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# Economic Manuscripts: Capital Vol. I

*Karl Marx*

246–313 minutes

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Karl Marx. Capital Volume One

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## Chapter Twenty-Five: The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation

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## **Section 1.**

### **The Increased Demand for labour power that Accompanies Accumulation, the Composition of Capital Remaining the Same**

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In this chapter we consider the influence of the growth of capital on the lot of the labouring class. The most important factor in this inquiry is the composition of capital and the changes it undergoes in the course of the process of accumulation.

The composition of capital is to be understood in a two-fold sense. On the side of value, it is determined by the proportion in which it is divided into constant capital or value of the means of production, and variable capital or value of labour power, the sum total of wages. On the side of material, as it functions in the process of production, all capital is divided into means of production and living labour power. This latter composition is determined by the relation between the mass of the means of production employed, on the one hand, and the mass of labour necessary for their employment on the other. I call the former the *value-composition*, the latter the *technical*

*composition* of capital.

Between the two there is a strict correlation. To express this, I call the value composition of capital, in so far as it is determined by its technical composition and mirrors the changes of the latter, the *organic composition* of capital.

Wherever I refer to the composition of capital, without further qualification, its organic composition is always understood.

The many individual capitals invested in a particular branch of production have, one with another, more or less different compositions. The average of their individual compositions gives us the composition of the total capital in this branch of production. Lastly, the average of these averages, in all branches of production, gives us the composition of the total social capital of a country, and with this alone are we, in the last resort, concerned in the following investigation.

Growth of capital involves growth of its variable constituent or of the part invested in labour power. A part of the surplus-value turned into additional capital must always be re-transformed into variable capital, or additional labour fund. If we suppose that, all other circumstances remaining the same, the composition of capital also remains constant (*i.e.*, that a definite mass of means of production constantly needs the same mass of labour power to set it in motion), then the demand for labour and the subsistence-fund of the labourers clearly increase in the same proportion as the capital, and the more rapidly, the more rapidly the capital increases. Since the capital produces yearly a surplus-value, of which one part is yearly added to the original capital; since this increment itself

grows yearly along with the augmentation of the capital already functioning; since lastly, under special stimulus to enrichment, such as the opening of new markets, or of new spheres for the outlay of capital in consequence of newly developed social wants, &c., the scale of accumulation may be suddenly extended, merely by a change in the division of the surplus-value or surplus-product into capital and revenue, the requirements of accumulating capital may exceed the increase of labour power or of the number of labourers; the demand for labourers may exceed the supply, and, therefore, wages may rise. This must, indeed, ultimately be the case if the conditions supposed above continue. For since in each year more labourers are employed than in its predecessor, sooner or later a point must be reached, at which the requirements of accumulation begin to surpass the customary supply of labour, and, therefore, a rise of wages takes place. A lamentation on this score was heard in England during the whole of the fifteenth, and the first half of the eighteenth centuries. The more or less favourable circumstances in which the wage working class supports and multiplies itself, in no way alter the fundamental character of capitalist production. As simple reproduction constantly reproduces the capital relation itself, *i.e.*, the relation of capitalists on the one hand, and wage workers on the other, so reproduction on a progressive scale, *i.e.*, accumulation, reproduces the capital relation on a progressive scale, more capitalists or larger capitalists at this pole, more wage workers at that. The reproduction of a mass of labour power, which must incessantly re-incorporate itself with capital for that capital's self-expansion; which cannot get

free from capital, and whose enslavement to capital is only concealed by the variety of individual capitalists to whom it sells itself, this reproduction of labour power forms, in fact, an essential of the reproduction of capital itself. Accumulation of capital is, therefore, increase of the proletariat. [\[1\]](#)

Classical economy grasped this fact so thoroughly that Adam Smith, Ricardo, &c., as mentioned earlier, inaccurately identified accumulation with the consumption, by the productive labourers, of all the capitalised part of the surplus-product, or with its transformation into additional wage labourers. As early as 1696 John Bellers says:

“For if one had a hundred thousand acres of land and as many pounds in money, and as many cattle, without a labourer, what would the rich man be, but a labourer? And as the labourers make men rich, so the more labourers there will be, the more rich men ... the labour of the poor being the mines of the rich.”

[\[2\]](#)

So also Bernard de Mandeville at the beginning of the eighteenth century:

“It would be easier, where property is well secured, to live without money than without poor; for who would do the work? ... As they [the poor] ought to be kept from starving, so they should receive nothing worth saving. If here and there one of the lowest class by uncommon industry, and pinching his belly, lifts himself above the condition he was brought up in, nobody ought to hinder him; nay, it is undeniably the wisest course for every person in the society, and for every private

family to be frugal; but it is the interest of all rich nations, that the greatest part of the poor should almost never be idle, and yet continually spend what they get.... Those that get their living by their daily labour ... have nothing to stir them up to be serviceable but their wants which it is prudence to relieve, but folly to cure. The only thing then that can render the labouring man industrious, is a moderate quantity of money, for as too little will, according as his temper is, either dispirit or make him desperate, so too much will make him insolent and lazy.... From what has been said, it is manifest, that, in a free nation, where slaves are not allowed of, the surest wealth consists in a multitude of laborious poor; for besides, that they are the never-failing nursery of fleets and armies, without them there could be no enjoyment, and no product of any country could be valuable. “To make the society” [which of course consists of non-workers] “happy and people easier under the meanest circumstances, it is requisite that great numbers of them should be ignorant as well as poor; knowledge both enlarges and multiplies our desires, and the fewer things a man wishes for, the more easily his necessities may be supplied.” [\[3\]](#)

What Mandeville, an honest, clear-headed man, had not yet seen, is that the mechanism of the process of accumulation itself increases, along with the capital, the mass of “labouring poor,” *i.e.*, the wage labourers, who turn their labour power into an increasing power of self-expansion of the growing capital, and even by doing so must eternise their dependent relation on their own product, as personified in the capitalists. In reference to this relation of dependence, Sir F. M. Eden in

his “The State of the Poor, an History of the Labouring Classes in England,” says,

“the natural produce of our soil is certainly not fully adequate to our subsistence; we can neither be clothed, lodged nor fed but in consequence of some previous labour. A portion at least of the society must be indefatigably employed .... There are others who, though they ‘neither toil nor spin,’ can yet command the produce of industry, but who owe their exemption from labour solely to civilisation and order .... They are peculiarly the creatures of civil institutions, [\[4\]](#) which have recognised that individuals may acquire property by various other means besides the exertion of labour.... Persons of independent fortune ... owe their superior advantages by no means to any superior abilities of their own, but almost entirely ... to the industry of others. It is not the possession of land, or of money, but the command of labour which distinguishes the opulent from the labouring part of the community .... This [scheme approved by Eden] would give the people of property sufficient (but by no means too much) influence and authority over those who ... work for them; and it would place such labourers, not in an abject or servile condition, but in such a state of easy and liberal dependence as all who know human nature, and its history, will allow to be necessary for their own comfort.” [\[5\]](#)

Sir F. M. Eden, it may be remarked in passing, is the only disciple of Adam Smith during the eighteenth century that produced any work of importance. [\[6\]](#)

Under the conditions of accumulation supposed thus far,

which conditions are those most favourable to the labourers, their relation of dependence upon capital takes on a form endurable or, as Eden says: “easy and liberal.” Instead of becoming more intensive with the growth of capital, this relation of dependence only becomes more extensive, *i.e.*, the sphere of capital’s exploitation and rule merely extends with its own dimensions and the number of its subjects. A larger part of their own surplus-product, always increasing and continually transformed into additional capital, comes back to them in the shape of means of payment, so that they can extend the circle of their enjoyments; can make some additions to their consumption-fund of clothes, furniture, &c., and can lay by small reserve funds of money. But just as little as better clothing, food, and treatment, and a larger peculium, do away with the exploitation of the slave, so little do they set aside that of the wage worker. A rise in the price of labour, as a consequence of accumulation of capital, only means, in fact, that the length and weight of the golden chain the wage worker has already forged for himself, allow of a relaxation of the tension of it. In the controversies on this subject the chief fact has generally been overlooked, viz., the *differentia specifica* {defining characteristic} of capitalistic production. Labour power is sold today, not with a view of satisfying, by its service or by its product, the personal needs of the buyer. His aim is augmentation of his capital, production of commodities containing more labour than he pays for, containing therefore a portion of value that costs him nothing, and that is nevertheless realised when the commodities are sold. Production of surplus-value is the absolute law of this



mode of production. Labour power is only saleable so far as it preserves the means of production in their capacity of capital, reproduces its own value as capital, and yields in unpaid labour a source of additional capital. [7] The conditions of its sale, whether more or less favourable to the labourer, include therefore the necessity of its constant re-selling, and the constantly extended reproduction of all wealth in the shape of capital. Wages, as we have seen, by their very nature, always imply the performance of a certain quantity of unpaid labour on the part of the labourer. Altogether, irrespective of the case of a rise of wages with a falling price of labour, &c., such an increase only means at best a quantitative diminution of the unpaid labour that the worker has to supply. This diminution can never reach the point at which it would threaten the system itself. Apart from violent conflicts as to the rate of wages (and Adam Smith has already shown that in such a conflict, taken on the whole, the master is always master), a rise in the price of labour resulting from accumulation of capital implies the following alternative:

Either the price of labour keeps on rising, because its rise does not interfere with the progress of accumulation. In this there is nothing wonderful, for, says Adam Smith, “after these (profits) are diminished, stock may not only continue to increase, but to increase much faster than before.... A great stock, though with small profits, generally increases faster than a small stock with great profits.” (l. c., ii, p. 189.) In this case it is evident that a diminution in the unpaid labour in no way interferes with the extension of the domain of capital. — Or, on the other hand, accumulation slackens in consequence of the rise in the price

of labour, because the stimulus of gain is blunted. The rate of accumulation lessens; but with its lessening, the primary cause of that lessening vanishes, *i.e.*, the disproportion between capital and exploitable labour power. The mechanism of the process of capitalist production removes the very obstacles that it temporarily creates. The price of labour falls again to a level corresponding with the needs of the self-expansion of capital, whether the level be below, the same as, or above the one which was normal before the rise of wages took place. We see thus: In the first case, it is not the diminished rate either of the absolute, or of the proportional, increase in labour power, or labouring population, which causes capital to be in excess, but conversely the excess of capital that makes exploitable labour power insufficient. In the second case, it is not the increased rate either of the absolute, or of the proportional, increase in labour power, or labouring population, that makes capital insufficient; but, conversely, the relative diminution of capital that causes the exploitable labour power, or rather its price, to be in excess. It is these absolute movements of the accumulation of capital which are reflected as relative movements of the mass of exploitable labour power, and therefore seem produced by the latter's own independent movement. To put it mathematically: the rate of accumulation is the independent, not the dependent, variable; the rate of wages, the dependent, not the independent, variable. Thus, when the industrial cycle is in the phase of crisis, a general fall in the price of commodities is expressed as a rise in the value of money, and, in the phase of prosperity, a general rise in the price of commodities, as a fall in the value of money. The so-

called currency school concludes from this that with high prices too much, with low prices too little [8] money is in circulation. Their ignorance and complete misunderstanding of facts [9] are worthily paralleled by the economists, who interpret the above phenomena of accumulation by saying that there are now too few, now too many wage labourers.

The law of capitalist production, that is at the bottom of the pretended “natural law of population,” reduces itself simply to this: The correlation between accumulation of capital and rate of wages is nothing else than the correlation between the unpaid labour transformed into capital, and the additional paid labour necessary for the setting in motion of this additional capital. It is therefore in no way a relation between two magnitudes, independent one of the other: on the one hand, the magnitude of the capital; on the other, the number of the labouring population; it is rather, at bottom, only the relation between the unpaid and the paid labour of the same labouring population. If the quantity of unpaid labour supplied by the working class, and accumulated by the capitalist class, increases so rapidly that its conversion into capital requires an extraordinary addition of paid labour, then wages rise, and, all other circumstances remaining equal, the unpaid labour diminishes in proportion. But as soon as this diminution touches the point at which the surplus labour that nourishes capital is no longer supplied in normal quantity, a reaction sets in: a smaller part of revenue is capitalised, accumulation lags, and the movement of rise in wages receives a check. The rise of wages therefore is confined within limits that not only leave intact the foundations of the capitalistic system, but also

secure its reproduction on a progressive scale. The law of capitalistic accumulation, metamorphosed by economists into pretended law of Nature, in reality merely states that the very nature of accumulation excludes every diminution in the degree of exploitation of labour, and every rise in the price of labour, which could seriously imperil the continual reproduction, on an ever-enlarging scale, of the capitalistic relation. It cannot be otherwise in a mode of production in which the labourer exists to satisfy the needs of self-expansion of existing values, instead of, on the contrary, material wealth existing to satisfy the needs of development on the part of the labourer. As, in religion, man is governed by the products of his own brain, so in capitalistic production, he is governed by the products of his own hand. [\[10\]](#)

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## **Section 2.**

### **Relative Diminution of the Variable Part of Capital Simultaneously with the Progress of Accumulation and of the Concentration that Accompanies it**

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According to the economists themselves, it is neither the actual extent of social wealth, nor the magnitude of the capital already functioning, that lead to a rise of wages, but only the constant growth of accumulation and the degree of rapidity of that growth. (Adam Smith, Book I., chapter 8.) So far, we have only considered one special phase of this process, that in which the increase of capital occurs along with a constant technical composition of capital. But the process goes beyond

this phase.

Once given the general basis of the capitalistic system, then, in the course of accumulation, a point is reached at which the development of the productivity of social labour becomes the most powerful lever of accumulation.

“The same cause,” says Adam Smith, “which raises the wages of labour, the increase of stock, tends to increase its productive powers, and to make a smaller quantity of labour produce a greater quantity of work.” [\[11\]](#)

Apart from natural conditions, such as fertility of the soil, &c., and from the skill of independent and isolated producers (shown rather qualitatively in the goodness than quantitatively in the mass of their products), the degree of productivity of labour, in a given society, is expressed in the relative extent of the means of production that one labourer, during a given time, with the same tension of labour power, turns into products. The mass of the means of production which he thus transforms, increases with the productiveness of his labour. But those means of production play a double part. The increase of some is a consequence, that of the others a condition of the increasing productivity of labour. *E.g.*, with the division of labour in manufacture, and with the use of machinery, more raw material is worked up in the same time, and, therefore, a greater mass of raw material and auxiliary substances enter into the labour process. That is the consequence of the increasing productivity of labour. On the other hand, the mass of machinery, beasts of burden, mineral manures, drain-pipes, &c., is a condition of the increasing

productivity of labour. So also is it with the means of production concentrated in buildings, furnaces, means of transport, &c. But whether condition or consequence, the growing extent of the means of production, as compared with the labour power incorporated with them, is an expression of the growing productiveness of labour. The increase of the latter appears, therefore, in the diminution of the mass of labour in proportion to the mass of means of production moved by it, or in the diminution of the subjective factor of the labour process as compared with the objective factor.

This change in the technical composition of capital, this growth in the mass of means of production, as compared with the mass of the labour power that vivifies them, is reflected again in its value composition, by the increase of the constant constituent of capital at the expense of its variable constituent. There may be, *e.g.*, originally 50 per cent. of a capital laid out in means of production, and 50 per cent. in labour power; later on, with the development of the productivity of labour, 80 per cent. in means of production, 20 per cent. in labour power, and so on. This law of the progressive increase in constant capital, in proportion to the variable, is confirmed at every step (as already shown) by the comparative analysis of the prices of commodities, whether we compare different economic epochs or different nations in the same epoch. The relative magnitude of the element of price, which represents the value of the means of production only, or the constant part of capital consumed, is in direct, the relative magnitude of the other element of price that pays labour (the variable part of capital) is in inverse proportion to the advance of accumulation.

This diminution in the variable part of capital as compared with the constant, or the altered value-composition of the capital, however, only shows approximately the change in the composition of its material constituents. If, *e.g.*, the capital-value employed today in spinning is  $\frac{7}{8}$  constant and  $\frac{1}{8}$  variable, whilst at the beginning of the 18th century it was  $\frac{1}{2}$  constant and  $\frac{1}{2}$  variable, on the other hand, the mass of raw material, instruments of labour, &c., that a certain quantity of spinning labour consumes productively today, is many hundred times greater than at the beginning of the 18th century. The reason is simply that, with the increasing productivity of labour, not only does the mass of the means of production consumed by it increase, but their value compared with their mass diminishes. Their value therefore rises absolutely, but not in proportion to their mass. The increase of the difference between constant and variable capital, is, therefore, much less than that of the difference between the mass of the means of production into which the constant, and the mass of the labour power into which the variable, capital is converted. The former difference increases with the latter, but in a smaller degree.

But, if the progress of accumulation lessens the relative magnitude of the variable part of capital, it by no means, in doing this, excludes the possibility of a rise in its absolute magnitude. Suppose that a capital-value at first is divided into 50 per cent. of constant and 50 per cent. of variable capital; later into 80 per cent. of constant and 20 per cent. of variable. If in the meantime the original capital, say £6,000, has increased to £18,000, its variable constituent has also

increased. It was £3,000, it is now £3,600. But where as formerly an increase of capital by 20 per cent. would have sufficed to raise the demand for labour 20 per cent., now this latter rise requires a tripling of the original capital.

In Part IV, it was shown, how the development of the productiveness of social labour presupposes co-operation on a large scale; how it is only upon this supposition that division and combination of labour can be organised, and the means of production economised by concentration on a vast scale; how instruments of labour which, from their very nature, are only fit for use in common, such as a system of machinery, can be called into being; how huge natural forces can be pressed into the service of production; and how the transformation can be effected of the process of production into a technological application of science. On the basis of the production of commodities, where the means of production are the property of private persons, and where the artisan therefore either produces commodities, isolated from and independent of others, or sells his labour power as a commodity, because he lacks the means for independent industry, co-operation on a large scale can realise itself only in the increase of individual capitals, only in proportion as the means of social production and the means of subsistence are transformed into the private property of capitalists. The basis of the production of commodities can admit of production on a large scale in the capitalistic form alone. A certain accumulation of capital, in the hands of individual producers of commodities, forms therefore the necessary preliminary of the specifically capitalistic mode of production. We had, therefore, to assume



that this occurs during the transition from handicraft to capitalistic industry. It may be called primitive accumulation, because it is the historic basis, instead of the historic result of specifically capitalist production. How it itself originates, we need not here inquire as yet. It is enough that it forms the starting point. But all methods for raising the social productive power of labour that are developed on this basis, are at the same time methods for the increased production of surplus-value or surplus-product, which in its turn is the formative element of accumulation. They are, therefore, at the same time methods of the production of capital by capital, or methods of its accelerated accumulation. The continual re-transformation of surplus-value into capital now appears in the shape of the increasing magnitude of the capital that enters into the process of production. This in turn is the basis of an extended scale of production, of the methods for raising the productive power of labour that accompany it, and of accelerated production of surplus-value. If, therefore, a certain degree of accumulation of capital appears as a condition of the specifically capitalist mode of production, the latter causes conversely an accelerated accumulation of capital. With the accumulation of capital, therefore, the specifically capitalistic mode of production develops, and with the capitalist mode of production the accumulation of capital. Both these economic factors bring about, in the compound ratio of the impulses they reciprocally give one another, that change in the technical composition of capital by which the variable constituent becomes always smaller and smaller as compared with the constant.

Every individual capital is a larger or smaller concentration of means of production, with a corresponding command over a larger or smaller labour-army. Every accumulation becomes the means of new accumulation. With the increasing mass of wealth which functions as capital, accumulation increases the concentration of that wealth in the hands of individual capitalists, and thereby widens the basis of production on a large scale and of the specific methods of capitalist production. The growth of social capital is effected by the growth of many individual capitals. All other circumstances remaining the same, individual capitals, and with them the concentration of the means of production, increase in such proportion as they form aliquot parts of the total social capital. At the same time portions of the original capitals disengage themselves and function as new independent capitals. Besides other causes, the division of property, within capitalist families, plays a great part in this. With the accumulation of capital, therefore, the number of capitalists grows to a greater or less extent. Two points characterise this kind of concentration which grows directly out of, or rather is identical with, accumulation. First: The increasing concentration of the social means of production in the hands of individual capitalists is, other things remaining equal, limited by the degree of increase of social wealth. Second: The part of social capital domiciled in each particular sphere of production is divided among many capitalists who face one another as independent commodity-producers competing with each other. Accumulation and the concentration accompanying it are, therefore, not only scattered over many points, but the increase

of each functioning capital is thwarted by the formation of new and the sub-division of old capitals. Accumulation, therefore, presents itself on the one hand as increasing concentration of the means of production, and of the command over labour; on the other, as repulsion of many individual capitals one from another.

This splitting-up of the total social capital into many individual capitals or the repulsion of its fractions one from another, is counteracted by their attraction. This last does not mean that simple concentration of the means of production and of the command over labour, which is identical with accumulation. It is concentration of capitals already formed, destruction of their individual independence, expropriation of capitalist by capitalist, transformation of many small into few large capitals. This process differs from the former in this, that it only presupposes a change in the distribution of capital already to hand, and functioning; its field of action is therefore not limited by the absolute growth of social wealth, by the absolute limits of accumulation. Capital grows in one place to a huge mass in a single hand, because it has in another place been lost by many. This is centralisation proper, as distinct from accumulation and concentration.

The laws of this centralisation of capitals, or of the attraction of capital by capital, cannot be developed here. A brief hint at a few facts must suffice. The battle of competition is fought by cheapening of commodities. The cheapness of commodities demands, *caeteris paribus*, on the productiveness of labour, and this again on the scale of production. Therefore, the larger capitals beat the smaller. It will further be remembered that,

with the development of the capitalist mode of production, there is an increase in the minimum amount of individual capital necessary to carry on a business under its normal conditions. The smaller capitals, therefore, crowd into spheres of production which Modern Industry has only sporadically or incompletely got hold of. Here competition rages in direct proportion to the number, and in inverse proportion to the magnitudes, of the antagonistic capitals. It always ends in the ruin of many small capitalists, whose capitals partly pass into the hands of their conquerors, partly vanish. Apart from this, with capitalist production an altogether new force comes into play — the credit system, which in its first stages furtively creeps in as the humble assistant of accumulation, drawing into the hands of individual or associated capitalists, by invisible threads, the money resources which lie scattered, over the surface of society, in larger or smaller amounts; but it soon becomes a new and terrible weapon in the battle of competition and is finally transformed into an enormous social mechanism for the centralisation of capitals.

