, indeed, we may safely confide to Providence the increase of the species. We may safely leave it to be regulated *by the nature which God has given man; i. e.* as I have explained in a previous part of this paper, to those parts of man's nature which are plainly stamped with authority over the rest—reason and conscience; and if we do this, we may rest assured that the result will justify our confidence. This is what Malthus and his followers

propose to do. But to take no concern whatsoever about it, saying it "may safely be left to the guidance of Providence," is to leave it *not to the guidance of Providence, but of that part of the nature of man which he has in common with the brutes.*

I have now considered most of the objections that have been made to the views of Malthus, and firmly believe that they have proved impotent to shake his theory. I believe *prudence in the matter of marriage*, Malthus' preventive check, to be the sole means whereby the condition of the labouring classes can be *permanently* ameliorated; while I would be far from disapproving of any change in the law calculated to give them a greater command over the comforts of life, though the improvement would be only temporary unless they were brought to regard these higher wages as *indispensable*, and so to refrain from a multiplication so rapid as by an undue increase of the supply of labour would necessitate the forfeiture of them. It is true that "the preventive check" exercises greater influence now than it did a century since; but it is not true that its influence is as great as every well-wisher of the labouring classes should desire to see it. Every effort accordingly should be made to strengthen its influence. It should be impressed on these Gibeonites, these hereditary bondsmen, that would they be free, themselves must strike the blow. "It should be understood," says Dr. Chalmers, "that the labouring classes have, in this way, though in this way only, their comfort and independence in their own hands. They are on high vantage-ground, if they but knew it; and it is the fondest wish of every enlightened philanthropist, that they should avail themselves to the uttermost of the position which they occupy. It is at the bidding of their collective will what the remuneration of labour shall be; for they have entire and absolute command over the supply of labour."

In conclusion, I would beg of you to bear in mind, lest I should appear presumptuous, as though I were setting *my* opinion against that of Dr. Lawson and Professor Rickards, that the views I have laid before you are not my own. "Non meus hic sermo, sed quæ præcepit Ofellus." The theory is not *mine*, but one which Malthus was the first fully to develop, and which has subsequently been endorsed by Ricardo, Chalmers, Mill, Senior, and other illustrious names. I have merely annexed *my* name to that distinguished catalogue.

VII.—*On Partnership with Limited Liability.*—By P. J. M'Kenna, Esq.

GENTLEMEN,

Although I have, on a previous occasion, brought this question under the consideration of the Statistical Society, yet such is its importance, and such the difficulty which those appointed to inquire into the subject entertain, that I feel but little hesitation in returning to it, and deem that little apology will be required for again