Commensurately with the development of capitalist production and accumulation there develop the two most powerful levers of centralisation — competition and credit. At the same time the progress of accumulation increases the material amenable to centralisation, *i.e.*, the individual capitals, whilst the expansion of capitalist production creates, on the one hand, the social want, and, on the other, the technical means necessary for those immense industrial undertakings which require a previous centralisation of capital for their accomplishment. Today, therefore, the force of

attraction, drawing together individual capitals, and the tendency to centralisation are stronger than ever before. But if the relative extension and energy of the movement towards centralisation is determined, in a certain degree, by the magnitude of capitalist wealth and superiority of economic mechanism already attained, progress in centralisation does not in any way depend upon a positive growth in the magnitude of social capital. And this is the specific difference between centralisation and concentration, the latter being only another name for reproduction on an extended scale.

Centralisation may result from a mere change in the distribution of capitals already existing, from a simple alteration in the quantitative grouping of the component parts of social capital. Here capital can grow into powerful masses in a single hand because there it has been withdrawn from many individual hands. In any given branch of industry centralisation would reach its extreme limit if all the individual capitals invested in it were fused into a single capital. [\[12\]](#) In a given society the limit would be reached only when the entire social capital was united in the hands of either a single capitalist or a single capitalist company.

Centralisation completes the work of accumulation by enabling industrial capitalists to extend the scale of their operations. Whether this latter result is the consequence of accumulation or centralisation, whether centralisation is accomplished by the violent method of annexation — when certain capitals become such preponderant centres of attraction for others that they shatter the individual cohesion of the latter and then draw the separate fragments to themselves — or

whether the fusion of a number of capitals already formed or in process of formation takes place by the smoother process of organising joint-stock companies — the economic effect remains the same. Everywhere the increased scale of industrial establishments is the starting point for a more comprehensive organisation of the collective work of many, for a wider development of their material motive forces — in other words, for the progressive transformation of isolated processes of production, carried on by customary methods, into processes of production socially combined and scientifically arranged.

But accumulation, the gradual increase of capital by reproduction as it passes from the circular to the spiral form, is clearly a very slow procedure compared with centralisation, which has only to change the quantitative groupings of the constituent parts of social capital. The world would still be without railways if it had had to wait until accumulation had got a few individual capitals far enough to be adequate for the construction of a railway. Centralisation, on the contrary, accomplished this in the twinkling of an eye, by means of joint-stock companies. And whilst centralisation thus intensifies and accelerates the effects of accumulation, it simultaneously extends and speeds those revolutions in the technical composition of capital which raise its constant portion at the expense of its variable portion, thus diminishing the relative demand for labour.

The masses of capital fused together overnight by centralisation reproduce and multiply as the others do, only more rapidly, thereby becoming new and powerful levers in social accumulation. Therefore, when we speak of the progress

of social accumulation we tacitly include — today — the effects of centralisation.

The additional capitals formed in the normal course of accumulation (see [Chapter XXIV, Section 1](#)) serve particularly as vehicles for the exploitation of new inventions and discoveries, and industrial improvements in general. But in time the old capital also reaches the moment of renewal from top to toe, when it sheds its skin and is reborn like the others in a perfected technical form, in which a smaller quantity of labour will suffice to set in motion a larger quantity of machinery and raw materials. The absolute reduction in the demand for labour which necessarily follows from this is obviously so much the greater the higher the degree in which the capitals undergoing this process of renewal are already massed together by virtue of the centralisation movement.

On the one hand, therefore, the additional capital formed in the course of accumulation attracts fewer and fewer labourers in proportion to its magnitude. On the other hand, the old capital periodically reproduced with change of composition, repels more and more of the labourers formerly employed by it.

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### **Section 3.**

#### **Progressive Production of a Relative surplus population or Industrial Reserve Army**

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The accumulation of capital, though originally appearing as its quantitative extension only, is effected, as we have seen, under

a progressive qualitative change in its composition, under a constant increase of its constant, at the expense of its variable constituent. [\[13\]](#)

The specifically capitalist mode of production, the development of the productive power of labour corresponding to it, and the change thence resulting in the organic composition of capital, do not merely keep pace with the advance of accumulation, or with the growth of social wealth. They develop at a much quicker rate, because mere accumulation, the absolute increase of the total social capital, is accompanied by the centralisation of the individual capitals of which that total is made up; and because the change in the technological composition of the additional capital goes hand in hand with a similar change in the technological composition of the original capital. With the advance of accumulation, therefore, the proportion of constant to variable capital changes. If it was originally say 1:1, it now becomes successively 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1, 7:1, &c., so that, as the capital increases, instead of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of its total value, only  $\frac{1}{3}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{5}$ ,  $\frac{1}{6}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ , &c., is transformed into labour-power, and, on the other hand,  $\frac{2}{3}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{5}$ ,  $\frac{5}{6}$ ,  $\frac{7}{8}$  into means of production. Since the demand for labour is determined not by the amount of capital as a whole, but by its variable constituent alone, that demand falls progressively with the increase of the total capital, instead of, as previously assumed, rising in proportion to it. It falls relatively to the magnitude of the total capital, and at an accelerated rate, as this magnitude increases. With the growth of the total capital, its variable constituent or the labour incorporated in it, also does increase, but in a



constantly diminishing proportion. The intermediate pauses are shortened, in which accumulation works as simple extension of production, on a given technical basis. It is not merely that an accelerated accumulation of total capital, accelerated in a constantly growing progression, is needed to absorb an additional number of labourers, or even, on account of the constant metamorphosis of old capital, to keep employed those already functioning. In its turn, this increasing accumulation and centralisation becomes a source of new changes in the composition of capital, of a more accelerated diminution of its variable, as compared with its constant constituent. This accelerated relative diminution of the variable constituent, that goes along with the accelerated increase of the total capital, and moves more rapidly than this increase, takes the inverse form, at the other pole, of an apparently absolute increase of the labouring population, an increase always moving more rapidly than that of the variable capital or the means of employment. But in fact, it is capitalistic accumulation itself that constantly produces, and produces in the direct ratio of its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant population of labourers, *i.e.*, a population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital, and therefore a surplus population.

Considering the social capital in its totality, the movement of its accumulation now causes periodical changes, affecting it more or less as a whole, now distributes its various phases simultaneously over the different spheres of production. In some spheres a change in the composition of capital occurs without increase of its absolute magnitude, as a consequence

of simple centralisation; in others the absolute growth of capital is connected with absolute diminution of its variable constituent, or of the labour power absorbed by it; in others again, capital continues growing for a time on its given technical basis, and attracts additional labour power in proportion to its increase, while at other times it undergoes organic change, and lessens its variable constituent; in all spheres, the increase of the variable part of capital, and therefore of the number of labourers employed by it, is always connected with violent fluctuations and transitory production of surplus population, whether this takes the more striking form of the repulsion of labourers already employed, or the less evident but not less real form of the more difficult absorption of the additional labouring population through the usual channels. <sup>[14]</sup> With the magnitude of social capital already functioning, and the degree of its increase, with the extension of the scale of production, and the mass of the labourers set in motion, with the development of the productiveness of their labour, with the greater breadth and fulness of all sources of wealth, there is also an extension of the scale on which greater attraction of labourers by capital is accompanied by their greater repulsion; the rapidity of the change in the organic composition of capital, and in its technical form increases, and an increasing number of spheres of production becomes involved in this change, now simultaneously, now alternately. The labouring population therefore produces, along with the accumulation of capital produced by it, the means by which it itself is made relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus population; and it

does this to an always increasing extent. [\[15\]](#) This is a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production; and in fact every special historic mode of production has its own special laws of population, historically valid within its limits and only in so far as man has not interfered with them.

But if a surplus labouring population is a necessary product of accumulation or of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population becomes, conversely, the lever of capitalistic accumulation, nay, a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production. It forms a disposable industrial reserve army, that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. Independently of the limits of the actual increase of population, it creates, for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital, a mass of human material always ready for exploitation. With accumulation, and the development of the productiveness of labour that accompanies it, the power of sudden expansion of capital grows also; it grows, not merely because the elasticity of the capital already functioning increases, not merely because the absolute wealth of society expands, of which capital only forms an elastic part, not merely because credit, under every special stimulus, at once places an unusual part of this wealth at the disposal of production in the form of additional capital; it grows, also, because the technical conditions of the process of production themselves — machinery, means of transport, &c. — now admit of the rapidest transformation of masses of surplus-product into additional means of production. The mass of social wealth, overflowing with the advance of accumulation, and

transformable into additional capital, thrusts itself frantically into old branches of production, whose market suddenly expands, or into newly formed branches, such as railways, &c., the need for which grows out of the development of the old ones. In all such cases, there must be the possibility of throwing great masses of men suddenly on the decisive points without injury to the scale of production in other spheres. Overpopulation supplies these masses. The course characteristic of modern industry, *viz.*, a decennial cycle (interrupted by smaller oscillations), of periods of average activity, production at high pressure, crisis and stagnation, depends on the constant formation, the greater or less absorption, and the re-formation of the industrial reserve army or surplus population. In their turn, the varying phases of the industrial cycle recruit the surplus population, and become one of the most energetic agents of its reproduction. This peculiar course of modern industry, which occurs in no earlier period of human history, was also impossible in the childhood of capitalist production. The composition of capital changed but very slowly. With its accumulation, therefore, there kept pace, on the whole, a corresponding growth in the demand for labour. Slow as was the advance of accumulation compared with that of more modern times, it found a check in the natural limits of the exploitable labouring population, limits which could only be got rid of by forcible means to be mentioned later. The expansion by fits and starts of the scale of production is the preliminary to its equally sudden contraction; the latter again evokes the former, but the former is impossible without disposable human material, without an increase, in the

number of labourers independently of the absolute growth of the population. This increase is effected by the simple process that constantly “sets free” a part of the labourers; by methods which lessen the number of labourers employed in proportion to the increased production. The whole form of the movement of modern industry depends, therefore, upon the constant transformation of a part of the labouring population into unemployed or half-employed hands. The superficiality of Political Economy shows itself in the fact that it looks upon the expansion and contraction of credit, which is a mere symptom of the periodic changes of the industrial cycle, as their cause. As the heavenly bodies, once thrown into a certain definite motion, always repeat this, so is it with social production as soon as it is once thrown into this movement of alternate expansion and contraction. Effects, in their turn, become causes, and the varying accidents of the whole process, which always reproduces its own conditions, take on the form of periodicity. When this periodicity is once consolidated, even Political Economy then sees that the production of a relative surplus population — *i.e.*, surplus with regard to the average needs of the self-expansion of capital — is a necessary condition of modern industry.

“Suppose,” says H. Merivale, formerly Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, subsequently employed in the English Colonial Office, “suppose that, on the occasion of some of these crises, the nation were to rouse itself to the effort of getting rid by emigration of some hundreds of thousands of superfluous arms, what would be the consequence? That, at the first returning demand for labour, there would be a

deficiency. However rapid reproduction may be, it takes, at all events, the space of a generation to replace the loss of adult labour. Now, the profits of our manufacturers depend mainly on the power of making use of the prosperous moment when demand is brisk, and thus compensating themselves for the interval during which it is slack. This power is secured to them only by the command of machinery and of manual labour. They must have hands ready by them, they must be able to increase the activity of their operations when required, and to slacken it again, according to the state of the market, or they cannot possibly maintain that pre-eminence in the race of competition on which the wealth of the country is founded.”

[\[16\]](#)

Even Malthus recognises overpopulation as a necessity of modern industry, though, after his narrow fashion, he explains it by the absolute over-growth of the labouring population, not by their becoming relatively supernumerary. He says:

“Prudential habits with regard to marriage, carried to a considerable extent among the labouring class of a country mainly depending upon manufactures and commerce, might injure it.... From the nature of a population, an increase of labourers cannot be brought into market in consequence of a particular demand till after the lapse of 16 or 18 years, and the conversion of revenue into capital, by saving, may take place much more rapidly: a country is always liable to an increase in the quantity of the funds for the maintenance of labour faster than the increase of population.” [\[17\]](#)

After Political Economy has thus demonstrated the constant

production of a relative surplus population of labourers to be a necessity of capitalistic accumulation, she very aptly, in the guise of an old maid, puts in the mouth of her “beau ideal” of a capitalist the following words addressed to those supernumeraries thrown on the streets by their own creation of additional capital: —

“We manufacturers do what we can for you, whilst we are increasing that capital on which you must subsist, and you must do the rest by accommodating your numbers to the means of subsistence.” [\[18\]](#)

Capitalist production can by no means content itself with the quantity of disposable labour power which the natural increase of population yields. It requires for its free play an industrial reserve army independent of these natural limits.

Up to this point it has been assumed that the increase or diminution of the variable capital corresponds rigidly with the increase or diminution of the number of labourers employed.

The number of labourers commanded by capital may remain the same, or even fall, while the variable capital increases. This is the case if the individual labourer yields more labour, and therefore his wages increase, and this although the price of labour remains the same or even falls, only more slowly than the mass of labour rises. Increase of variable capital, in this case, becomes an index of more labour, but not of more labourers employed. It is the absolute interest of every capitalist to press a given quantity of labour out of a smaller, rather than a greater number of labourers, if the cost is about the same. In the latter case, the outlay of constant capital

increases in proportion to the mass of labour set in action; in the former that increase is much smaller. The more extended the scale of production, the stronger this motive. Its force increases with the accumulation of capital.

We have seen that the development of the capitalist mode of production and of the productive power of labour — at once the cause and effect of accumulation — enables the capitalist, with the same outlay of variable capital, to set in action more labour by greater exploitation (extensive or intensive) of each individual labour power. We have further seen that the capitalist buys with the same capital a greater mass of labour power, as he progressively replaces skilled labourers by less skilled, mature labour power by immature, male by female, that of adults by that of young persons or children.

On the one hand, therefore, with the progress of accumulation, a larger variable capital sets more labour in action without enlisting more labourers; on the other, a variable capital of the same magnitude sets in action more labour with the same mass of labour power; and, finally, a greater number of inferior labour powers by displacement of higher.

The production of a relative surplus population, or the setting free of labourers, goes on therefore yet more rapidly than the technical revolution of the process of production that accompanies, and is accelerated by, the advance of accumulation; and more rapidly than the corresponding diminution of the variable part of capital as compared with the constant. If the means of production, as they increase in extent and effective power, become to a less extent means of



employment of labourers, this state of things is again modified by the fact that in proportion as the productiveness of labour increases, capital increases its supply of labour more quickly than its demand for labourers. The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve, whilst conversely the greater pressure that the latter by its competition exerts on the former, forces these to submit to overwork and to subjugation under the dictates of capital. The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by the overwork of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalists, [\[19\]](#) and accelerates at the same time the production of the industrial reserve army on a scale corresponding with the advance of social accumulation. How important is this element in the formation of the relative surplus population, is shown by the example of England. Her technical means for saving labour are colossal. Nevertheless, if to-morrow morning labour generally were reduced to a rational amount, and proportioned to the different sections of the working class according to age and sex, the working population to hand would be absolutely insufficient for the carrying on of national production on its present scale. The great majority of the labourers now “unproductive” would have to be turned into “productive” ones.

Taking them as a whole, the general movements of wages are exclusively regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army, and these again correspond to the periodic changes of the industrial cycle. They are, therefore, not determined by the variations of the absolute number of the

working population, but by the varying proportions in which the working class is divided into active and reserve army, by the increase or diminution in the relative amount of the surplus population, by the extent to which it is now absorbed, now set free. For Modern Industry with its decennial cycles and periodic phases, which, moreover, as accumulation advances, are complicated by irregular oscillations following each other more and more quickly, that would indeed be a beautiful law, which pretends to make the action of capital dependent on the absolute variation of the population, instead of regulating the demand and supply of labour by the alternate expansion and contraction of capital, the labour-market now appearing relatively under-full, because capital is expanding, now again over-full, because it is contracting. Yet this is the dogma of the economists. According to them, wages rise in consequence of accumulation of capital. The higher wages stimulate the working population to more rapid multiplication, and this goes on until the labour-market becomes too full, and therefore capital, relatively to the supply of labour, becomes insufficient. Wages fall, and now we have the reverse of the medal. The working population is little by little decimated as the result of the fall in wages, so that capital is again in excess relatively to them, or, as others explain it, falling wages and the corresponding increase in the exploitation of the labourer again accelerates accumulation, whilst, at the same time, the lower wages hold the increase of the working class in check. Then comes again the time, when the supply of labour is less than the demand, wages rise, and so on. A beautiful mode of motion this for developed capitalist production! Before, in

consequence of the rise of wages, any positive increase of the population really fit for work could occur, the time would have been passed again and again, during which the industrial campaign must have been carried through, the battle fought and won.

Between 1849 and 1859, a rise of wages practically insignificant, though accompanied by falling prices of corn, took place in the English agricultural districts. In Wiltshire, *e.g.*, the weekly wages rose from 7s. to 8s.; in Dorsetshire from 7s. or 8s., to 9s., &c. This was the result of an unusual exodus of the agricultural surplus population caused by the demands of war, the vast extension of railroads, factories, mines, &c. The lower the wages, the higher is the proportion in which ever so insignificant a rise of them expresses itself. If the weekly wage, *e.g.*, is 20s. and it rises to 22s., that is a rise of 10 per cent.; but if it is only 7s. and it rises to 9s., that is a rise of  $28 \frac{4}{7}$  per cent., which sounds very fine. Everywhere the farmers were howling, and the London *Economist*, with reference to these starvation-wages, prattled quite seriously of “a general and substantial advance.” [\[20\]](#) What did the farmers do now? Did they wait until, in consequence of this brilliant remuneration, the agricultural labourers had so increased and multiplied that their wages must fall again, as prescribed by the dogmatic economic brain? They introduced more machinery, and in a moment the labourers were redundant again in a proportion satisfactory even to the farmers. There was now “more capital” laid out in agriculture than before, and in a more productive form. With this the demand for labour fell, not only relatively, but absolutely.

The above economic fiction confuses the laws that regulate the general movement of wages, or the ratio between the working class — *i.e.*, the total labour power — and the total social capital, with the laws that distribute the working population over the different spheres of production. If, *e.g.*, in consequence of favourable circumstances, accumulation in a particular sphere of production becomes especially active, and profits in it, being greater than the average profits, attract additional capital, of course the demand for labour rises and wages also rise. The higher wages draw a larger part of the working population into the more favoured sphere, until it is glutted with labour power, and wages at length fall again to their average level or below it, if the pressure is too great. Then, not only does the immigration of labourers into the branch of industry in question cease; it gives place to their emigration. Here the political economist thinks he sees the why and wherefore of an absolute increase of workers accompanying an increase of wages, and of a diminution of wages accompanying an absolute increase of labourers. But he sees really only the local oscillation of the labour-market in a particular sphere of production — he sees only the phenomena accompanying the distribution of the working population into the different spheres of outlay of capital, according to its varying needs.

The industrial reserve army, during the periods of stagnation and average prosperity, weighs down the active labour-army; during the periods of over-production and paroxysm, it holds its pretensions in check. Relative surplus population is therefore the pivot upon which the law of demand and supply

of labour works. It confines the field of action of this law within the limits absolutely convenient to the activity of exploitation and to the domination of capital.

This is the place to return to one of the grand exploits of economic apologetics. It will be remembered that if through the introduction of new, or the extension of old, machinery, a portion of variable capital is transformed into constant, the economic apologist interprets this operation which “fixes” capital and by that very act sets labourers “free,” in exactly the opposite way, pretending that it sets free capital for the labourers. Only now can one fully understand the effrontery of these apologists. What are set free are not only the labourers immediately turned out by the machines, but also their future substitutes in the rising generation, and the additional contingent, that with the usual extension of trade on the old basis would be regularly absorbed. They are now all “set free,” and every new bit of capital looking out for employment can dispose of them. Whether it attracts them or others, the effect on the general labour demand will be nil, if this capital is just sufficient to take out of the market as many labourers as the machines threw upon it. If it employs a smaller number, that of the supernumeraries increases; if it employs a greater, the general demand for labour only increases to the extent of the excess of the employed over those “set free.” The impulse that additional capital, seeking an outlet, would otherwise have given to the general demand for labour, is therefore in every case neutralised to the extent of the labourers thrown out of employment by the machine. That is to say, the mechanism of capitalistic production so manages matters that the absolute

increase of capital is accompanied by no corresponding rise in the general demand for labour. And this the apologist calls a compensation for the misery, the sufferings, the possible death of the displaced labourers during the transition period that banishes them into the industrial reserve army! The demand for labour is not identical with increase of capital, nor supply of labour with increase of the working class. It is not a case of two independent forces working on one another. Les dés sont pipés.

Capital works on both sides at the same time. If its accumulation, on the one hand, increases the demand for labour, it increases on the other the supply of labourers by the “setting free” of them, whilst at the same time the pressure of the unemployed compels those that are employed to furnish more labour, and therefore makes the supply of labour, to a certain extent, independent of the supply of labourers. The action of the law of supply and demand of labour on this basis completes the despotism of capital. As soon, therefore, as the labourers learn the secret, how it comes to pass that in the same measure as they work more, as they produce more wealth for others, and as the productive power of their labour increases, so in the same measure even their function as a means of the self-expansion of capital becomes more and more precarious for them; as soon as they discover that the degree of intensity of the competition among themselves depends wholly on the pressure of the relative surplus population; as soon as, by Trades’ Unions, &c., they try to organise a regular co-operation between employed and unemployed in order to destroy or to weaken the ruinous

effects of this natural law of capitalistic production on their class, so soon capital and its sycophant, Political Economy, cry out at the infringement of the “eternal” and so to say “sacred” law of supply and demand. Every combination of employed and unemployed disturbs the “harmonious” action of this law. But, on the other hand, as soon as (in the colonies, *e.g.*) adverse circumstances prevent the creation of an industrial reserve army and, with it, the absolute dependence of the working class upon the capitalist class, capital, along with its commonplace Sancho Panza, rebels against the “sacred” law of supply and demand, and tries to check its inconvenient action by forcible means and State interference.

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#### **Section 4.**

### **Different Forms of the Relative surplus population. The General Law of Capitalistic Accumulation**

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The relative surplus population exists in every possible form. Every labourer belongs to it during the time when he is only partially employed or wholly unemployed. Not taking into account the great periodically recurring forms that the changing phases of the industrial cycle impress on it, now an acute form during the crisis, then again a chronic form during dull times — it has always three forms, the floating, the latent, the stagnant.

In the centres of modern industry — factories, manufactures, ironworks, mines, &c. — the labourers are sometimes repelled, sometimes attracted again in greater masses, the

number of those employed increasing on the whole, although in a constantly decreasing proportion to the scale of production. Here the surplus population exists in the floating form.

In the automatic factories, as in all the great workshops, where machinery enters as a factor, or where only the modern division of labour is carried out, large numbers of boys are employed up to the age of maturity. When this term is once reached, only a very small number continue to find employment in the same branches of industry, whilst the majority are regularly discharged. This majority forms an element of the floating surplus population, growing with the extension of those branches of industry. Part of them emigrates, following in fact capital that has emigrated. One consequence is that the female population grows more rapidly than the male, *teste* England. That the natural increase of the number of labourers does not satisfy the requirements of the accumulation of capital, and yet all the time is in excess of them, is a contradiction inherent to the movement of capital itself. It wants larger numbers of youthful labourers, a smaller number of adults. The contradiction is not more glaring than that other one that there is a complaint of the want of hands, while at the same time many thousands are out of work, because the division of labour chains them to a particular branch of industry. [\[21\]](#)

The consumption of labour power by capital is, besides, so rapid that the labourer, half-way through his life, has already more or less completely lived himself out. He falls into the



ranks of the supernumeraries, or is thrust down from a higher to a lower step in the scale. It is precisely among the work-people of modern industry that we meet with the shortest duration of life. Dr. Lee, Medical Officer of Health for Manchester, stated

“that the average age at death of the Manchester ... upper middle class was 38 years, while the average age at death of the labouring class was 17; while at Liverpool those figures were represented as 35 against 15. It thus appeared that the well-to-do classes had a lease of life which was more than double the value of that which fell to the lot of the less favoured citizens.” [\[22\]](#)

In order to conform to these circumstances, the absolute increase of this section of the proletariat must take place under conditions that shall swell their numbers, although the individual elements are used up rapidly. Hence, rapid renewal of the generations of labourers (this law does not hold for the other classes of the population). This social need is met by early marriages, a necessary consequence of the conditions in which the labourers of modern industry live, and by the premium that the exploitation of children sets on their production.

As soon as capitalist production takes possession of agriculture, and in proportion to the extent to which it does so, the demand for an agricultural labouring population falls absolutely, while the accumulation of the capital employed in agriculture advances, without this repulsion being, as in non-agricultural industries, compensated by a greater attraction.

Part of the agricultural population is therefore constantly on the point of passing over into an urban or manufacturing proletariat, and on the look-out for circumstances favourable to this transformation. (Manufacture is used here in the sense of all non-agricultural industries.) [\[23\]](#) This source of relative surplus population is thus constantly flowing. But the constant flow towards the towns pre-supposes, in the country itself, a constant latent surplus population, the extent of which becomes evident only when its channels of outlet open to exceptional width. The agricultural labourer is therefore reduced to the minimum of wages, and always stands with one foot already in the swamp of pauperism.

The third category of the relative surplus population, the stagnant, forms a part of the active labour army, but with extremely irregular employment. Hence it furnishes to capital an inexhaustible reservoir of disposable labour power. Its conditions of life sink below the average normal level of the working class; this makes it at once the broad basis of special branches of capitalist exploitation. It is characterised by maximum of working-time, and minimum of wages. We have learnt to know its chief form under the rubric of “domestic industry.” It recruits itself constantly from the supernumerary forces of modern industry and agriculture, and specially from those decaying branches of industry where handicraft is yielding to manufacture, manufacture to machinery. Its extent grows, as with the extent and energy of accumulation, the creation of a surplus population advances. But it forms at the same time a self-reproducing and self-perpetuating element of the working class, taking a proportionally greater part in the

general increase of that class than the other elements. In fact, not only the number of births and deaths, but the absolute size of the families stand in inverse proportion to the height of wages, and therefore to the amount of means of subsistence of which the different categories of labourers dispose. This law of capitalistic society would sound absurd to savages, or even civilised colonists. It calls to mind the boundless reproduction of animals individually weak and constantly hunted down. [\[24\]](#)

The lowest sediment of the relative surplus population finally dwells in the sphere of pauperism. Exclusive of vagabonds, criminals, prostitutes, in a word, the “dangerous” classes, this layer of society consists of three categories. First, those able to work. One need only glance superficially at the statistics of English pauperism to find that the quantity of paupers increases with every crisis, and diminishes with every revival of trade. Second, orphans and pauper children. These are candidates for the industrial reserve army, and are, in times of great prosperity, as 1860, *e.g.*, speedily and in large numbers enrolled in the active army of labourers. Third, the demoralised and ragged, and those unable to work, chiefly people who succumb to their incapacity for adaptation, due to the division of labour; people who have passed the normal age of the labourer; the victims of industry, whose number increases with the increase of dangerous machinery, of mines, chemical works, &c., the mutilated, the sickly, the widows, &c. Pauperism is the hospital of the active labour-army and the dead weight of the industrial reserve army. Its production is included in that of the relative surplus population, its necessity in theirs; along with the surplus population,

pauperism forms a condition of capitalist production, and of the capitalist development of wealth. It enters into the *faux frais* of capitalist production; but capital knows how to throw these, for the most part, from its own shoulders on to those of the working class and the lower middle class.

The greater the social wealth, the functioning capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and, therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour, the greater is the industrial reserve army. The same causes which develop the expansive power of capital, develop also the labour power at its disposal. The relative mass of the industrial reserve army increases therefore with the potential energy of wealth. But the greater this reserve army in proportion to the active labour army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus population, whose misery is in inverse ratio to its torment of labour. The more extensive, finally, the Lazarus layers of the working class, and the industrial reserve army, the greater is official pauperism. *This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.* Like all other laws it is modified in its working by many circumstances, the analysis of which does not concern us here.

The folly is now patent of the economic wisdom that preaches to the labourers the accommodation of their number to the requirements of capital. The mechanism of capitalist production and accumulation constantly effects this adjustment. The first word of this adaptation is the creation of a relative surplus population, or industrial reserve army. Its last word is the misery of constantly extending strata of the active army of labour, and the dead weight of pauperism.

The law by which a constantly increasing quantity of means of production, thanks to the advance in the productiveness of social labour, may be set in movement by a progressively diminishing expenditure of human power, this law, in a capitalist society — where the labourer does not employ the means of production, but the means of production employ the labourer — undergoes a complete inversion and is expressed thus: the higher the productiveness of labour, the greater is the pressure of the labourers on the means of employment, the more precarious, therefore, becomes their condition of existence, viz., the sale of their own labour power for the increasing of another's wealth, or for the self-expansion of capital. The fact that the means of production, and the productiveness of labour, increase more rapidly than the productive population, expresses itself, therefore, capitalistically in the inverse form that the labouring population always increases more rapidly than the conditions under which capital can employ this increase for its own self-expansion.

We saw in Part IV., when analysing the production of relative surplus-value: within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productiveness of labour are brought about at the cost of the individual labourer; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in

the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of capital. But all methods for the production of surplus-value are at the same time methods of accumulation; and every extension of accumulation becomes again a means for the development of those methods. It follows therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the labourer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse. The law, finally, that always equilibrates the relative surplus population, or industrial reserve army, to the extent and energy of accumulation, this law rivets the labourer to capital more firmly than the wedges of Vulcan did Prometheus to the rock. It establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, *i.e.*, on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital. [\[25\]](#) This antagonistic character of capitalistic accumulation is enunciated in various forms by political economists, although by them it is confounded with phenomena, certainly to some extent analogous, but nevertheless essentially distinct, and belonging to pre-capitalistic modes of production.

The Venetian monk Ortes, one of the great economic writers of the 18th century, regards the antagonism of capitalist production as a general natural law of social wealth.

“In the economy of a nation, advantages and evils always balance one another (il bene ed il male economico in una nazione sempre all, istessa misura): the abundance of wealth with some people, is always equal to the want of it with others (la copia dei beni in alcuni sempre eguale alia mancanza di essi in altri): the great riches of a small number are always accompanied by the absolute privation of the first necessities of life for many others. The wealth of a nation corresponds with its population, and its misery corresponds with its wealth. Diligence in some compels idleness in others. The poor and idle are a necessary consequence of the rich and active,” &c.

[\[26\]](#)

In a thoroughly brutal way about 10 years after Ortes, the Church of England parson, Townsend, glorified misery as a necessary condition of wealth.

“Legal constraint (to labour) is attended with too much trouble, violence, and noise, whereas hunger is not only a peaceable, silent, unremitted pressure, but as the most natural motive to industry and labour, it calls forth the most powerful exertions.”

Everything therefore depends upon making hunger permanent among the working class, and for this, according to Townsend, the principle of population, especially active among the poor, provides.

“It seems to be a law of Nature that the poor should be to a certain degree improvident” [*i.e.*, so improvident as to be born *without* a silver spoon in the mouth], “that there may always be some to fulfil the most servile, the most sordid, and the

most ignoble offices in the community. The stock of human happiness is thereby much increased, whilst the more delicate are not only relieved from drudgery ... but are left at liberty without interruption to pursue those callings which are suited to their various dispositions ... it” [the Poor Law] “tends to destroy the harmony and beauty, the symmetry and order of that system which God and Nature have established in the world.” [\[27\]](#) If the Venetian monk found in the fatal destiny that makes misery eternal, the *raison d’être* of Christian charity, celibacy, monasteries and holy houses, the Protestant prebendary finds in it a pretext for condemning the laws in virtue of which the poor possessed a right to a miserable public relief.

“The progress of social wealth,” says Storch, “begets this useful class of society ... which performs the most wearisome, the vilest, the most disgusting functions, which takes, in a word, on its shoulders all that is disagreeable and servile in life, and procures thus for other classes leisure, serenity of mind and conventional” [c’est bon!] “dignity of character.” [\[28\]](#)

Storch asks himself in what then really consists the progress of this capitalistic civilisation with its misery and its degradation of the masses, as compared with barbarism. He finds but one answer: security!

“Thanks to the advance of industry and science,” says Sismondi, “every labourer can produce every day much more than his consumption requires. But at the same time, whilst his labour produces wealth, that wealth would, were he called on



to consume it himself, make him less fit for labour.”  
According to him, “men” [*i.e.*, non-workers] “would probably prefer to do without all artistic perfection, and all the enjoyments that manufacturers procure for us, if it were necessary that all should buy them by constant toil like that of the labourer.... Exertion today is separated from its recompense; it is not the same man that first works, and then reposes; but it is because the one works that the other rests.... The indefinite multiplication of the productive powers of labour can then only have for result the increase of luxury and enjoyment of the idle rich.” [\[29\]](#)

Finally Destutt de Tracy, the fish-blooded bourgeois doctrinaire, blurts out brutally:

“In poor nations the people are comfortable, in rich nations they are generally poor.” [\[30\]](#)

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## **Section 5.**

### **Illustrations of the General Law of Capitalist Accumulation**

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#### **A. England from 1846-1866**

No period of modern society is so favourable for the study of capitalist accumulation as the period of the last 20 years. It is as if this period had found Fortunatus' purse. But of all countries England again furnishes the classical example, because it holds the foremost place in the world-market,

because capitalist production is here alone completely developed, and lastly, because the introduction of the Free-trade millennium since 1846 has cut off the last retreat of vulgar economy. The titanic advance of production — the latter half of the 20 years' period again far surpassing the former — has been already pointed out sufficiently in Part IV.

Although the absolute increase of the English population in the last half century was very great, the relative increase or rate of growth fell constantly, as the following table borrowed from the census shows.

Annual increase per cent. of the population of England and Wales in decimal numbers:

1811-1821	1.533 <i>per cent.</i>
1821-1831	1.446 <i>per cent.</i>
1831-1841	1.326 <i>per cent.</i>
1841-1851	1.216 <i>per cent.</i>
1851-1861	1.141 <i>per cent.</i>

Let us now, on the other hand, consider the increase of wealth. Here the movement of profit, rent of land, &c., that come under the income tax, furnishes the surest basis. The increase of profits liable to income tax (farmers and some other categories not included) in Great Britain from 1853 to 1864 amounted to 50.47% or 4.58% as the annual average, [\[31\]](#) that of the population during the same period to about 12%. The augmentation of the rent of land subject to taxation (including houses, railways, mines, fisheries, &c.), amounted for 1853 to

1864 to 38% or 3 5/12% annually. Under this head the following categories show the greatest increase:

<b>Excess of annual income of 1864 over that of 1853</b>		<b>Increase per year</b>
<b>Houses</b>	38.60%	3.50%
<b>Quarries</b>	84.76%	7.70%
<b>Mines</b>	68.85%	6.26%
<b>Ironworks</b>	39.92%	3.63%
<b>Fisheries</b>	57.37%	5.21%
<b>Gasworks</b>	126.02%	11.45%
<b>Railways</b>	83.29%	7.57%

If we compare the years from 1853 to 1864 in three sets of four consecutive years each, the rate of augmentation of the income increases constantly. [\[32\]](#) It is, *e.g.*, for that arising from profits between 1853 to 1857, 1.73% yearly; 1857-1861, 2.74%, and for 1861-64, 9.30% yearly. The sum of the incomes of the United Kingdom that come under the income tax was in 1856, £307,068,898; in 1859, £328,127,416; in 1862, £351,745,241; in 1863, £359,142,897; in 1864, £362,462,279; in 1865, £385,530,020. [\[33\]](#)

The accumulation of capital was attended at the same time by its concentration and centralisation. Although no official statistics of agriculture existed for England (they did for Ireland), they were voluntarily given in 10 counties. These

statistics gave the result that from 1851 to 1861 the number of farms of less than 100 acres had fallen from 31,583 to 26,597, so that 5,016 had been thrown together into larger farms. [\[34\]](#)

From 1815 to 1825 no personal estate of more than £1,000,000 came under the succession duty; from 1825 to 1855, however, 8 did; and 4 from 1856 to June, 1859, *i.e.*, in 4½ years. [\[35\]](#)

The centralisation will, however, be best seen from a short analysis of the Income Tax Schedule D (profits, exclusive of farms, &c.), in the years 1864 and 1865. I note beforehand that incomes from this source pay income tax on everything over £60. These incomes liable to taxation in England, Wales and Scotland, amounted in 1864 to £95,844,222, in 1865 to £105,435,579. [\[36\]](#) The number of persons taxed were in 1864, 308,416, out of a population of 23,891,009; in 1865, 332,431 out of a population of 24,127,003. The following table shows the distribution of these incomes in the two years:

	Year ending April 5th, 1864.		Year ending April 5th, 1865.	
	Income from Profits	Income from People	Income from Profits	Income from People
<b>Total Income</b>	£95,844,222	308,416	105,435,738	332,431
<b>of these</b>	57,028,289	23,334	64,554,297	24,265
<b>of these</b>	36,415,225	3,619	42,535,576	4,021

<b>of these</b>	22,809,781	832	27,555,313	973
<b>of these</b>	8,744,762	91	11,077,238	107

In 1855 there were produced in the United Kingdom 61,453,079 tons of coal, of value £16,113,167; in 1864, 92,787,873 tons, of value £23,197,968; in 1855, 3,218,154 tons of pig-iron, of value £8,045,385; 1864, 4,767,951 tons, of value £11,919,877. In 1854 the length of the railroads worked in the United Kingdom was 8,054 miles, with a paid-up capital of £286,068,794; in 1864 the length was 12,789 miles, with capital paid up of £425,719,613. In 1854 the total sum of the exports and imports of the United Kingdom was £268,210,145; in 1865, £489,923,285. The following table shows the movement of the exports:

1846	£58,842,377
1849	63,596,052
1856	115,826,948
1860	135,842,817
1865	165,862,402
1866 <sup>[37]</sup>	188,917,563

After these few examples one understands the cry of triumph of the Registrar-General of the British people:

“Rapidly as the population has increased, it has not kept pace with the progress of industry and wealth.” <sup>[38]</sup>

Let us turn now to the direct agents of this industry, or the

producers of this wealth, to the working class.

“It is one of the most melancholy features in the social state of this country,” says Gladstone, “that while there was a decrease in the consuming powers of the people, and while there was an increase in the privations and distress of the labouring class and operatives, there was at the same time a constant accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, and a constant increase of capital.” [\[39\]](#)

Thus spake this unctuous minister in the House of Commons of February 13th, 1843. On April 16th, 1863, 20 years later, in the speech in which he introduced his Budget:

“From 1842 to 1852 the taxable income of the country increased by 6 per cent.... In the 8 years from 1853 to 1861 it had increased from the basis taken in 1853 by 20 per cent.! The fact is so astonishing as to be almost incredible ... this intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power ... entirely confined to classes of property ... must be of indirect benefit to the labouring population, because it cheapens the commodities of general consumption. While the rich have been growing richer, the poor have been growing less poor. At any rate, whether the extremes of poverty are less, I do not presume to say.” [\[40\]](#)

How lame an anti-climax! If the working class has remained “poor,” only “less poor” in proportion as it produces for the wealthy class “an intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power,” then it has remained relatively just as poor. If the extremes of poverty have not lessened, they have increased,

because the extremes of wealth have. As to the cheapening of the means of subsistence, the official statistics, *e.g.*, the accounts of the London Orphan Asylum, show an increase in price of 20% for the average of the three years 1860-1862, compared with 1851-1853. In the following three years, 1863-1865, there was a progressive rise in the price of meat, butter, milk, sugar, salt, coals, and a number of other necessary means of subsistence. [\[41\]](#) Gladstone's next Budget speech of April 7th, 1864, is a Pindaric dithyrambus on the advance of surplus-value-making and the happiness of the people "tempered by poverty." He speaks of masses "on the border" of pauperism, of branches of trade in which "wages have not increased," and finally sums up the happiness of the working class in the words:

"human life is but, in nine cases out of ten, a struggle for existence." [\[42\]](#)

Professor Fawcett, not bound like Gladstone by official considerations, declares roundly:

"I do not, of course, deny that money wages have been augmented by this increase of capital (in the last ten years), but this apparent advantage is to a great extent lost, because many of the necessities of life are becoming dearer" (he believes because of the fall in value of the precious metals)... "the rich grow rapidly richer, whilst there is no perceptible advance in the comfort enjoyed by the industrial classes.... They (the labourers) become almost the slaves of the tradesman, to whom they owe money." [\[43\]](#)

In the chapters on the “working-day” and “machinery,” the reader has seen under what circumstances the British working class created an “intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power” for the propertied classes. There we were chiefly concerned with the social functioning of the labourer. But for a full elucidation of the law of accumulation, his condition outside the workshop must also be looked at, his condition as to food and dwelling. The limits of this book compel us to concern ourselves chiefly with the worst paid part of the industrial proletariat, and with the agricultural labourers, who together form the majority of the working class.

But first, one word on official pauperism, or on that part of the working class which has forfeited its condition of existence (the sale of labour power), and vegetates upon public alms.

The official list of paupers numbered in England [\[44\]](#) 851,369 persons; in 1856, 877,767; in 1865, 971,433. In consequence of the cotton famine, it grew in the years 1863 and 1864 to 1,079,382 and 1,014,978. The crisis of 1866, which fell most heavily on London, created in this centre of the world market, more populous than the kingdom of Scotland, an increase of pauperism for the year 1866 of 19.5% compared with 1865, and of 24.4% compared with 1864, and a still greater increase for the first months of 1867 as compared with 1866. From the analysis of the statistics of pauperism, two points are to be taken. On the one hand, the fluctuation up and down of the number of paupers, reflects the periodic changes of the industrial cycle. On the other, the official statistics become more and more misleading as to the actual extent of pauperism in proportion as, with the accumulation of capital, the class-



struggle, and, therefore, the class consciousness of the working men, develop. *E.g.*, the barbarity in the treatment of the paupers, at which the English Press (*The Times*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, etc.) have cried out so loudly during the last two years, is of ancient date. F. Engels showed in 1844 exactly the same horrors, exactly the same transient canting outcries of “sensational literature.” But frightful increase of “deaths by starvation” in London during the last ten years proves beyond doubt the growing horror in which the working-people hold the slavery of the workhouse, that place of punishment for misery. [\[45\]](#)

#### **B. The Badly Paid Strata of the British Industrial Class**

During the cotton famine of 1862, Dr. Smith was charged by the Privy Council with an inquiry into the conditions of nourishment of the distressed operatives in Lancashire and Cheshire. His observations during many preceding years had led him to the conclusion that “to avert starvation diseases,” the daily food of an average woman ought to contain at least 3,900 grains of carbon with 180 grains of nitrogen; the daily food of an average man, at least 4,300 grains of carbon with 200 grains of nitrogen; for women, about the same quantity of nutritive elements as are contained in 2 lbs. of good wheaten bread, for men  $\frac{1}{9}$  more; for the weekly average of adult men and women, at least 28,600 grains of carbon and 1,330 grains of nitrogen. His calculation was practically confirmed in a surprising manner by its agreement with the miserable quantity of nourishment to which want had forced down the

consumption of the cotton operatives. This was, in December, 1862, 29,211 grains of carbon, and 1,295 grains of nitrogen weekly.

In the year 1863, the Privy Council ordered an inquiry into the state of distress of the worst-nourished part of the English working class. Dr. Simon, medical officer to the Privy Council, chose for this work the above-mentioned Dr. Smith. His inquiry ranges on the one hand over the agricultural labourers, on the other, over silk-weavers, needlewomen, kid-glovers, stocking-weavers, glove-weavers, and shoemakers. The latter categories are, with the exception of the stocking-weavers, exclusively town-dwellers. It was made a rule in the inquiry to select in each category the most healthy families, and those comparatively in the best circumstances.

As a general result it was found that

“in only one of the examined classes of in-door operatives did the average nitrogen supply just exceed, while in another it nearly reached, the estimated standard of bare sufficiency [*i.e.*, sufficient to avert starvation diseases], and that in two classes there was defect — in one, a very large defect — of both nitrogen and carbon. Moreover, as regards the examined families of the agricultural population, it appeared that more than a fifth were with less than the estimated sufficiency of carbonaceous food, that more than one-third were with less than the estimated sufficiency of nitrogenous food, and that in three counties (Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Somersetshire), insufficiency of nitrogenous food was the average local diet.”

Among the agricultural labourers, those of England, the wealthiest part of the United Kingdom, were the worst fed. [47]  
 The insufficiency of food among the agricultural labourers, fell, as a rule, chiefly on the women and children, for “the man must eat to do his work.” Still greater penury ravaged the town-workers examined.

“They are so ill fed that assuredly among them there must be many cases of severe and injurious privation.” [48]

(“Privation” of the capitalist all this! *i.e.*, “abstinence” from paying for the means of subsistence absolutely necessary for the mere vegetation of his “hands.”) [49]

The following table shows the conditions of nourishment of the above-named categories of purely town-dwelling work-people, as compared with the minimum assumed by Dr. Smith, and with the food-allowance of the cotton operatives during the time of their greatest distress:

<b>Both Sexes</b>	<b>Average weekly carbon</b>	<b>Average weekly nitrogen</b>
Five in-door occupations	28,876 grains	1,192 grains
Unemployed Lancashire Operatives	28,211 grains	1,295 grains
Minimum quantity to be	28,600 grains	1,330 grains

allowed to the Lancashire Operatives, equal number of males and females		
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One half, or 60/125, of the industrial labour categories investigated, had absolutely no beer, 28% no milk. The weekly average of the liquid means of nourishment in the families varied from seven ounces in the needle-women to  $24\frac{3}{4}$  ounces in the stocking-makers. The majority of those who did not obtain milk were needle-women in London. The quantity of bread-stuffs consumed weekly varied from  $7\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. for the needle-women to  $11\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. for the shoemakers, and gave a total average of 9.9 lbs. per adult weekly. Sugar (treacle, etc.) varied from 4 ounces weekly for the kid-glovers to 11 ounces for the stocking-makers; and the total average per week for all categories was 8 ounces per adult weekly. Total weekly average of butter (fat, etc.) 5 ounces per adult. The weekly average of meat (bacon, etc.) varied from  $7\frac{1}{4}$  ounces for the silk-weavers, to  $18\frac{1}{4}$  ounces for the kid-glovers; total average for the different categories 13.6 ounces. The weekly cost of food per adult, gave the following average figures; silk-weavers 2s.  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d., needle-women 2s. 7d., kid-glovers 2s.  $9\frac{1}{2}$ d., shoemakers 2s.  $7\frac{3}{4}$ d., stocking-weavers 2s.  $6\frac{1}{4}$ d. For the silk-weavers of Macclesfield the average was only 1s.  $8\frac{1}{2}$ d. The worst categories were the needle-women, silk-weavers and kid-glovers. [\[50\]](#) Of these facts, Dr. Simon in his General Health Report says:

“That cases are innumerable in which defective diet is the cause or the aggravator of disease, can be affirmed by any one who is conversant with poor law medical practice, or with the wards and out-patient rooms of hospitals.... Yet in this point of view, there is, in my opinion, a very important sanitary context to be added. It must be remembered that privation of food is very reluctantly borne, and that as a rule great poorness of diet will only come when other privations have preceded it. Long before insufficiency of diet is a matter of hygienic concern, long before the physiologist would think of counting the grains of nitrogen and carbon which intervene between life and starvation, the household will have been utterly destitute of material comfort; clothing and fuel will have been even scantier than food — against inclemencies of weather there will have been no adequate protection — dwelling space will have been stinted to the degree in which overcrowding produces or increases disease; of household utensils and furniture there will have been scarcely any — even cleanliness will have been found costly or difficult, and if there still be self-respectful endeavours to maintain it, every such endeavour will represent additional pangs of hunger. The home, too, will be where shelter can be cheapest bought; in quarters where commonly there is least fruit of sanitary supervision, least drainage, least scavenging, least suppression of public nuisances, least or worst water supply, and, if in town, least light and air. Such are the sanitary dangers to which poverty is almost certainly exposed, when it is poverty enough to imply scantiness of food. And while the sum of them is of terrible magnitude against life, the mere scantiness

of food is in itself of very serious moment.... These are painful reflections, especially when it is remembered that the poverty to which they advert is not the deserved poverty of idleness. In all cases it is the poverty of working populations. Indeed, as regards the in-door operatives, the work which obtains the scanty pittance of food, is for the most part excessively prolonged. Yet evidently it is only in a qualified sense that the work can be deemed self-supporting.... And on a very large scale the nominal self-support can be only a circuit, longer or shorter, to pauperism.” [\[51\]](#)

The intimate connexion between the pangs of hunger of the most industrious layers of the working class, and the extravagant consumption, coarse or refined, of the rich, for which capitalist accumulation is the basis, reveals itself only when the economic laws are known. It is otherwise with the “housing of the poor.” Every unprejudiced observer sees that the greater the centralisation of the means of production, the greater is the corresponding heaping together of the labourers, within a given space; that therefore the swifter capitalistic accumulation, the more miserable are the dwellings of the working-people. “Improvements” of towns, accompanying the increase of wealth, by the demolition of badly built quarters, the erection of palaces for banks, warehouses, &c., the widening of streets for business traffic, for the carriages of luxury, and for the introduction of tramways, &c., drive away the poor into even worse and more crowded hiding places. On the other hand, every one knows that the dearness of dwellings is in inverse ratio to their excellence, and that the mines of misery are exploited by house speculators with more profit or

less cost than ever were the mines of Potosi. The antagonistic character of capitalist accumulation, and therefore of the capitalistic relations of property generally, [\[52\]](#) is here so evident, that even the official English reports on this subject teem with heterodox onslaughts on “property and its rights.” With the development of industry, with the accumulation of capital, with the growth and “improvement” of towns, the evil makes such progress that the mere fear of contagious diseases which do not spare even “respectability,” brought into existence from 1847 to 1864 no less than 10 Acts of Parliament on sanitation, and that the frightened bourgeois in some towns, as Liverpool, Glasgow, &c., took strenuous measures through their municipalities. Nevertheless Dr. Simon, in his report of 1865, says:

“Speaking generally, it may be said that the evils are uncontrolled in England.”

By order of the Privy Council, in 1864, an inquiry was made into the conditions of the housing of the agricultural labourers, in 1865 of the poorer classes in the towns. The results of the admirable work of Dr. Julian Hunter are to be found in the seventh (1865) and eighth (1866) reports on “Public Health.” To the agricultural labourers, I shall come later. On the condition of town dwellings, I quote, as preliminary, a general remark of Dr. Simon.

“Although my official point of view,” he says, “is one exclusively physical, common humanity requires that the other aspect of this evil should not be ignored .... In its higher degrees it [*i.e.*, over-crowding] almost necessarily involves

such negation of all delicacy, such unclean confusion of bodies and bodily functions, such exposure of animal and sexual nakedness, as is rather bestial than human. To be subject to these influences is a degradation which must become deeper and deeper for those on whom it continues to work. To children who are born under its curse, it must often be a very baptism into infamy. And beyond all measure hopeless is the wish that persons thus circumstanced should ever in other respects aspire to that atmosphere of civilisation which has its essence in physical and moral cleanliness.” [\[53\]](#)

London takes the first place in over-crowded habitations, absolutely unfit for human beings.

“He feels clear,” says Dr. Hunter, “on two points; first, that there are about 20 large colonies in London, of about 10,000 persons each, whose miserable condition exceeds almost anything he has seen elsewhere in England, and is almost entirely the result of their bad house accommodation; and second, that the crowded and dilapidated condition of the houses of these colonies is much worse than was the case 20 years ago.” [\[54\]](#) “It is not too much to say that life in parts of London and Newcastle is infernal.” [\[55\]](#)

Further, the better-off part of the working class, together with the small shopkeepers and other elements of the lower middle class, falls in London more and more under the curse of these vile conditions of dwelling, in proportion as “improvements,” and with them the demolition of old streets and houses, advance, as factories and the afflux of human beings grow in the metropolis, and finally as house rents rise with the ground-



rents.

“Rents have become so heavy that few labouring men can afford more than one room.” [\[56\]](#)

There is almost no house-property in London that is not overburdened with a number of middlemen. For the price of land in London is always very high in comparison with its yearly revenue, and therefore every buyer speculates on getting rid of it again at a jury price (the expropriation valuation fixed by jurymen), or on pocketing an extraordinary increase of value arising from the neighbourhood of some large establishment. As a consequence of this there is a regular trade in the purchase of “fag-ends of leases.”

“Gentlemen in this business may be fairly expected to do as they do — get all they can from the tenants while they have them, and leave as little as they can for their successors.” [\[57\]](#)

The rents are weekly, and these gentlemen run no risk. In consequence of the making of railroads in the City,

“the spectacle has lately been seen in the East of London of a number of families wandering about some Saturday night with their scanty worldly goods on their backs, without any resting place but the workhouse.” [\[58\]](#)

The workhouses are already over-crowded, and the “improvements” already sanctioned by Parliament are only just begun. If labourers are driven away by the demolition of their old houses, they do not leave their old parish, or at most they settle down on its borders, as near as they can get to it.

“They try, of course, to remain as near as possible to their workshops. The inhabitants do not go beyond the same or the next parish, parting their two-room tenements into single rooms, and crowding even those.... Even at an advanced rent, the people who are displaced will hardly be able to get an accommodation so good as the meagre one they have left.... Half the workmen ... of the Strand ... walked two miles to their work.” [\[59\]](#)

This same Strand, a main thoroughfare which gives strangers an imposing idea of the wealth of London, may serve as an example of the packing together of human beings in that town. In one of its parishes, the Officer of Health reckoned 581 persons per acre, although half the width of the Thames was reckoned in. It will be self-understood that every sanitary measure, which, as has been the case hitherto in London, hunts the labourers from one quarter, by demolishing uninhabitable houses, serves only to crowd them together yet more closely in another.

“Either,” says Dr. Hunter, “the whole proceeding will of necessity stop as an absurdity, or the public compassion (!) be effectually aroused to the obligation which may now be without exaggeration called national, of supplying cover to those who by reason of their having no capital, cannot provide it for themselves, though they can by periodical payments reward those who will provide it for them.” [\[60\]](#)

Admire this capitalistic justice! The owner of land, of houses, the businessman, when expropriated by “improvements” such as railroads, the building of new streets, &c., not only receives

full indemnity. He must, according to law, human and divine, be comforted for his enforced “abstinence” over and above this by a thumping profit. The labourer, with his wife and child and chattels, is thrown out into the street, and — if he crowds in too large numbers towards quarters of the town where the vestries insist on decency, he is prosecuted in the name of sanitation!

Except London, there was at the beginning of the 19th century no single town in England of 100,000 inhabitants. Only five had more than 50,000. Now there are 28 towns with more than 50,000 inhabitants.

“The result of this change is not only that the class of town people is enormously increased, but the old close-packed little towns are now centres, built round on every side, open nowhere to air, and being no longer agreeable to the rich are abandoned by them for the pleasanter outskirts. The successors of these rich are occupying the larger houses at the rate of a family to each room [... and find accommodation for two or three lodgers ...] and a population, for which the houses were not intended and quite unfit, has been created, whose surroundings are truly degrading to the adults and ruinous to the children.” [\[61\]](#)

The more rapidly capital accumulates in an industrial or commercial town, the more rapidly flows the stream of exploitable human material, the more miserable are the improvised dwellings of the labourers.

Newcastle-on-Tyne, as the centre of a coal and iron district of growing productiveness, takes the next place after London in

the housing inferno. Not less than 34,000 persons live there in single rooms. Because of their absolute danger to the community, houses in great numbers have lately been destroyed by the authorities in Newcastle and Gateshead. The building of new houses progresses very slowly, business very quickly. The town was, therefore, in 1865, more full than ever. Scarcely a room was to let. Dr. Embleton, of the Newcastle Fever Hospital, says:

“There can be little doubt that the great cause of the continuance and spread of the typhus has been the overcrowding of human beings, and the uncleanness of their dwellings. The rooms, in which labourers in many cases live, are situated in confined and unwholesome yards or courts, and for space, light, air, and cleanliness, are models of insufficiency and insalubrity, and a disgrace to any civilised community; in them men, women, and children lie at night huddled together: and as regards the men, the night-shift succeed the day-shift, and the day-shift the night-shift in unbroken series for some time together, the beds having scarcely time to cool; the whole house badly supplied with water and worse with privies; dirty, unventilated, and pestiferous.” [\[62\]](#)

The price per week of such lodgings ranges from 8d. to 3s.

“The town of Newcastle-on-Tyne,” says Dr. Hunter, “contains a sample of the finest tribe of our countrymen, often sunk by external circumstances of house and street into an almost savage degradation.” [\[63\]](#)

As a result of the ebbing and flowing of capital and labour, the state of the dwellings of an industrial town may today be bearable, tomorrow hideous. Or the aedileship of the town may have pulled itself together for the removal of the most shocking abuses. Tomorrow, like a swarm of locusts, come crowding in masses of ragged Irishmen or decayed English agricultural labourers. They are stowed away in cellars and lofts, or the hitherto respectable labourer's dwelling is transformed into a lodging house whose *personnel* changes as quickly as the billets in the 30 years' war. Example: Bradford (Yorkshire). There the municipal philistine was just busied with urban improvements. Besides, there were still in Bradford, in 1861, 1,751 uninhabited houses. But now comes that revival of trade which the mildly liberal Mr. Forster, the negro's friend, recently crowed over with so much grace. With the revival of trade came of course an overflow from the waves of the ever fluctuating "reserve army" or "relative surplus population." The frightful cellar habitations and rooms registered in the list, [\[64\]](#) which Dr. Hunter obtained from the agent of an Insurance Company, were for the most part inhabited by well-paid labourers. They declared that they would willingly pay for better dwellings if they were to be had. Meanwhile, they become degraded, they fall ill, one and all, whilst the mildly liberal Forster, M. P., sheds tears over the blessings of Free Trade, and the profits of the eminent men of Bradford who deal in worsted. In the Report of September, 1865, Dr. Bell, one of the poor law doctors of Bradford, ascribes the frightful mortality of fever-patients in his district to the nature of their dwellings.

“In one small cellar measuring 1,500 cubic feet ... there are ten persons .... Vincent Street, Green Aire Place, and the Leys include 223 houses having 1,450 inhabitants, 435 beds, and 36 privies.... The beds — and in that term I include any roll of dirty old rags, or an armful of shavings — have an average of 3.3 persons to each, many have 5 and 6 persons to each, and some people, I am told, are absolutely without beds; they sleep in their ordinary clothes, on the bare boards — young men and women, married and unmarried, all together. I need scarcely add that many of these dwellings are dark, damp, dirty, stinking holes, utterly unfit for human habitations; they are the centres from which disease and death are distributed amongst those in better circumstances, who have allowed them thus to fester in our midst.” [\[65\]](#)

Bristol takes the third place after London in the misery of its dwellings.

“Bristol, where the blankest poverty and domestic misery abound in the wealthiest town of Europe.” [\[66\]](#)

### **C. The Nomad Population**

We turn now to a class of people whose origin is agricultural, but whose occupation is in great part industrial. They are the light infantry of capital, thrown by it, according to its needs, now to this point, now to that. When they are not on the march, they “camp.” Nomad labour is used for various operations of building and draining, brick-making, lime-burning, railway-making, &c. A flying column of pestilence, it

carries into the places in whose neighbourhood it pitches its camp, small-pox, typhus, cholera, scarlet fever, &c. [\[67\]](#) In undertakings that involve much capital outlay, such as railways, &c., the contractor himself generally provides his army with wooden huts and the like, thus improvising villages without any sanitary provisions, outside the control of the local boards, very profitable to the contractor, who exploits the labourers in two-fold fashion — as soldiers of industry and as tenants. According as the wooden hut contains 1, 2, or 3 holes, its inhabitant, navvy, or whatever he may be, has to pay 1, 3, or 4 shillings weekly. [\[68\]](#) One example will suffice. In September, 1864, Dr. Simon reports that the Chairman of the Nuisances Removal Committee of the parish of Sevenoaks sent the following denunciation to Sir George Grey, Home Secretary: —

“Small-pox cases were rarely heard of in this parish until about twelve months ago. Shortly before that time, the works for a railway from Lewisham to Tunbridge were commenced here, and, in addition to the principal works being in the immediate neighbourhood of this town, here was also established the dépôt for the whole of the works, so that a large number of persons was of necessity employed here. As cottage accommodation could not be obtained for them all, huts were built in several places along the line of the works by the contractor, Mr. Jay, for their especial occupation. These huts possessed no ventilation nor drainage, and, besides, were necessarily over-crowded, because each occupant had to accommodate lodgers, whatever the number in his own family might be, although there were only two rooms to each

tenement. The consequences were, according to the medical report we received, that in the night-time these poor people were compelled to endure all the horror of suffocation to avoid the pestiferous smells arising from the filthy, stagnant water, and the privies close under their windows. Complaints were at length made to the Nuisances Removal Committee by a medical gentleman who had occasion to visit these huts, and he spoke of their condition as dwellings in the most severe terms, and he expressed his fears that some very serious consequences might ensue, unless some sanitary measures were adopted. About a year ago, Mr. Jay promised to appropriate a hut, to which persons in his employ, who were suffering from contagious diseases, might at once be removed. He repeated that promise on the 23rd July last, but although since the date of the last Promise there have been several cases of small-pox in his huts, and two deaths from the same disease, yet he has taken no steps whatever to carry out his promise. On the 9th September instant, Mr. Kelson, surgeon, reported to me further cases of small-pox in the same huts, and he described their condition as most disgraceful. I should add, for your (the Home Secretary's) information that an isolated house, called the Pest-house, which is set apart for parishioners who might be suffering from infectious diseases, has been continually occupied by such patients for many months past, and is also now occupied; that in one family five children died from small-pox and fever; that from the 1st April to the 1st September this year, a period of five months, there have been no fewer than ten deaths from small-pox in the parish, four of them being in the huts already referred to; that



it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of persons who have suffered from that disease although they are known to be many, from the fact of the families keeping it as private as possible.” [\[69\]](#)

The labourers in coal and other mines belong to the best paid categories of the British proletariat. The price at which they buy their wages was shown on an earlier page. [\[70\]](#) Here I merely cast a hurried glance over the conditions of their dwellings. As a rule, the exploiter of a mine, whether its owner or his tenant, builds a number of cottages for his hands. They receive cottages and coal for firing “for nothing” — *i.e.*, these form part of their wages, paid in kind. Those who are not lodged in this way receive in compensation £4 per annum. The mining districts attract with rapidity a large population, made up of the miners themselves, and the artisans, shopkeepers, &c., that group themselves around them. The ground-rents are high, as they are generally where population is dense. The master tries, therefore, to run up, within the smallest space possible at the mouth of the pit, just so many cottages as are necessary to pack together his hands and their families. If new mines are opened in the neighbourhood, or old ones are again set working, the pressure increases. In the construction of the cottages, only one point of view is of moment, the “abstinence” of the capitalist from all expenditure that is not absolutely unavoidable.

“The lodging which is obtained by the pitman and other labourers connected with the collieries of Northumberland and Durham,” says Dr. Julian Hunter, “is perhaps, on the whole,

the worst and the dearest of which any large specimens can be found in England, the similar parishes of Monmouthshire excepted.... The extreme badness is in the high number of men found in one room, in the smallness of the ground-plot on which a great number of houses are thrust, the want of water, the absence of privies, and the frequent placing of one house on the top of another, or distribution into flats, ... the lessee acts as if the whole colony were encamped, not resident.” [\[71\]](#)

“In pursuance of my instructions,” says Dr. Stevens, “I visited most of the large colliery villages in the Durham Union.... With very few exceptions, the general statement that no means are taken to secure the health of the inhabitants would be true of all of them.... All colliers are bound [‘bound,’ an expression which, like bondage, dates from the age of serfdom] to the colliery lessee or owner for twelve months.... If the colliers express discontent, or in any way annoy the ‘viewer,’ a mark of memorandum is made against their names, and, at the annual ‘binding,’ such men are turned off... It appears to me that no part of the ‘truck system’ could be worse than what obtains in these densely-populated districts. The collier is bound to take as part of his hiring a house surrounded with pestiferous influences; he cannot help himself, and it appears doubtful whether anyone else can help him except his proprietor (he is, to all intents and purposes, a serf), and his proprietor first consults his balance-sheet, and the result is tolerably certain. The collier is also often supplied with water by the proprietor, which, whether it be good or bad, he has to pay for, or rather he suffers a deduction for from his wages.”

[\[72\]](#)

In conflict with “public opinion,” or even with the Officers of Health, capital makes no difficulty about “justifying” the conditions partly dangerous, partly degrading, to which it confines the working and domestic life of the labourer, on the ground that they are necessary for profit. It is the same thing when capital “abstains” from protective measures against dangerous machinery in the factory, from appliances for ventilation and for safety in mines, &c. It is the same here with the housing of the miners. Dr. Simon, medical officer of the Privy Council, in his official Report says:

“In apology for the wretched household accommodation ... it is alleged that miners are commonly worked on lease; that the duration of the lessee’s interest (which in collieries is commonly for 21 years), is not so long that he should deem it worth his while to create good accommodation for his labourers, and for the tradespeople and others whom the work attracts; that even if he were disposed to act liberally in the matter, this disposition would commonly be defeated by his landlord’s tendency to fix on him, as ground-rent, an exorbitant additional charge for the privilege of having on the surface of the ground the decent and comfortable village which the labourers of the subterranean property ought to inhabit, and that prohibitory price (if not actual prohibition) equally excludes others who might desire to build. It would be foreign to the purpose of this report to enter upon any discussion of the merits of the above apology. Nor here is it even needful to consider where it would be that, if decent accommodation were provided, the cost ... would eventually fall — whether on landlord, or lessee, or labourer, or public.

But in presence of such shameful facts as are vouched for in the annexed reports [those of Dr. Hunter, Dr. Stevens, &c.] a remedy may well be claimed.... Claims of landlordship are being so used as to do great public wrong. The landlord in his capacity of mine-owner invites an industrial colony to labour on his estate, and then in his capacity of surface-owner makes it impossible that the labourers whom he collects, should find proper lodging where they must live. The lessee [the capitalist exploiter] meanwhile has no pecuniary motive for resisting that division of the bargain; well knowing that if its latter conditions be exorbitant, the consequences fall, not on him, that his labourers on whom they fall have not education enough to know the value of their sanitary rights, that neither obscenest lodging nor foulest drinking water will be appreciable inducements towards a ‘strike.’” [\[73\]](#)

#### **D. Effect of Crises on the Best Paid Part of the working class**

Before I turn to the regular agricultural labourers, I may be allowed to show, by one example, how industrial revulsions affect even the best-paid, the aristocracy, of the working class. It will be remembered that the year 1857 brought one of the great crises with which the industrial cycle periodically ends. The next termination of the cycle was due in 1866. Already discounted in the regular factory districts by the cotton famine, which threw much capital from its wonted sphere into the great centres of the money-market, the crisis assumed, at this time, an especially financial character. Its outbreak in 1866 was signalised by the failure of a gigantic London Bank,

immediately followed by the collapse of countless swindling companies. One of the great London branches of industry involved in the catastrophe was iron shipbuilding. The magnates of this trade had not only over-produced beyond all measure during the overtrading time, but they had, besides, engaged in enormous contracts on the speculation that credit would be forthcoming to an equivalent extent. Now, a terrible reaction set in, that even at this hour (the end of March, 1867) continues in this and other London industries. <sup>[74]</sup> To show the condition of the labourers, I quote the following from the circumstantial report of a correspondent of the *Morning Star*, who, at the end of 1866, and beginning of 1867, visited the chief centres of distress:

“In the East End districts of Poplar, Millwall, Greenwich, Deptford, Limehouse and Canning Town, at least 15,000 workmen and their families were in a state of utter destitution, and 3,000 skilled mechanics were breaking stones in the workhouse yard (after distress of over half a year’s duration).... I had great difficulty in reaching the workhouse door, for a hungry crowd besieged it.... They were waiting for their tickets, but the time had not yet arrived for the distribution. The yard was a great square place with an open shed running all round it, and several large heaps of snow covered the paving-stones in the middle. In the middle, also, were little wicker-fenced spaces, like sheep pens, where in finer weather the men worked; but on the day of my visit the pens were so snowed up that nobody could sit in them. Men were busy, however, in the open shed breaking paving-stones into macadam. Each man had a big paving-stone for a seat,

and he chipped away at the rime-covered granite with a big hammer until he had broken up, and think! five bushels of it, and then he had done his day's work, and got his day's pay — threepence and an allowance of food. In another part of the yard was a rickety little wooden house, and when we opened the door of it, we found it filled with men who were huddled together shoulder to shoulder for the warmth of one another's bodies and breath. They were picking oakum and disputing the while as to which could work the longest on a given quantity of food — for endurance was the point of honour. Seven thousand ... in this one workhouse ... were recipients of relief ... many hundreds of them ... it appeared, were, six or eight months ago, earning the highest wages paid to artisans.... Their number would be more than doubled by the count of those who, having exhausted all their savings, still refuse to apply to the parish, because they have a little left to pawn. Leaving the workhouse, I took a walk through the streets, mostly of little one-storey houses, that abound in the neighbourhood of Poplar. My guide was a member of the Committee of the Unemployed.... My first call was on an ironworker who had been seven and twenty weeks out of employment. I found the man with his family sitting in a little back room. The room was not bare of furniture, and there was a fire in it. This was necessary to keep the naked feet of the young children from getting frost bitten, for it was a bitterly cold day. On a tray in front of the fire lay a quantity of oakum, which the wife and children were picking in return for their allowance from the parish. The man worked in the stone yard of the workhouse for a certain ration of food, and threepence per day. He had now

come home to dinner quite hungry, as he told us with a melancholy smile, and his dinner consisted of a couple of slices of bread and dripping, and a cup of milkless tea.... The next door at which we knocked was opened by a middle-aged woman, who, without saying a word, led us into a little back parlour, in which sat all her family, silent and fixedly staring at a rapidly dying fire. Such desolation, such hopelessness was about these people and their little room, as I should not care to witness again. ‘Nothing have they done, sir,’ said the woman, pointing to her boys, ‘for six and twenty weeks; and all our money gone — all the twenty pounds that me and father saved when times were better, thinking it would yield a little to keep us when we got past work. Look at it,’ she said, almost fiercely, bringing out a bank-book with all its well kept entries of money paid in, and money taken out, so that we could see how the little fortune had begun with the first five shilling deposit, and had grown by little and little to be twenty pounds, and how it had melted down again till the sum in hand got from pounds to shillings, and the last entry made the book as worthless as a blank sheet. This family received relief from the workhouse, and it furnished them with just one scanty meal per day.... Our next visit was to an iron labourer’s wife, whose husband had worked in the yards. We found her ill from want of food, lying on a mattress in her clothes, and just covered with a strip of carpet, for all the bedding had been pawned. Two wretched children were tending her, themselves looking as much in need of nursing as their mother. Nineteen weeks of enforced idleness had brought them to this pass, and while the mother told the history of that bitter past, she

moaned as if all her faith in a future that should atone for it were dead.... On getting outside a young fellow came running after us, and asked us to step inside his house and see if anything could be done for him. A young wife, two pretty children, a cluster of pawn-tickets, and a bare room were all he had to show.”

On the after pains of the crisis of 1866, the following extract from a Tory newspaper. It must not be forgotten that the East-end of London, which is here dealt with, is not only the seat of the iron shipbuilding mentioned above, but also of a so-called “home-industry” always underpaid.

“A frightful spectacle was to be seen yesterday in one part of the metropolis. Although the unemployed thousands of the East-end did not parade with their black flags *en masse*, the human torrent was imposing enough. Let us remember what these people suffer. They are dying of hunger. That is the simple and terrible fact. There are 40,000 of them.... In our presence, in one quarter of this wonderful metropolis, are packed — next door to the most enormous accumulation of wealth the world ever saw — cheek by jowl with this are 40,000 helpless, starving people. These thousands are now breaking in upon the other quarters; always half-starving, they cry their misery in our ears, they cry to Heaven, they tell us from their miserable dwellings, that it is impossible for them to find work, and useless for them to beg. The local ratepayers themselves are driven by the parochial charges to the verge of pauperism.” — (*Standard*, 5th April, 1867.)

As it is the fashion amongst English capitalists to quote



Belgium as the Paradise of the labourer because “freedom of labour,” or what is the same thing, “freedom of capital,” is there limited neither by the despotism of Trades’ Unions, nor by Factory Acts, a word or two on the “happiness” of the Belgian labourer. Assuredly no one was more thoroughly initiated in the mysteries of this happiness than the late M. Ducpétiaux, inspector-general of Belgian prisons and charitable institutions, and member of the central commission of Belgian statistics. Let us take his work: “Budgets économiques des classes ouvrières de la Belgique,” Bruxelles, 1855. Here we find among other matters, a normal Belgian labourer’s family, whose yearly income and expenditure he calculates on very exact data, and whose conditions of nourishment are then compared with those of the soldier, sailor, and prisoner. The family “consists of father, mother, and four children.” Of these 6 persons “four may be usefully employed the whole year through.” It is assumed that “there is no sick person nor one incapable of work, among them,” nor are there “expenses for religious, moral, and intellectual purposes, except a very small sum for church sittings,” nor “contributions to savings banks or benefit societies,” nor “expenses due to luxury or the result of improvidence.” The father and eldest son, however, allow themselves “the use of tobacco,” and on Sundays “go to the *cabaret*,” for which a whole 86 centimes a week are reckoned.

“From a general compilation of wages allowed to the labourers in different trades, it follows that the highest average of daily wage is 1 franc 56c., for men, 89 centimes for women, 56 centimes for boys, and 55 centimes for girls. Calculated at

this rate, the resources of the family would amount, at the maximum, to 1,068 francs a-year.... In the family ... taken as typical we have calculated all possible resources. But in ascribing wages to the mother of the family we *raise the question of the direction of the household*. How will its internal economy be cared for? Who will look after the young children? Who will get ready the meals, do the washing and mending? This is the dilemma incessantly presented to the labourers.”

According to this the budget of the family is:

<b>The father</b>	300 working-days at fr. 1.56	fr. 468
<b>mother</b>	300 working-days at fr. 0.89	fr. 267
<b>boy</b>	300 working-days at fr. 0.56	fr. 168
<b>girl</b>	300 working-days at fr. 0.55	fr. 165
		<b>Total fr. 1,068</b>

The annual expenditure of the family would cause a deficit upon the hypothesis that the labourer has the food of:

<b>The man-of-war's man</b>	fr. 1,828	Deficit fr. 760
<b>The soldier</b>	fr. 1,473	Deficit fr. 405
<b>The prisoner</b>	fr. 1,112	Deficit fr. 44

“We see that few labouring families can reach, we will not say the average of the sailor or soldier, but even that of the prisoner. The general average (of the cost of each prisoner in the different prisons during the period 1847-1849), has been

63 centimes for all prisons. This figure, compared with that of the daily maintenance of the labourer, shows a difference of 13 centimes. It must be remarked further, that if in the prisons it is necessary to set down in the account the expenses of administration and surveillance, on the other hand, the prisoners have not to pay for their lodging; that the purchases they make at the canteens are not included in the expenses of maintenance, and that these expenses are greatly lowered in consequence of the large number of persons that make up the establishments, and of contracting for or buying wholesale, the food and other things that enter into their consumption.... How comes it, however, that a great number, we might say, a great majority, of labourers, live in a more economical way? It is ... by adopting expedients, the secret of which only the labourer knows; by reducing his daily rations; by substituting rye-bread for wheat; by eating less meat, or even none at all, and the same with butter and condiments; by contenting themselves with one or two rooms where the family is crammed together, where boys and girls sleep side by side, often on the same pallet; by economy of clothing, washing, decency; by giving up the Sunday diversions; by, in short, resigning themselves to the most painful privations. Once arrived at this extreme limit, the least rise in the price of food, stoppage of work, illness, increases the labourer's distress and determines his complete ruin; debts accumulate, credit fails, the most necessary clothes and furniture are pawned, and finally, the family asks to be enrolled on the list of paupers." (Ducpétiaux, l. c., pp. 151, 154, 155.)

In fact, in this "Paradise of capitalists" there follows, on the

smallest change in the price of the most essential means of subsistence, a change in the number of deaths and crimes! (See Manifesto of the Maatschappij: “De Vlamingen Vooruit!” Brussels, 1860, pp. 15, 16.) In all Belgium are 930,000 families, of whom, according to the official statistics, 90,000 are wealthy and on the list of voters = 450,000 persons; 390,000 families of the lower middle-class in towns and villages, the greater part of them constantly sinking into the proletariat, = 1,950,000 persons. Finally, 450,000 working class families = 2,250,000 persons, of whom the model ones enjoy the happiness depicted by Ducpétiaux. Of the 450,000 working class families, over 200,000 are on the pauper list.

#### **E. The British Agricultural Proletariat**

Nowhere does the antagonistic character of capitalistic production and accumulation assert itself more brutally than in the progress of English agriculture (including cattle-breeding) and the retrogression of the English agricultural labourer.

Before I turn to his present situation, a rapid retrospect.

Modern agriculture dates in England from the middle of the 18th century, although the revolution in landed property, from which the changed mode of production starts as a basis, has a much earlier date.

If we take the statements of Arthur Young, a careful observer, though a superficial thinker, as to the agricultural labourer of 1771, the latter plays a very pitiable part compared with his predecessor of the end of the 14th century,

“when the labourer ... could live in plenty, and accumulate

wealth,” [\[75\]](#)

not to speak of the 15th century, “the golden age of the English labourer in town and country.” We need not, however, go back so far. In a very instructive work of the year 1777 we read:

“The great farmer is nearly mounted to a level with him [the gentleman]; while the poor labourer is depressed almost to the earth. His unfortunate situation will fully appear, by taking a comparative view of it, only forty years ago, and at present.... Landlord and tenant ... have both gone hand in hand in keeping the labourer down.” [\[76\]](#)

It is then proved in detail that the real agricultural wages between 1737 and 1777 fell nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  or 25 per cent.

“Modern policy,” says Dr. Richard Price also, “is, indeed, more favourable to the higher classes of people; and the consequences may in time prove that the whole kingdom will consist of only gentry and beggars, or of grandees and slaves.” [\[77\]](#)

Nevertheless, the position of the English agricultural labourer from 1770 to 1780, with regard to his food and dwelling, as well as to his self-respect, amusements, &c., is an ideal never attained again since that time. His average wage expressed in pints of wheat was from 1770 to 1771, 90 pints, in Eden’s time (1797) only 65, in 1808 but 60. [\[78\]](#)

The state of the agricultural labourer at the end of the Anti-Jacobin War, during which landed proprietors, farmers, manufacturers, merchants, bankers, stockbrokers, army-

contractors, &c., enriched themselves so extraordinarily, has been already indicated above. The nominal wages rose in consequence partly of the bank-note depreciation, partly of a rise in the price of the primary means of subsistence independent of this depreciation. But the actual wage-variation can be evidenced in a very simple way, without entering into details that are here unnecessary. The Poor Law and its administration were in 1795 and 1814 the same. It will be remembered how this law was carried out in the country districts: in the form of alms the parish made up the nominal wage to the nominal sum required for the simple vegetation of the labourer. The ratio between the wages paid by the farmer, and the wage-deficit made good by the parish, shows us two things. First, the falling of wages below their minimum; second, the degree in which the agricultural labourer was a compound of wage labourer and pauper, or the degree in which he had been turned into a serf of his parish. Let us take one county that represents the average condition of things in all counties. In Northamptonshire, in 1795, the average weekly wage was 7s. 6d.; the total yearly expenditure of a family of 6 persons, £36 12s. 5d.; their total income, £29 18s.; deficit made good by the parish, £6 14s. 5d. In 1814, in the same county, the weekly wage was 12s. 2d.; the total yearly expenditure of a family of 5 persons, £54 18s. 4d.; their total income, £36, 2s.; deficit made good by the parish, £18 6s. 4d.

[\[79\]](#) In 1795 the deficit was less than 1/4 the wage, in 1814, more than half. It is self-evident that, under these circumstances, the meagre comforts that Eden still found in the cottage of the agricultural labourer, had vanished by 1814.

[80] Of all the animals kept by the farmer, the labourer, the *instrumentum vocale*, was, thenceforth, the most oppressed, the worst nourished, the most brutally treated.

The same state of things went on quietly until

“the Swing riots, in 1830, revealed to us (*i.e.*, the ruling classes) by the light of blazing corn-stacks, that misery and black mutinous discontent smouldered quite as fiercely under the surface of agricultural as of manufacturing England.” [81]

At this time, Sadler, in the House of Commons, christened the agricultural labourers “white slaves,” and a Bishop echoed the epithet in the Upper House. The most notable political economist of that period — E. G. Wakefield — says:

“The peasant of the South of England ... is not a freeman, nor is he a slave; he is a pauper.” [82]

The time just before the repeal of the Corn Laws threw new light on the condition of the agricultural labourers. On the one hand, it was to the interest of the middle-class agitators to prove how little the Corn Laws protected the actual producers of the corn. On the other hand, the industrial bourgeoisie foamed with sullen rage at the denunciations of the factory system by the landed aristocracy, at the pretended sympathy with the woes of the factory operatives, of those utterly corrupt, heartless, and genteel loafers, and at their “diplomatic zeal” for factory legislation. It is an old English proverb that “when thieves fall out, honest men come by their own,” and, in fact, the noisy, passionate quarrel between the two fractions of the ruling class about the question, which of the two

exploited the labourers the more shamefully, was on each hand the midwife of the truth. Earl Shaftesbury, then Lord Ashley, was commander-in-chief in the aristocratic, philanthropic, anti-factory campaign. He was, therefore, in 1845, a favourite subject in the revelations of the *Morning Chronicle* on the condition of the agricultural labourers. This journal, then the most important Liberal organ, sent special commissioners into the agricultural districts, who did not content themselves with mere general descriptions and statistics, but published the names both of the labouring families examined and of their landlords. The following list gives the wages paid in three villages in the neighbourhood of Blandford, Wimbourne, and Poole. The villages are the property of Mr. G. Banks and of the Earl of Shaftesbury. It will be noted that, just like Banks, this “low church pope,” this head of English pietists, pockets a great part of the miserable wages of the labourers under the pretext of house-rent: —

<b>FIRST VILLAGE</b>						
(a) Children.	2	3	2	2	6	3
(b) Number of Members in Family.	4	5	4	4	8	5
(c) Weekly Wage of the Men.	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.
(d) Weekly Wage of the Children.	—	—	—	—	1/-, 1/6	1/-, 2/-



(e) Weekly Income of the whole Family.	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	10s. 6d.	7s. 0d.
(f) Weekly Rent.	2s. 0d.	1s. 6d.	1s. 0d.	1s. 0d.	2s. 0d.	1s. 4d.
(g) Total Weekly wage after deduction of Rent.	6s. 0d.	6s. 6d.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	8s. 6d.	5s. 8d.
(h) Weekly income per head.	1s. 6d.	1s. 3½d.	1s. 9d.	1s. 9d.	1s. 0 ¾d.	1s. 1½d.

SECOND VILLAGE					
(a) Children.	6	6	8	4	3
(b) Number of Members in Family.	8	8	10	6	5
(c) Weekly Wage of the Men.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.
(d) Weekly Wage of the Children.	1/-, 1/6	1/-, 1/6	—	—	—
(e) Weekly Income of the whole Family.	10s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.

(f) Weekly Rent.	1s. 6d.	1s. 3½d.	1s. 3½d.	1s. 6½d.	1s. 6½d.
(g) Total Weekly wage after deduction of Rent.	8s. 6d.	5s. 8½d.	5s. 8½d.	5s. 5½d.	5s. 5½d.
(h) Weekly income per head.	1s. 0 ¾d.	0s. 8½d.	0s. 7d.	0s. 11d.	1s. 1d.

THIRD VILLAGE			
(a) Children.	4	3	0
(b) Number of Members in Family.	6	5	2
(c) Weekly Wage of the Men.	7s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	5s. 0d.
(d) Weekly Wage of the Children.	-	1/- 2/-	1/- 2/6
(e) Weekly Income of the whole Family.	7s. 0d.	11s. 6d.	5s. 0d.
(f) Weekly Rent.	1s. 0d.	0s. 10d.	1s. 0d.
(g) Total Weekly wage after deduction of Rent.	6s. 0d.	10s. 8d.	4s. 0d.
(h) Weekly income per head. <a href="#">[83]</a>	1s. 0d.	2s. 1 3/5d.	2s. 0d.

The repeal of the Corn Laws gave a marvellous impulse to English agriculture. <sup>[84]</sup> Drainage on the most extensive scale, new methods of stall-feeding, and of the artificial cultivation of green crops, introduction of mechanical manuring apparatus, new treatment of clay soils, increased use of mineral manures, employment of the steam-engine, and of all kinds of new machinery, more intensive cultivation generally, characterised this epoch. Mr. Pusey, Chairman of the Royal Agricultural Society, declares that the (relative) expenses of farming have been reduced nearly one half by the introduction of new machinery. On the other hand, the actual return of the soil rose rapidly. Greater outlay of capital per acre, and, as a consequence, more rapid concentration of farms, were essential conditions of the new method. <sup>[85]</sup> At the same time, the area under cultivation increased, from 1846 to 1856, by 464,119 acres, without reckoning the great area in the Eastern Counties which was transformed from rabbit warrens and poor pastures into magnificent corn-fields. It has already been seen that, at the same time, the total number of persons employed in agriculture fell. As far as the actual agricultural labourers of both sexes and of all ages are concerned, their number fell from 1,241,396, in 1851, to 1,163, 217 in 1861. <sup>[86]</sup> If the English Registrar-General, therefore, rightly remarks:

“The increase of farmers and farm-labourers, since 1801, bears no kind of proportion ... to the increase of agricultural produce,” <sup>[87]</sup>

this disproportion obtains much more for the last period, when a positive decrease of the agricultural population went hand in

hand with increase of the area under cultivation, with more intensive cultivation, unheard-of accumulation of the capital incorporated with the soil, and devoted to its working, an augmentation in the products of the soil without parallel in the history of English agriculture, plethoric rent-rolls of landlords, and growing wealth of the capitalist farmers. If we take this, together with the swift, unbroken extension of the markets, viz., the towns, and the reign of Free Trade, then the agricultural labourer was at last, *post tot discrimina rerum*, placed in circumstances that ought, *secundum artem*, to have made him drunk with happiness.

But Professor Rogers comes to the conclusion that the lot of the English agricultural labourer of today, not to speak of his predecessor in the last half of the 14th and in the 15th century, but only compared with his predecessor from 1770 to 1780, has changed for the worse to an extraordinary extent, that “the peasant has again become a serf,” and a serf worse fed and worse clothed. [\[88\]](#) Dr. Julian Hunter, in his epochmaking report on the dwellings of the agricultural labourers, says:

“The cost of the hind” (a name for the agricultural labourer, inherited from the time of serfdom) “is fixed at the lowest possible amount on which he can live ... the supplies of wages and shelter are not calculated on the profit to be derived from him. He is a zero in farming calculations ... [\[89\]](#) The means [of subsistence] being always supposed to be a fixed quantity. [\[90\]](#) As to any further reduction of his income, he may say, *nihil habeo nihil curo*. He has no fears for the future, because he has now only the spare supply necessary to keep him. He has

reached the zero from which are dated the calculations of the farmer. Come what will, he has no share either in prosperity or adversity.” [\[91\]](#)

In the year 1863, an official inquiry took place into the conditions of nourishment and labour of the criminals condemned to transportation and penal servitude. The results are recorded in two voluminous Blue books. Among other things it is said:

“From an elaborate comparison between the diet of convicts in the convict prisons in England, and that of paupers in workhouses and of free labourers in the same country ... it certainly appears that the former are much better fed than either of the two other classes,” [\[92\]](#) whilst “the amount of labour required from an ordinary convict under penal servitude is about one half of what would be done by an ordinary day-labourer.” [\[93\]](#)

A few characteristic depositions of witnesses: John Smith, governor of the Edinburgh prison, deposes:

No. 5056. “The diet of the English prisons [is] superior to that of ordinary labourers in England.” No 50. “It is the fact ... that the ordinary agricultural labourers in Scotland very seldom get any meat at all.” Answer No. 3047. “Is there anything that you are aware of to account for the necessity of feeding them very much better than ordinary labourers? — Certainly not.” No. 3048. “Do you think that further experiments ought to be made in order to ascertain whether a dietary might not be hit upon for prisoners employed on public works nearly

approaching to the dietary of free labourers? ...” [\[94\]](#) “He [the agricultural labourer] might say: ‘I work hard, and have not enough to eat, and when in prison I did not work harder where I had plenty to eat, and therefore it is better for me to be in prison again than here.’” [\[95\]](#)

From the tables appended to the first volume of the Report I have compiled the annexed comparative summary.

<b>WEEKLY AMOUNT OF NUTRIENTS</b>				
	<b>Quantity Of Nitrogenous Ingredients</b>	<b>Quantity Of Non-Nitrogenous Ingredients</b>	<b>Quantity Of Mineral Matter</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	Ounces	Ounces	Ounces	Ounces
Portland (convict)	28.95	150.06	4.68	183.69
Sailor in the Navy	29.63	152.91	4.52	187.06
Soldier	25.55	114.49	3.94	143.98
Working Coachmaker	24.53	162.06	4.23	190.82
Compositor	21.24	100.83	3.12	125.19

Agricultural labourer <sup>[96]</sup>	17.73	118.06	3.29	139.08
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The general result of the inquiry by the medical commission of 1863 on the food of the lowest fed classes, is already known to the reader. He will remember that the diet of a great part of the agricultural labourers' families is below the minimum necessary "to arrest starvation diseases." This is especially the case in all the purely rural districts of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Wilts, Stafford, Oxford, Berks, and Herts.

"The nourishment obtained by the labourer himself," says Dr. E. Smith, "is larger than the average quantity indicates, since he eats a larger share ... necessary to enable him to perform his labour ... of food than the other members of the family, including in the poorer districts nearly all the meat and bacon.... The quantity of food obtained by the wife and also by the children at the period of rapid growth, is in many cases, in almost every county, deficient, and particularly in nitrogen."

<sup>[97]</sup>

The male and female servants living with the farmers themselves are sufficiently nourished. Their number fell from 288,277 in 1851, to 204,962 in 1861.

"The labour of women in the fields," says Dr. Smith, "whatever may be its disadvantages, ... is under present circumstances of great advantage to the family, since it adds that amount of income which ... provides shoes and clothing and pays the rent, and thus enables the family to be better fed."

<sup>[98]</sup>

One of the most remarkable results of the inquiry was that the agricultural labourer of England, as compared with other parts of the United Kingdom, “is considerably the worst fed,” as the appended table shows:

Quantities of Carbon and Nitrogen weekly consumed by an average agricultural adult:

	<b>Carbon, grains</b>	<b>Nitrogen, grains</b>
England	46,673	1,594
Wales	48,354	2,031
Scotland	48,980	2,348
Ireland <sup>[99]</sup>	43,366	2,434

“To the insufficient quantity and miserable quality of the house accommodation generally had,” says Dr. Simon, in his official Health Report, “by our agricultural labourers, almost every page of Dr. Hunter’s report bears testimony. And gradually, for many years past, the state of the labourer in these respects has been deteriorating, house-room being now greatly more difficult for him to find, and, when found, greatly less suitable to his needs than, perhaps, for centuries had been the case. Especially within the last twenty or thirty years, the evil has been in very rapid increase, and the household circumstances of the labourer are now in the highest degree deplorable. Except in so far as they whom his labour enriches, see fit to treat him with a kind of pitiful indulgence, he is quite peculiarly helpless in the matter. Whether he shall find house-



room on the land which he contributes to till, whether the house-room which he gets shall be human or swinish, whether he shall have the little space of garden that so vastly lessens the pressure of his poverty — all this does not depend on his willingness and ability to pay reasonable rent for the decent accommodation he requires, but depends on the use which others may see fit to make of their ‘right to do as they will with their own.’ However large may be a farm, there is no law that a certain proportion of labourers’ dwellings (much less of decent dwellings) shall be upon it; nor does any law reserve for the labourer ever so little right in that soil to which his industry is as needful as sun and rain.... An extraneous element weighs the balance heavily against him ... the influence of the Poor Law in its provisions concerning settlement and chargeability. [\[100\]](#) Under this influence, each parish has a pecuniary interest in reducing to a minimum the number of its resident labourers: — for, unhappily, agricultural labour instead of implying a safe and permanent independence for the hardworking labourer and his family, implies for the most part only a longer or shorter circuit to eventual pauperism — a pauperism which, during the whole circuit, is so near, that any illness or temporary failure of occupation necessitates immediate recourse to parochial relief — and thus all residence of agricultural population in a parish is glaringly an addition to its poor-rates .... Large proprietors [\[101\]](#) ... have but to resolve that there shall be no labourers’ dwellings on their estates, and their estates will thenceforth be virtually free from half their responsibility for the poor. How far it has been intended, in the English constitution and law, that this kind of

unconditional property in land should be acquirable, and that a landlord 'doing as he wills with his own,' should be able to treat the cultivators of the soil as aliens, whom he may expel from his territory, is a question which I do not pretend to discuss.... For that (power) of eviction ... does not exist only in theory. On a very large scale it prevails in practice — prevails ... as a main governing condition in the household circumstances of agricultural labour.... As regards the extent of the evil, it may suffice to refer to the evidence which Dr. Hunter has compiled from the last census, that destruction of houses, notwithstanding increased local demands for them, had, during the last ten years, been in progress in 821 separate parishes or townships of England, so that irrespectively of persons who had been forced to become non-resident (that is in the parishes in which they work), these parishes and townships were receiving in 1861, as compared with 1851, a population 5 1/3 per cent. greater, into houseroom 4½ per cent. less... When the process of depopulation has completed itself, the result, says Dr. Hunter, is a show-village where the cottages have been reduced to a few, and where none but persons who are needed as shepherds, gardeners, or game-keepers, are allowed to live; regular servants who receive the good treatment usual to their class. [\[102\]](#) But the land requires cultivation, and it will be found that the labourers employed upon it are not the tenants of the owner, but that they come from a neighbouring open village, perhaps three miles off, where a numerous small proprietary had received them when their cottages were destroyed in the close villages around. Where things are tending to the above result, often the

cottages which stand, testify, in their unrepaired and wretched condition, to the extinction to which they are doomed. They are seen standing in the various stages of natural decay. While the shelter holds together, the labourer is permitted to rent it, and glad enough he will often be to do so, even at the price of decent lodging. But no repair, no improvement shall it receive, except such as its penniless occupants can supply. And when at last it becomes quite uninhabitable — uninhabitable even to the humblest standard of serfdom — it will be but one more destroyed cottage, and future poor-rates will be somewhat lightened. While great owners are thus escaping from poor-rates through the depopulation of lands over which they have control, the nearest town or open village receive the evicted labourers: the nearest, I say, but this “nearest” may mean three or four miles distant from the farm where the labourer has his daily toil. To that daily toil there will then have to be added, as though it were nothing, the daily need of walking six or eight miles for power of earning his bread. And whatever farmwork is done by his wife and children, is done at the same disadvantage. Nor is this nearly all the toil which the distance occasions him. In the open village, cottage-speculators buy scraps of land, which they throng as densely as they can with the cheapest of all possible hovels. And into those wretched habitations (which, even if they adjoin the open country, have some of the worst features of the worst town residences) crowd the agricultural labourers of England. [\[103\]](#) .... Nor on the other hand must it be supposed that even when the labourer is housed upon the lands which he cultivates, his household circumstances are generally such as his life of

productive industry would seem to deserve. Even on princely estates ... his cottage ... may be of the meanest description. There are landlords who deem any sty good enough for their labourer and his family, and who yet do not disdain to drive with him the hardest possible bargain for rent. [\[104\]](#) It may be but a ruinous one-bedroomed hut, having no fire-grate, no privy, no opening window, no water supply but the ditch, no garden — but the labourer is helpless against the wrong.... And the Nuisances Removal Acts ... are ... a mere dead letter ... in great part dependent for their working on such cottage-owners as the one from whom his (the labourer's) hovel is rented.... From brighter, but exceptional scenes, it is requisite in the interests of justice, that attention should again be drawn to the overwhelming preponderance of facts which are a reproach to the civilisation of England. Lamentable indeed, must be the case, when, notwithstanding all that is evident with regard to the quality of the present accommodation, it is the common conclusion of competent observers that even the general badness of dwellings is an evil infinitely less urgent than their mere numerical insufficiency. For years the overcrowding of rural labourers' dwellings has been a matter of deep concern, not only to persons who care for sanitary good, but to persons who care for decent and moral life. For, again and again in phrases so uniform that they seem stereotyped, reporters on the spread of epidemic disease in rural districts, have insisted on the extreme importance of that overcrowding, as an influence which renders it a quite hopeless task, to attempt the limiting of any infection which is introduced. And again and again it has been pointed out that,

notwithstanding the many salubrious influences which there are in country life, the crowding which so favours the extension of contagious disease, also favours the origination of disease which is not contagious. And those who have denounced the over-crowded state of our rural population have not been silent as to a further mischief. Even where their primary concern has been only with the injury to health, often almost perforce they have referred to other relations on the subject. In showing how frequently it happens that adult persons of both sexes, married and unmarried, are huddled together in single small sleeping rooms, their reports have carried the conviction that, under the circumstances they describe, decency must always be outraged, and morality almost of necessity must suffer. [\[105\]](#) Thus, for instance, in the appendix of my last annual report, Dr. Ord, reporting on an outbreak of fever at Wing, in Buckinghamshire, mentions how a young man who had come thither from Wingrave with fever, “in the first days of his illness slept in a room with nine other persons. Within a fortnight several of these persons were attacked, and in the course of a few weeks five out of the nine had fever, and one died...” From Dr. Harvey, of St. George’s Hospital, who, on private professional business, visited Wing during the time of the epidemic, I received information exactly in the sense of the above report.... “A young woman having fever, lay at night in a room occupied by her father and mother, her bastard child, two young men (her brothers), and her two sisters, each with a bastard child — 10 persons in all. A few weeks ago 13 persons slept in it.” [\[106\]](#)

Dr. Hunter investigated 5,375 cottages of agricultural

labourers, not only in the purely agricultural districts, but in all counties of England. Of these, 2,195 had only one bedroom (often at the same time used as living-room), 2,930 only two, and 250, more than two. I will give a few specimens culled from a dozen counties.

### **(1.) Bedfordshire**

*Wrestlingworth.* Bedrooms about 12 feet long and 10 broad, although many are smaller than this. The small, one-storied cots are often divided by partitions into two bedrooms, one bed frequently in a kitchen, 5 feet 6 inches in height. Rent, £3 a year. The tenants have to make their own privies, the landlord only supplies a hole. As soon as one has made a privy, it is made use of by the whole neighbourhood. One house, belonging to a family called Richardson, was of quite unapproachable beauty. "Its plaster walls bulged very like a lady's dress in a curtsey. One gable end was convex, the other concave, and on this last, unfortunately, stood the chimney, a curved tube of clay and wood like an elephant's trunk. A long stick served as prop to prevent the chimney from falling. The doorway and window were rhomboidal." Of 17 houses visited, only 4 had more than one bedroom, and those four overcrowded. The cots with one bedroom sheltered 3 adults and 3 children, a married couple with 6 children, &c.

*Dunton.* High rents, from £4 to £5; weekly wages of the man, 10s. They hope to pay the rent by the straw-plaiting of the family. The higher the rent, the greater the number that must work together to pay it. Six adults, living with 4 children in

one sleeping apartment, pay £3 10s. for it. The cheapest house in Dunton, 15 feet long externally, 10 broad, let for £3. Only one of the houses investigated had 2 bedrooms. A little outside the village, a house whose “tenants dinged against the house-side,” the lower 9 inches of the door eaten away through sheer rottenness; the doorway, a single opening closed at night by a few bricks, ingeniously pushed up after shutting and covered with some matting. Half a window, with glass and frame, had gone the way of all flesh. Here, without furniture, huddled together were 3 adults and 5 children. Dunton is not worse than the rest of Biggleswade Union.

## **(2.) Berkshire**

*Beenham.* In June, 1864, a man, his wife and 4 children lived in a cot (one-storied cottage). A daughter came home from service with scarlet fever. She died. One child sickened and died. The mother and one child were down with typhus when Dr. Hunter was called in. The father and one child slept outside, but the difficulty of securing isolation was seen here, for in the crowded market of the miserable village lay the linen of the fever-stricken household, waiting for the wash. The rent of H.’s house, 1s. a-week; one bedroom for man, wife, and 6 children. One house let for 8d. a-week, 14 feet 6 inches long, 7 feet broad, kitchen, 6 feet high; the bedroom without window, fire-place, door, or opening, except into the lobby; no garden. A man lived here for a little while, with two grown-up daughters and one grown-up son; father and son slept on the bed, the girls in the passage. Each of the latter had

a child while the family was living here, but one went to the workhouse for her confinement and then came home.

### **(3.) Buckinghamshire**

30 cottages — on 1,000 acres of land — contained here about 130-140 persons. The parish of *Bradenham* comprises 1,000 acres; it numbered, in 1851, 36 houses and a population of 84 males and 54 females. This inequality of the sexes was partly remedied in 1861, when they numbered 98 males and 87 females; increase in 10 years of 14 men and 33 women. Meanwhile, the number of houses was one less.

*Winslow*. Great part of this newly built in good style; demand for houses appears very marked, since very miserable cots let at 1s. to 1s. 3d. per week.

*Water Eaton*. Here the landlords, in view of the increasing population, have destroyed about 20 per cent. of the existing houses. A poor labourer, who had to go about 4 miles to his work, answered the question, whether he could not find a cot nearer: “No; they know better than to take a man in with my large family.”

*Tinker’s End*, near Winslow. A bedroom in which were 4 adults and 4 children; 11 feet long, 9 feet broad, 6 feet 5 inches high at its highest part; another 11 feet 3 inches by 9 feet, 5 feet 10 inches high, sheltered 6 persons. Each of these families had less space than is considered necessary for a convict. No house had more than one bedroom, not one of them a back-door; water very scarce; weekly rent from 1s. 4d. to 2s. In 16



of the houses visited, only 1 man that earned 10s. a-week. The quantity of air for each person under the circumstances just described corresponds to that which he would have if he were shut up in a box of 4 feet measuring each way, the whole night. But then, the ancient dens afforded a certain amount of unintentional ventilation.

#### **(4.) Cambridgeshire**

*Gamblingay* belongs to several landlords. It contains the wretchedest cots to be found anywhere. Much straw-plaiting. “A deadly lassitude, a hopeless surrendering up to filth,” reigns in *Gamblingay*. The neglect in its centre, becomes mortification at its extremities, north and south, where the houses are rotting to pieces. The absentee landlords bleed this poor rookery too freely. The rents are very high; 8 or 9 persons packed in one sleeping apartment, in 2 cases 6 adults, each with 1 or 2 children in one small bedroom.

#### **(5.) Essex**

In this county, diminutions in the number of persons and of cottages go, in many parishes, hand in hand. In not less than 22 parishes, however, the destruction of houses has not prevented increase of population, or has not brought about that expulsion which, under the name “migration to towns,” generally occurs. In *Fingringhoe*, a parish of 3,443 acres, were in 1851, 145 houses; in 1861, only 110. But the people did not wish to go away, and managed even to increase under these circumstances. In 1851, 252 persons inhabited 61 houses, but

in 1861, 262 persons were squeezed into 49 houses. In Basilden, in 1851, 157 persons lived on 1,827 acres, in 35 houses; at the end of ten years, 180 persons in 27 houses. In the parishes of Fingringhoe, South Fambridge, Widford, Basilden, and Ramsden Crag, in 1851, 1,392 persons were living on 8,449 acres in 316 houses; in 1861, on the same area, 1,473 persons in 249 houses.

#### **(6.) Herefordshire**

This little county has suffered more from the “eviction-spirit” than any other in England. At Nadby, overcrowded cottages generally, with only 2 bedrooms, belonging for the most part to the farmers. They easily let them for £3 or £4 a-year, and paid a weekly wage of 9s.

#### **(7.) Huntingdon**

*Hartford* had, in 1851, 87 houses; shortly after this, 19 cottages were destroyed in this small parish of 1,720 acres; population in 1831, 452; in 1852, 382; and in 1861, 341. 14 cottages, each with 1 bedroom, were visited. In one, a married couple, 3 grown-up sons, 1 grown-up daughter, 4 children — in all 10 in another, 3 adults, 6 children. One of these rooms, in which 8 people slept, was 12 feet 10 inches long, 12 feet 2 inches broad, 6 feet 9 inches high: the average, without making any deduction for projections into the apartment, gave about 130 cubic feet per head. In the 14 sleeping rooms, 34 adults and 33 children. These cottages are seldom provided with gardens, but many of the inmates are able to farm small

allotments at 10s. or 12s. per rood. These allotments are at a distance from the houses, which are without privies. The family “must either go to the allotment to deposit their ordures,” or, as happens in this place, saving your presence, “use a closet with a trough set like a drawer in a chest of drawers, and drawn out weekly and conveyed to the allotment to be emptied where its contents were wanted.” In Japan, the circle of life-conditions moves more decently than this.

**(8.) Lincolnshire**

*Langtoft.* A man lives here, in Wright’s house, with his wife, her mother, and 5 children; the house has a front kitchen, scullery, bedroom over the front kitchen; front kitchen and bedroom, 12 feet 2 inches by 9 feet 5 inches; the whole ground floor, 21 feet 2 inches by 9 feet 5 inches. The bedroom is a garret: the walls run together into the roof like a sugar-loaf, a dormer-window opening in front. “Why did he live here? On account of the garden? No; it is very small. Rent? High, 1s. 3d. per week. Near his work? No; 6 miles away, so that he walks daily, to and fro, 12 miles. He lived there, because it was a tenantable cot,” and because he wanted to have a cot for himself alone, anywhere, at any price, and in any conditions. The following are the statistics of 12 houses in Langtoft, with 12 bedrooms, 38 adults, and 36 children.

TWELVE HOUSES IN LANGTOFT									
House	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.

<b>Bedrooms.</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Adults.</b>	3	4	4	5	2	5	3	3	2
<b>Children.</b>	5	3	4	4	2	3	3	2	0
<b>Number of Persons.</b>	8	7	8	9	4	8	6	5	2

### (9.) Kent

*Kennington*, very seriously over-populated in 1859, when diphtheria appeared, and the parish doctor instituted a medical inquiry into the condition of the poorer classes. He found that in this locality, where much labour is employed, various cots had been destroyed and no new ones built. In one district stood four houses, named birdcages; each had 4 rooms of the following dimensions in feet and inches:

Kitchen:	9 ft. 5 by 8 ft. 11 by 6 ft. 6
Scullery:	8 ft. 6 by 4 ft. 6 by 6 ft. 6
Bedroom:	8 ft. 5 by 5 ft. 10 by 6 ft. 3
Bedroom:	8 ft. 3 by 8 ft. 4 by 6 ft. 3

### (10.) Northamptonshire

*Brinworth, Pickford and Floore*: in these villages in the winter 20-30 men were lounging about the streets from want of work. The farmers do not always till sufficiently the corn and turnip

lands, and the landlord has found it best to throw all his farms together into 2 or 3. Hence want of employment. Whilst on one side of the wall, the land calls for labour, on the other side the defrauded labourers are casting at it longing glances. Feverishly overworked in summer, and half-starved in winter, it is no wonder if they say in their peculiar dialect, “the parson and gentlefolk seem frit to death at them.”

At Floore, instances, in one bedroom of the smallest size, of couples with 4, 5, 6 children; 3 adults with 5 children; a couple with grandfather and 6 children down with scarlet fever, &c.; in two houses with two bedrooms, two families of 8 and 9 adults respectively.

#### **(11.) Wiltshire**

*Stratton.* 31 houses visited, 8 with only one bedroom. Pentill, in the same parish: a cot let at Is. 3d. weekly with 4 adults and 4 children, had nothing good about it, except the walls, from the floor of rough-hewn pieces of stones to the roof of worn-out thatch.

#### **(12.) Worcestershire**

House-destruction here not quite so excessive; yet from 1851 to 1861, the number of inhabitants to each house on the average, has risen from 4.2 to 4.6.

*Badsey.* Many cots and little gardens here. Some of the farmers declare that the cots are “a great nuisance here, because they bring the poor.” On the statement of one

gentleman:

“The poor are none the better for them; if you build 500 they will let fast enough, in fact, the more you build, the more they want”

(according to him the houses give birth to the inhabitants, who then by a law of Nature press on “the means of housing”). Dr. Hunter remarks:

“Now these poor must come from somewhere, and as there is no particular attraction, such as doles, at Badsey, it must be repulsion from some other unfit place, which will send them here. If each could find an allotment near his work, he would not prefer Badsey, where he pays for his scrap of ground twice as much as the farmer pays for his.”

The continual emigration to the towns, the continual formation of surplus population in the country through the concentration of farms, conversion of arable land into pasture, machinery, &c., and the continual eviction of the agricultural population by the destruction of their cottages, go hand in hand. The more empty the district is of men, the greater is its “relative surplus population,” the greater is their pressure on the means of employment, the greater is the absolute excess of the agricultural population over the means for housing it, the greater, therefore, in the villages is the local surplus population and the most pestilential packing together of human beings. The packing together of knots of men in scattered little villages and small country towns corresponds to the forcible draining of men from the surface of the land. The continuous superseding of the agricultural labourers, in spite of their

diminishing number and the increasing mass of their products, gives birth to their pauperism. Their pauperism is ultimately a motive to their eviction and the chief source of their miserable housing which breaks down their last power of resistance, and makes them more slaves of the landed proprietors and the farmers. [\[107\]](#) Thus the minimum of wages becomes a law of Nature to them. On the other hand, the land, in spite of its constant “relative surplus population,” is at the same time underpopulated. This is seen, not only locally at the points where the efflux of men to towns, mines, railroad-making, &c., is most marked. It is to be seen everywhere, in harvest-time as well as in spring and summer, at those frequently recurring times when English agriculture, so careful and intensive, wants extra hands. There are always too many agricultural labourers for the ordinary, and always too few for the exceptional or temporary needs of the cultivation of the soil. [\[108\]](#) Hence we find in the official documents contradictory complaints from the same places of deficiency and excess of labour simultaneously. The temporary or local want of labour brings about no rise in wages, but a forcing of the women and children into the fields, and exploitation at an age constantly lowered. As soon as the exploitation of the women and children takes place on a larger scale, it becomes in turn a new means of making a surplus population of the male agricultural labourer and of keeping down his wage. In the east of England thrives a beautiful fruit of this vicious circle — the so-called gang-system, to which I must briefly return here. [\[109\]](#)

The gang-system obtains almost exclusively in the counties of Lincoln, Huntingdon, Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Nottingham, here and there in the neighbouring counties of Northampton, Bedford, and Rutland. Lincolnshire will serve us as an example. A large part of this county is new land, marsh formerly, or even, as in others of the eastern counties just named, won lately from the sea. The steam-engine has worked wonders in the way of drainage. What were once fens and sandbanks, bear now a luxuriant sea of corn and the highest of rents. The same thing holds of the alluvial lands won by human endeavour, as in the island of Axholme and other parishes on the banks of the Trent. In proportion as the new farms arose, not only were no new cottages built: old ones were demolished, and the supply of labour had to come from open villages, miles away, by long roads that wound along the sides of the hills. There alone had the population formerly found shelter from the incessant floods of the winter-time. The labourers that dwell on the farms of 400-1,000 acres (they are called “confined labourers”) are solely employed on such kinds of agricultural work as is permanent, difficult, and carried on by aid of horses. For every 100 acres there is, on an average, scarcely one cottage. A fen farmer, e.g., gave evidence before the Commission of Inquiry:

“I farm 320 acres, all arable land. I have not one cottage on my farm. I have only one labourer on my farm now. I have four horsemen lodging about. We get light work done by gangs.”

[\[110\]](#)

The soil requires much light field labour, such as weeding,



hoeing, certain processes of manuring, removing of stones, &c. This is done by the gangs, or organised bands that dwell in the open villages.

The gang consists of 10 to 40 or 50 persons, women, young persons of both sexes (13-18 years of age, although the boys are for the most part eliminated at the age of 13), and children of both sexes (6-13 years of age). At the head is the gang-master, always an ordinary agricultural labourer, generally what is called a bad lot, a scapegrace, unsteady, drunken, but with a dash of enterprise and *savoir-faire*. He is the recruiting-sergeant for the gang, which works under him, not under the farmer. He generally arranges with the latter for piece-work, and his income, which on the average is not very much above that of an ordinary agricultural labourer, [\[111\]](#) depends almost entirely upon the dexterity with which he manages to extract within the shortest time the greatest possible amount of labour from his gang. The farmers have discovered that women work steadily only under the direction of men, but that women and children, once set going, impetuously spend their life-force — as Fourier knew — while the adult male labourer is shrewd enough to economise his as much as he can. The gang-master goes from one farm to another, and thus employs his gang from 6 to 8 months in the year. Employment by him is, therefore, much more lucrative and more certain for the labouring families, than employment by the individual farmer, who only employs children occasionally. This circumstance so completely rivets his influence in the open villages that children are generally only to be hired through his instrumentality. The lending out of these individually,

independently of the gang, is his second trade.

The “drawbacks” of the system are the overwork of the children and young persons, the enormous marches that they make daily to and from the farms, 5, 6, and sometimes 7 miles distant, finally, the demoralisation of the gang. Although the gang-master, who, in some districts is called “the driver,” is armed with a long stick, he uses it but seldom, and complaints of brutal treatment are exceptional. He is a democratic emperor, or a kind of Pied Piper of Hamelin. He must therefore be popular with his subjects, and he binds them to himself by the charms of the gipsy life under his direction. Coarse freedom, a noisy jollity, and obscenest impudence give attractions to the gang. Generally the gangmaster pays up in a public house; then he returns home at the head of the procession reeling drunk, propped up right and left by a stalwart virago, while children and young persons bring up the rear, boisterous, and singing chaffing and bawdy songs. On the return journey what Fourier calls “phanerogamie,” is the order of the day. The getting with child of girls of 13 and 14 by their male companions of the same age, is common. The open villages which supply the contingent of the gang, become Sodoms and Gomorrahs, [\[112\]](#) and have twice as high a rate of illegitimate births as the rest of the kingdom. The moral character of girls bred in these schools, when married women, was shown above. Their children, when opium does not give them the finishing stroke, are born recruits of the gang.

The gang in its classical form just described, is called the public, common, or tramping gang. For there are also private

gangs. These are made up in the same way as the common gang, but count fewer members, and work, not under a gang-master, but under some old farm servant, whom the farmer does not know how to employ in any better way. The gipsy fun has vanished here, but according to all witnesses, the payment and treatment of the children is worse.

The gang-system, which during the last years has steadily increased, [\[113\]](#) clearly does not exist for the sake of the gang-master. It exists for the enrichment of the large farmers, [\[114\]](#) and indirectly of the landlords. [\[115\]](#) For the farmer there is no more ingenious method of keeping his labourers well below the normal level, and yet of always having an extra hand ready for extra work, of extracting the greatest possible amount of labour with the least possible amount of money [\[116\]](#) and of making adult male labour “redundant.” From the exposition already made, it will be understood why, on the one hand, a greater or less lack of employment for the agricultural labourer is admitted, while on the other, the gang-system is at the same time declared “necessary” on account of the want of adult male labour and its migration to the towns. [\[117\]](#) The cleanly weeded land, and the uncleanly human weeds, of Lincolnshire, are pole and counterpole of capitalistic production. [\[118\]](#)

## **F. Ireland**

In concluding this section, we must travel for a moment to Ireland. First, the main facts of the case.

The population of Ireland had, in 1841, reached 8,222,664; in

1851, it had dwindled to 6,623,985; in 1861, to 5,850,309; in 1866, to 5½ millions, nearly to its level in 1801. The diminution began with the famine year, 1846, so that Ireland, in less than twenty years, lost more than 5/16 ths of its people.

[\[119\]](#) Its total emigration from May, 1851, to July, 1865, numbered 1,591,487: the emigration during the years 1861-1865 was more than half-a-million. The number of inhabited houses fell, from 1851-1861, by 52,990. From 1851-1861, the number of holdings of 15 to 30 acres increased 61,000, that of holdings over 30 acres, 109,000, whilst the total number of all farms fell 120,000, a fall, therefore, solely due to the suppression of farms under 15 acres — *i.e.*, to their centralisation.

LIVE-STOCK					
Year	Horses		Cattle		
	Total Number	Decrease	Total Number	Decrease	Increase
1860	619,811	—	3,606,374	—	—
1861	614,232	5,579	3,471,688	134,686	—
1862	602,894	11,338	3,254,890	216,798	—
1863	579,978	22,916	3,144,231	110,659	—
1864	562,158	17,820	3,262,294	—	118,063
1865	547,867	14,291	3,493,414	—	231,120

The decrease of the population was naturally accompanied by a decrease in the mass of products. For our purpose, it suffices to consider the 5 years from 1861-1865 during which over half-a-million emigrated, and the absolute number of people sank by more than 1/3 of a million. From the above table it results: —

<b>Horses</b>	<b>Cattle</b>	<b>Sheep</b>	<b>Pigs</b>
Absolute Decrease	Absolute Decrease	Absolute Increase	Absolute Increase
71,944	112,960	146,662	28,8211 <sup>[120]</sup>

Let us now turn to agriculture, which yields the means of subsistence for cattle and for men. In the following table is calculated the decrease or increase for each separate year, as compared with its immediate predecessor. The Cereal Crops include wheat, oats, barley, rye, beans, and peas; the Green Crops, potatoes, turnips, marigolds, beet-root, cabbages, carrots, parsnips, vetches, &c.

<i>Table B</i>					
<b>INCREASE OR DECREASE IN THE AREA UNDER C</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>Cereal Crops</b>	<b>Green Crops</b>		<b>Grass and Clover</b>	
	Decrease (Acres)	Decrease (Acres)	Increase (Acres)	Decrease (Acres)	Increase (Acres)

<b>1861</b>	15,701	36,974	—	47,969	—
<b>1862</b>	72,734	74,785	—	—	6,623
<b>1863</b>	144,719	19,358	—	—	7,724
<b>1864</b>	122,437	2,317	—	—	47,486
<b>1865</b>	72,450	—	25,241	—	68,970
<b>1861-65</b>	428,041	108,193	—	—	82,834

In the year 1865, 127,470 additional acres came under the heading “grass land,” chiefly because the area under the heading of “bog and waste unoccupied,” decreased by 101,543 acres. If we compare 1865 with 1864, there is a decrease in cereals of 246,667 qrs., of which 48,999 were wheat, 160,605 oats, 29,892 barley, &c.: the decrease in potatoes was 446,398 tons, although the area of their cultivation increased in 1865.

From the movement of population and the agricultural produce of Ireland, we pass to the movement in the purse of its landlords, larger farmers, and industrial capitalists. It is reflected in the rise and fall of the Income-tax. It may be remembered that Schedule D. (profits with the exception of those of farmers), includes also the so-called, “professional” profits — *i.e.*, the incomes of lawyers, doctors, &c.; and the Schedules C. and E., in which no special details are given, include the incomes of employees, officers, State sinecurists, State fundholders, &c.

<i>Table</i>
<b>INCREASE OR DECREASE IN THE AREA UNDER C</b>

PRODUCT PER ACRE, AND TOTAL PRODUCT OF 1864					
Product	Acres of Cultivated Land				Product per Acre
	1864	1865	Increase or Decrease, 1865		1864
Wheat	276,483	266,989	—	9,494	cwt., 13.3
Oats	1,814,886	1,745,228	—	69,658	cwt., 12.1
Barley	172,700	177,102	4,402	—	cwt., 15.9
Bere	8,894	10,091	1,197	—	cwt., 16.4
Rye					cwt., 8.5
Potatoes	1,039,724	1,066,260	26,536	—	tons, 4.1
Turnips	337,355	334,212	—	3,143	tons, 10.3
Mangold-wurzel	14,073	14,389	316	—	tons, 10.5
Cabbages	31,821	33,622	1,801	—	tons,

					9.3
<b>Flax</b>	301,693	251,433	—	50,260	st. (14 lb.) 34.2
<b>Hay</b>	1,609,569	1,678,493	68,9241	—	tons, 1.6

<i>Table D</i>				
<b>THE INCOME-TAX ON THE SUBJOINED INCOMES</b> (Tenth Report of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, London, 1863)				
	<b>1860</b>	<b>1861</b>	<b>1862</b>	<b>1863</b>
<i>Schedule</i> <b>A.</b> <b>Rent of</b> <b>Land</b>	13,893,829	13,003,554	13,398,938	13,494,000
<i>Schedule</i> <b>B.</b> <b>Farmers’</b> <b>Profits.</b>	2,765,387	2,773,644	2,937,899	2,938,900
<i>Schedule</i> <b>D.</b> <b>Industrial,</b> <b>&amp;c.,</b> <b>Profits</b>	4,891,652	4,836,203	4,858,800	4,846,400



<b>Total Schedules A to E</b>	22,962,885	22,998,394	23,597,574	23,658,000
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Under Schedule D., the average annual increase of income from 1853-1864 was only 0.93; whilst, in the same period, in Great Britain, it was 4.58. The following table shows the distribution of the profits (with the exception of those of farmers) for the years 1864 and 1865: —

<i>Table E</i> <a href="#">[122]</a>		
<b>SCHEDULE D.</b>		
<b>INCOME FROM PROFITS (OVER £60) IN IRELAND</b>		
	<b>1864</b> £	<b>1865</b> £
Total yearly income of	4,368,610 divided among 17,467 persons.	4,669,979 divided among 18,081 persons.
Yearly income over £60 and under £100	238,726 divided among 5,015 persons.	222,575 divided among 4,703 persons.
Of the yearly total income	1,979,066 divided among 11,321 persons.	2,028,571 divided among 12,184 persons.
Remainder of the total yearly	2,150,818 divided among 1,131 persons.	2,418,833 divided among 1,194 persons.

income		
Of these		
	1,073,906 divided among 1,010 persons.	1,097,927 divided among 1,044 persons.
	1,076,912 divided among 121 persons.	1,320,906 divided among 150 persons.
	430,535 divided among 95 persons.	584,458 divided among 2 persons.
	646,377 divided among 26	736,448 divided among 28
	262,819 divided among 3	274,528 divided among 3

England, a country with fully developed capitalist production, and pre-eminently industrial, would have bled to death with such a drain of population as Ireland has suffered. But Ireland is at present only an agricultural district of England, marked off by a wide channel from the country to which it yields corn, wool, cattle, industrial and military recruits.

The depopulation of Ireland has thrown much of the land out of cultivation, has greatly diminished the produce of the soil, [\[123\]](#) and, in spite of the greater area devoted to cattle breeding, has brought about, in some of its branches, an absolute diminution, in others, an advance scarcely worthy of mention, and constantly interrupted by retrogressions.

Nevertheless, with the fall in numbers of the population, rents and farmers' profits rose, although the latter not as steadily as the former. The reason of this is easily comprehensible. On the one hand, with the throwing of small holdings into large ones, and the change of arable into pasture land, a larger part of the whole produce was transformed into surplus-produce. The surplus-produce increased, although the total produce, of which it formed a fraction, decreased. On the other hand, the money value of this surplus-produce increased yet more rapidly than its mass, in consequence of the rise in the English market price of meat, wool, &c., during the last 20, and especially during the last 10, years.

The scattered means of production that serve the producers themselves as means of employment and of subsistence, without expanding their own value by the incorporation of the labour of others, are no more capital than a product consumed by its own producer is a commodity. If, with the mass of the population, that of the means of production employed in agriculture also diminished, the mass of the capital employed in agriculture increased, because a part of the means of production that were formerly scattered, was concentrated and turned into capital.

The total capital of Ireland outside agriculture, employed in industry and trade, accumulated during the last two decades slowly, and with great and constantly recurring fluctuations; so much the more rapidly did the concentration of its individual constituents develop. And, however small its absolute increase, in proportion to the dwindling population it had increased largely.

Here, then, under our own eyes and on a large scale, a process is revealed, than which nothing more excellent could be wished for by orthodox economy for the support of its dogma: that misery springs from absolute surplus population, and that equilibrium is re-established by depopulation. This is a far more important experiment than was the plague in the middle of the 14th century so belauded of Malthusians. Note further: If only the naïveté of the schoolmaster could apply, to the conditions of production and population of the nineteenth century, the standard of the 14th, this naïveté, into the bargain, overlooked the fact that whilst, after the plague and the decimation that accompanied it, followed on this side of the Channel, in England, enfranchisement and enrichment of the agricultural population, on that side, in France, followed greater servitude and more misery. [\[124\]](#)

The Irish famine of 1846 killed more than 1,000,000 people, but it killed poor devils only. To the wealth of the country it did not the slightest damage. The exodus of the next 20 years, an exodus still constantly increasing, did not, as, *e.g.*, the Thirty Years' War, decimate, along with the human beings, their means of production. Irish genius discovered an altogether new way of spiriting a poor people thousands of miles away from the scene of its misery. The exiles transplanted to the United States, send home sums of money every year as travelling expenses for those left behind. Every troop that emigrates one year, draws another after it the next. Thus, instead of costing Ireland anything, emigration forms one of the most lucrative branches of its export trade. Finally, it is a systematic process, which does not simply make a

passing gap in the population, but sucks out of it every year more people than are replaced by the births, so that the absolute level of the population falls year by year. [\[125\]](#)

What were the consequences for the Irish labourers left behind and freed from the surplus population? That the relative surplus population is today as great as before 1846; that wages are just as low, that the oppression of the labourers has increased, that misery is forcing the country towards a new crisis. The facts are simple. The revolution in agriculture has kept pace with emigration. The production of relative surplus population has more than kept pace with the absolute depopulation. A glance at table C. shows that the change of arable to pasture land must work yet more acutely in Ireland than in England. In England the cultivation of green crops increases with the breeding of cattle; in Ireland, it decreases. Whilst a large number of acres, that were formerly tilled, lie idle or are turned permanently into grass-land, a great part of the waste land and peat bogs that were unused formerly, become of service for the extension of cattle-breeding. The smaller and medium farmers — I reckon among these all who do not cultivate more than 100 acres — still make up about 8/10ths of the whole number. [\[126\]](#) They are one after the other, and with a degree of force unknown before, crushed by the competition of an agriculture managed by capital, and therefore they continually furnish new recruits to the class of wage labourers. The one great industry of Ireland, linen-manufacture, requires relatively few adult men and only employs altogether, in spite of its expansion since the price of cotton rose in 1861-1866, a comparatively insignificant part of

the population. Like all other great modern industries, it constantly produces, by incessant fluctuations, a relative surplus population within its own sphere, even with an absolute increase in the mass of human beings absorbed by it. The misery of the agricultural population forms the pedestal for gigantic shirt-factories, whose armies of labourers are, for the most part, scattered over the country. Here, we encounter again the system described above of domestic industry, which in underpayment and overwork, possesses its own systematic means for creating supernumerary labourers. Finally, although the depopulation has not such destructive consequences as would result in a country with fully developed capitalistic production, it does not go on without constant reaction upon the home-market. The gap which emigration causes here, limits not only the local demand for labour, but also the incomes of small shopkeepers, artisans, tradespeople generally. Hence the diminution in incomes between £60 and £100 in Table E.

A clear statement of the condition of the agricultural labourers in Ireland is to be found in the Reports of the Irish Poor Law Inspectors (1870). [\[127\]](#) Officials of a government which is maintained only by bayonets and by a state of siege, now open, now disguised, they have to observe all the precautions of language that their colleagues in England disdain. In spite of this, however, they do not let their government cradle itself in illusions. According to them the rate of wages in the country, still very low, has within the last 20 years risen 50-60 per cent., and stands now, on the average, at 6s. to 9s. per week. But behind this apparent rise, is hidden an actual fall in

wages, for it does not correspond at all to the rise in price of the necessary means of subsistence that has taken place in the meantime. For proof, the following extract from the official accounts of an Irish workhouse.

<b>AVERAGE WEEKLY COST PER HEAD</b>			
<b>Year ended</b>	<b>Provisions and Necessaries.</b>	<b>Clothing.</b>	<b>TOTAL.</b>
29th Sept., 1849.	1s. 3 1/4d.	3d.	1s. 6 1/4d.
29th Sept., 1869.	2s. 7 1/4d.	6d.	3s. 1 1/4d.

The price of the necessary means of subsistence is therefore fully twice, and that of clothing exactly twice, as much as they were 20 years before.

Even apart from this disproportion, the mere comparison of the rate of wages expressed in gold would give a result far from accurate. Before the famine, the great mass of agricultural wages were paid in kind, only the smallest part in money; today, payment in money is the rule. From this it follows that, whatever the amount of the real wage, its money rate must rise.

“Previous to the famine, the labourer enjoyed his cabin ... with a rood, or half-acre or acre of land, and facilities for ... a crop of potatoes. He was able to rear his pig and keep fowl.... But they now have to buy bread, and they have no refuse upon which they can feed a pig or fowl, and they have consequently no benefit from the sale of a pig, fowl, or eggs.” [\[128\]](#)

In fact, formerly, the agricultural labourers were but the

smallest of the small farmers, and formed for the most part a kind of rear-guard of the medium and large farms on which they found employment. Only since the catastrophe of 1846 have they begun to form a fraction of the class of purely wage labourers, a special class, connected with its wage-masters only by monetary relations.

We know what were the conditions of their dwellings in 1846. Since then they have grown yet worse. A part of the agricultural labourers, which, however, grows less day by day, dwells still on the holdings of the farmers in over-crowded huts, whose hideousness far surpasses the worst that the English agricultural labourers offered us in this way. And this holds generally with the exception of certain tracts of Ulster; in the south, in the counties of Cork, Limerick, Kilkenny, &c.; in the east, in Wicklow, Wexford, &c.; in the centre of Ireland, in King's and Queen's County, Dublin, &c.; in the west, in Sligo, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, &c.

“The agricultural labourers' huts,” an inspector cries out, “are a disgrace to the Christianity and to the civilisation of this country.” [\[129\]](#)

In order to increase the attractions of these holes for the labourers, the pieces of land belonging thereto from time immemorial, are systematically confiscated.

“The mere sense that they exist subject to this species of ban, on the part of the landlords and their agents, has ... given birth in the minds of the labourers to corresponding sentiments of antagonism and dissatisfaction towards those by whom they are thus led to regard themselves as being treated as ... a



proscribed race.” [\[130\]](#)

The first act of the agricultural revolution was to sweep away the huts situated on the field of labour. This was done on the largest scale, and as if in obedience to a command from on high. Thus many labourers were compelled to seek shelter in villages and towns. There they were thrown like refuse into garrets, holes, cellars and corners, in the worst back slums. Thousands of Irish families, who according to the testimony of the English, eaten up as these are with national prejudice, are notable for their rare attachment to the domestic hearth, for their gaiety and the purity of their home-life, found themselves suddenly transplanted into hotbeds of vice. The men are now obliged to seek work of the neighbouring farmers and are only hired by the day, and therefore under the most precarious form of wage. Hence

“they sometimes have long distances to go to and from work, often get wet, and suffer much hardship, not unfrequently ending in sickness, disease and want.” [\[131\]](#)

“ The towns have had to receive from year to year what was deemed to be the surplus-labour of the rural division;” [\[132\]](#) and then people still wonder “there is still a surplus of labour in the towns and villages, and either a scarcity or a threatened scarcity in some of the country divisions.” [\[133\]](#) The truth is that this want only becomes perceptible “in harvest-time, or during spring, or at such times as agricultural operations are carried on with activity; at other periods of the year many hands are idle;” [\[134\]](#) that “from the digging out of the main

crop of potatoes in October until the early spring following ... there is no employment for them;” [\[135\]](#) and further, that during the active times they “are subject to broken days and to all kinds of interruptions.” [\[136\]](#)

These results of the agricultural revolution — *i.e.*, the change of arable into pasture land, the use of machinery, the most rigorous economy of labour, &c., are still further aggravated by the model landlords, who, instead of spending their rents in other countries, condescend to live in Ireland on their demesnes. In order that the law of supply and demand may not be broken, these gentlemen draw their

“labour-supply ... chiefly from their small tenants, who are obliged to attend when required to do the landlord’s work, at rates of wages, in many instances, considerably under the current rates paid to ordinary labourers, and without regard to the inconvenience or loss to the tenant of being obliged to neglect his own business at critical periods of sowing or reaping.” [\[137\]](#)

The uncertainty and irregularity of employment, the constant return and long duration of gluts of labour, all these symptoms of a relative surplus population, figure therefore in the reports of the Poor Law administration, as so many hardships of the agricultural proletariat. It will be remembered that we met, in the English agricultural proletariat, with a similar spectacle. But the difference is that in England, an industrial country, the industrial reserve recruits itself from the country districts, whilst in Ireland, an agricultural country, the agricultural reserve recruits itself from the towns, the cities of refuge of the

expelled agricultural labourers. In the former, the supernumeraries of agriculture are transformed into factory operatives; in the latter, those forced into the towns, whilst at the same time they press on the wages in towns, remain agricultural labourers, and are constantly sent back to the country districts in search of work.

The official inspectors sum up the material condition of the agricultural labourer as follows:

“Though living with the strictest frugality, his own wages are barely sufficient to provide food for an ordinary family and pay his rent” and he depends upon other sources for the means of clothing himself, his wife, and children.... The atmosphere of these cabins, combined with the other privations they are subjected to, has made this class particularly susceptible to low fever and pulmonary consumption.” [\[138\]](#)

After this, it is no wonder that, according to the unanimous testimony of the inspectors, a sombre discontent runs through the ranks of this class, that they long for the return of the past, loathe the present, despair of the future, give themselves up “to the evil influence of agitators,” and have only one fixed idea, to emigrate to America. This is the land of Cockaigne, into which the great Malthusian panacea, depopulation, has transformed green Erin.

What a happy life the Irish factory operative leads one example will show:

“On my recent visit to the North of Ireland,” says the English Factory Inspector, Robert Baker, “I met with the following

evidence of effort in an Irish skilled workman to afford education to his children; and I give his evidence verbatim, as I took it from his mouth. That he was a skilled factory hand, may be understood when I say that he was employed on goods for the Manchester market. ‘Johnson. — I am a beetler and work from 6 in the morning till 11 at night, from Monday to Friday. Saturday we leave off at 6 p. m., and get three hours of it (for meals and rest). I have five children in all. For this work I get 10s. 6d. a week; my wife works here also, and gets 5s. a week. The oldest girl who is 12, minds the house. She is also cook, and all the servant we have. She gets the young ones ready for school. A girl going past the house wakes me at half past five in the morning. My wife gets up and goes along with me. We get nothing (to eat) before we come to work. The child of 12 takes care of the little children all the day, and we get nothing till breakfast at eight. At eight we go home. We get tea once a week; at other times we get stirabout, sometimes of oatmeal, sometimes of Indian meal, as we are able to get it. In the winter we get a little sugar and water to our Indian meal. In the summer we get a few potatoes, planting a small patch ourselves; and when they are done we get back to stirabout. Sometimes we get a little milk as it may be. So we go on from day to day, Sunday and week day, always the same the year round. I am always very much tired when I have done at night. We may see a bit of flesh meat sometimes, but very seldom. Three of our children attend school, for whom we pay 1d. a week a head. Our rent is 9d. a week. Peat for firing costs 1s. 6d. a fortnight at the very lowest.’” [\[139\]](#)

Such are Irish wages, such is Irish life!

In fact the misery of Ireland is again the topic of the day in England. At the end of 1866 and the beginning of 1867, one of the Irish land magnates, Lord Dufferin, set about its solution in *The Times*. “Wie menschlich von solch grossem Herrn!”

From Table E. we saw that, during 1864, of £4,368,610 of total profits, three surplus-value makers pocketed only £262,819; that in 1865, however, out of £4,669,979 total profits, the same three virtuosi of “abstinence” pocketed £274,528; in 1864, 26 surplus-value makers reached to £646,377; in 1865, 28 surplus-value makers reached to £736,448; in 1864, 121 surplus-value makers, £1,076,912; in 1865, 150 surplus-value makers, £1,320,906; in 1864, 1,131 surplus-value makers £2,150,818, nearly half of the total annual profit; in 1865, 1,194 surplus-value makers, £2,418,833, more than half of the total annual profit. But the lion’s share, which an inconceivably small number of land magnates in England, Scotland and Ireland swallow up of the yearly national rental, is so monstrous that the wisdom of the English State does not think fit to afford the same statistical materials about the distribution of rents as about the distribution of profits. Lord Dufferin is one of those land magnates. That rent-rolls and profits can ever be “excessive,” or that their plethora is in any way connected with plethora of the people’s misery is, of course, an idea as “disreputable” as “unsound.” He keeps to facts. The fact is that, as the Irish population diminishes, the Irish rent-rolls swell; that depopulation benefits the landlords, therefore also benefits the soil, and, therefore, the people, that mere accessory of the soil. He declares, therefore, that Ireland is still over-populated, and

the stream of emigration still flows too lazily. To be perfectly happy, Ireland must get rid of at least one-third of a million of labouring men. Let no man imagine that this lord, poetic into the bargain, is a physician of the school of Sangrado, who as often as he did not find his patient better, ordered phlebotomy and again phlebotomy, until the patient lost his sickness at the same time as his blood. Lord Dufferin demands a new blood-letting of one-third of a million only, instead of about two millions; in fact, without the getting rid of these, the millennium in Erin is not to be. The proof is easily given.

<b>NUMBER AND EXTENT OF FARMS IN IRELAND</b> <b>IN 1864</b> <a href="#">[140]</a>		
	<b>No.</b>	<b>Acres</b>
(1) Farms not over 1 acre.	48,653	25,394
(2) Farms over 1, not over 5 acres.	82,037	288,916
(3) Farms over 5, not over 15 acres.	176,368	1,836,310
(4) Farms over 15, not over 30 acres.	136,578	3,051,343
(5) Farms over 30, not over 50 acres.	71,961	2,906,274
(6) Farms over 50, not over 100 acres.	54,247	3,983,880

(7) Farms over 100 acres.	31,927	8,227,807
(8) TOTAL AREA.	—	26,319,924

Centralisation has from 1851 to 1861 destroyed principally farms of the first three categories, under 1 and not over 15 acres. These above all must disappear. This gives 307,058 “supernumerary” farmers, and reckoning the families the low average of 4 persons, 1,228,232 persons. On the extravagant supposition that, after the agricultural revolution is complete one-fourth of these are again absorbable, there remain for emigration 921,174 persons. Categories 4, 5, 6, of over 15 and not over 100 acres, are, as was known long since in England, too small for capitalistic cultivation of corn, and for sheep-breeding are almost vanishing quantities. On the same supposition as before, therefore, there are further 788,761 persons to emigrate; total, 1,709,532. And as l’appétit vient en mangeant, Rentroll’s eyes will soon discover that Ireland, with 3½ millions, is still always miserable, and miserable because she is overpopulated. Therefore her depopulation must go yet further, that thus she may fulfil her true destiny, that of an English sheep-walk and cattle-pasture.” [\[141\]](#)

Like all good things in this bad world, this profitable method has its drawbacks. With the accumulation of rents in Ireland, the accumulation of the Irish in America keeps pace. The Irishman, banished by sheep and ox, re-appears on the other side of the ocean as a Fenian, and face to face with the old queen of the seas rises, threatening and more threatening, the

young giant Republic:

*Acerba fata Romanos agunt*

*Scelusque fraternae necis.*

[A cruel fate torments the Romans,  
and the crime of fratricide]

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## Footnotes

[1.](#) Karl Marx, l. c., “A égalité d’oppression des masses, plus un pays a de prolétaires et plus il est riche.” (Colins, “L’Economie Politique. Source des Révolutions et des Utopies, prétendues Socialistes.” Paris, 1857, t. III., p. 331.) Our “proletarian” is economically none other than the wage labourer, who produces and increases capital, and is thrown out on the streets, as soon as he is superfluous for the needs of aggrandisement of “Monsieur capital,” as Pecqueur calls this person. “The sickly proletarian of the primitive forest,” is a pretty Roscherian fancy. The primitive forester is owner of the primitive forest, and uses the primitive forest as his property with the freedom of an orang-outang. He is not, therefore, a proletarian. This would only be the case, if the primitive forest exploited him, instead of being exploited by him. As far as his health is concerned, such a man would well bear comparison, not only with the modern proletarian, but also with the syphilitic and scrofulous upper classes. But, no doubt, Herr Wilhelm Roscher, by “primitive forest” means his native heath of Lüneburg.

[2.](#) John Bellers, l. c., p. 2.



[3.](#) Bernard de Mandeville: “The Fable of the Bees,” 5th edition, London, 1728. Remarks, pp. 212, 213, 328.

“Temperate living and constant employment is the direct road, for the poor, to rational happiness” [by which he most probably means long working-days and little means of subsistence], “and to riches and strength for the state” (*viz.*, for the landlords, capitalists, and their political dignitaries and agents). (“An Essay on Trade and Commerce,” London, 1770, p. 54.)

[4.](#) Eden should have asked, whose creatures then are “the civil institutions”? From his standpoint of juridical illusion, he does not regard the law as a product of the material relations of production, but conversely the relations of production as products of the law. Linguet overthrew Montesquieu’s illusory “*Esprit des lois*” with one word: “*L’esprit des lois, c’est la propriété.*” [The spirit of laws is property]

[5.](#) Eden, l. c., Vol. 1, book I., chapter 1, pp. 1, 2, and preface, p. xx.

[6.](#) If the reader reminds me of Malthus, whose “Essay on Population” appeared in 1798, I remind him that this work in its first form is nothing more than a schoolboyish, superficial plagiarism of De Foe, Sir James Steuart, Townsend, Franklin, Wallace, &c., and does not contain a single sentence thought out by himself. The great sensation this pamphlet caused, was due solely to party interest. The French Revolution had found passionate defenders in the United Kingdom; the “principle of population,” slowly worked out in the eighteenth century, and then, in the midst of a great social crisis, proclaimed with

drums and trumpets as the infallible antidote to the teachings of Condorcet, &c., was greeted with jubilation by the English oligarchy as the great destroyer of all hankerings after human development. Malthus, hugely astonished at his success, gave himself to stuffing into his book materials superficially compiled, and adding to it new matter, not discovered but annexed by him. Note further: Although Malthus was a parson of the English State Church, he had taken the monastic vow of celibacy — one of the conditions of holding a Fellowship in Protestant Cambridge University: “Socios collegiorum maritos esse non permittimus, sed statim postquam quis uxorem duxerit socius collegii desinat esse.” (“Reports of Cambridge University Commission,” p. 172.) This circumstance favourably distinguishes Malthus from the other Protestant parsons, who have shuffled off the command enjoining celibacy of the priesthood and have taken, “Be fruitful and multiply,” as their special Biblical mission in such a degree that they generally contribute to the increase of population to a really unbecoming extent, whilst they preach at the same time to the labourers the “principle of population.” It is characteristic that the economic fall of man, the Adam’s apple, the urgent appetite, “the checks which tend to blunt the shafts of Cupid,” as Parson Townsend waggishly puts it, that this delicate question was and is monopolised by the Reverends of Protestant Theology, or rather of the Protestant Church. With the exception of the Venetian monk, Ortes, an original and clever writer, most of the population theory teachers are Protestant parsons. For instance, Bruckner, “Théorie du Système animal,” Leyde, 1767, in which the whole subject of

the modern population theory is exhausted, and to which the passing quarrel between Quesnay and his pupil, the elder Mirabeau, furnished ideas on the same topic; then Parson Wallace, Parson Townsend, Parson Malthus and his pupil, the arch-Parson Thomas Chalmers, to say nothing of lesser reverend scribblers in this line. Originally, Political Economy was studied by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Hume; by businessmen and statesmen, like Thomas More, Temple, Sully, De Witt, North, Law, Vanderlint, Cantillon, Franklin; and especially, and with the greatest success, by medical men like Petty, Barbon, Mandeville, Quesnay. Even in the middle of the eighteenth century, the Rev. Mr. Tucker, a notable economist of his time, excused himself for meddling with the things of Mammon. Later on, and in truth with this very “Principle of population,” struck the hour of the Protestant parsons. Petty, who regarded the population as the basis of wealth, and was, like Adam Smith, an outspoken foe to parsons, says, as if he had a presentiment of their bungling interference, “that Religion best flourishes when the Priests are most mortified, as was before said of the Law, which best flourisheth when lawyers have least to do.” He advises the Protestant priests, therefore, if they, once for all, will not follow the Apostle Paul and “mortify” themselves by celibacy, “not to breed more Churchmen than the Benefices, as they now stand shared out, will receive, that is to say, if there be places for about twelve thousand in England and Wales, it will not be safe to breed up 24,000 ministers, for then the twelve thousand which are unprovided for, will seek ways how to get themselves a livelihood, which they cannot do more easily than by

persuading the people that the twelve thousand incumbents do poison or starve their souls, and misguide them in their way to Heaven.” (Petty: “A Treatise of Taxes and Contributions,” London, 1667, p. 57.) Adam Smith’s position with the Protestant priesthood of his time is shown by the following. In “A Letter to A. Smith, L.L.D. On the Life, Death, and Philosophy of his Friend, David Hume. By one of the People called Christians,” 4th Edition, Oxford, 1784, Dr. Horne, Bishop of Norwich, reproves Adam Smith, because in a published letter to Mr. Strahan, he “embalmed his friend David” (sc. Hume); because he told the world how “Hume amused himself on his deathbed with Lucian and Whist,” and because he even had the impudence to write of Hume: “I have always considered him, both in his life-time and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as, perhaps, the nature of human frailty will permit.” The bishop cries out, in a passion: “Is it right in you, Sir, to hold up to our view as ‘perfectly wise and virtuous,’ the *character* and *conduct* of one, who seems to have been possessed with an incurable antipathy to all that is called *Religion*; and who strained every nerve to explode, suppress and extirpate the spirit of it among men, that its very name, if he could effect it, might no more be had in remembrance?” (l. c., p. 8.) “But let not the lovers of truth be discouraged. Atheism cannot be of long continuance.” (P. 17.) Adam Smith, “had the atrocious wickedness to propagate atheism through the land (viz., by his “Theory of Moral Sentiments”). Upon the whole, Doctor, your meaning is good; but I think you will not succeed this time. You would persuade us, by the example of

*David Hume, Esq.*, that atheism is the only cordial for low spirits, and the proper antidote against the fear of death.... You may smile over *Babylon* in ruins and congratulate the hardened *Pharaoh* on his overthrow in the Red Sea.” (l. c., pp. 21, 22.) One orthodox individual, amongst Adam Smith’s college friends, writes after his death: “Smith’s well-placed affection for Hume ... hindered him from being a Christian.... When he met with honest men whom he liked ... he would believe almost anything they said. Had he been a friend of the worthy ingenious Horrox he would have believed that the moon some times disappeared in a clear sky without the interposition of a cloud.... He approached to republicanism in his political principles.” (“The Bee.” By James Anderson, 18 Vols., Vol. 3, pp. 166, 165, Edinburgh, 1791-93.) Parson Thomas Chalmers has his suspicions as to Adam Smith having invented the category of “unproductive labourers,” solely for the Protestant parsons, in spite of their blessed work in the vineyard of the Lord.

[7.](#) “The limit, however, to the employment of both the operative and the labourer is the same; namely, the possibility of the employer realising a *profit* on the produce of their industry. If the rate of wages is such as to reduce the master’s gains below the average profit of capital, he will cease to employ them, or he will only employ them on condition of submission to a reduction of wages.” (John Wade, l. c., p. 241.)

[8.](#) Note by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism to the Russian edition: The MS in the first case says “little” and in the second case “much”; the correction has been introduced according to

the authorised French translation.

[9.](#) Cf. Karl Marx: “Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie,” pp. 166, seq.

[10.](#) “If we now return to our first inquiry, wherein it was shown that capital itself is only the result of human labour... it seems quite incomprehensible that man can have fallen under the domination of capital, his own product; can be subordinated to it; and as in reality this is beyond dispute the case, involuntarily the question arises: How has the labourer been able to pass from being master of capital — as its creator — to being its slave?” (Von Thünen, “Der isolierte Staat” Part ii., Section ii., Rostock, 1863, pp. 5, 6.) It is Thünen’s merit to have asked this question. His answer is simply childish.

[11.](#) From Adam Smith, *Enquiry into the Nature of ....*, Volume I.

[12.](#) *Note in the 4th German edition.* — The latest English and American “trusts” are already striving to attain this goal by attempting to unite at least all the large-scale concerns in one branch of industry into one great joint-stock company with a practical monopoly. *F. E.*

[13.](#) *Note in the 3rd German edition.* — In Marx’s copy there is here the marginal note: “Here note for working out later; if the extension is only quantitative, then for a greater and a smaller capital in the same branch of business the profits are as the magnitudes of the capitals advanced. If the quantitative extension induces qualitative change, then the rate of profit on the larger capital rises simultaneously.” *F. E.*

[14.](#) The census of England and Wales shows: all persons employed in agriculture (landlords, farmers, gardeners, shepherds, &c., included): 1851, 2,011,447; 1861, 1,924,110. Fall, 87,337. Worsted manufacture: 1851, 102,714 persons; 1861, 79,242. Silk weaving: 1851, 111,940; 1861, 101,678. Calico-printing: 1851, 12,098; 1861, 12,556. A small rise that, in the face of the enormous extension of this industry and implying a great fall proportionally in the number of labourers employed. Hat-making: 1851, 15,957; 1861, 13,814. Straw-hat and bonnet-making: 1851, 20,393; 1861, 18,176. Malting: 1851, 10,566; 1861, 10,677. Chandlery, 1851, 4,949; 1861, 4,686. This fall is due, besides other causes, to the increase in lighting by gas. Comb-making: 1851, 2,038; 1861, 1,478. Sawyers: 1851, 30,552; 1861, 31,647 — a small rise in consequence of the increase of sawing-machines. Nail-making: 1851, 26,940; 1861, 26,130 — fall in consequence of the competition of machinery. Tin and copper-mining: 1851, 31,360; 1861, 32,041. On the other hand: Cotton-spinning and weaving: 1851, 371,777; 1861, 456,646. Coal-mining: 1851, 183,389, 1861, 246,613, “The increase of labourers is generally greatest, since 1851, in such branches of industry in which machinery has not up to the present been employed with success.” (Census of England and Wales for 1861. Vol. III. London, 1863, p. 36.)

[15.](#) *Added in the 4th German edition.* — The law of progressive diminution of the relative magnitude of variable capital and its effect on the condition of the class of wage workers is conjectured rather than understood by some of the prominent economists of the classical school. The greatest



service was rendered here by John Barton, although he, like all the rest, lumps together constant and fixed capital, variable and circulating capital. He says:

“The demand for labour depends on the increase of circulating, and not of fixed capital. Were it true that the proportion between these two sorts of capital is the same at all times, and in all circumstances, then, indeed, it follows that the number of labourers employed is in proportion to the wealth of the state. But such a proposition has not the semblance of probability. As arts are cultivated, and civilisation is extended, fixed capital bears a larger and larger proportion to circulating capital. The amount of fixed capital employed in the production of a piece of British muslin is at least a hundred, probably a thousand times greater than that employed in a similar piece of Indian muslin. And the proportion of circulating capital is a hundred or thousand times less ... the whole of the annual savings, added to the fixed capital, would have no effect in increasing the demand for labour.” (John Barton, “Observations on the Circumstances which Influence the Condition of the Labouring Classes of Society.” London, 1817, pp. 16, 17.) “The same cause which may increase the net revenue of the country may at the same time render the population redundant, and deteriorate the condition of the labourer.” (Ricardo, l. c., p. 469.) With increase of capital, “the demand [for labour] will be in a diminishing ratio.” (Ibid., p. 480, Note.) “The amount of capital devoted to the maintenance of labour may vary, independently of any changes in the whole amount of capital.... Great fluctuations in the amount of employment, and great suffering may become



more frequent as capital itself becomes more plentiful.”  
(Richard Jones, “An Introductory Lecture on Pol. Econ.,”  
Lond. 1833, p. 13) “Demand [for labour] will rise ... not in  
proportion to the accumulation of the general capital. ... Every  
augmentation, therefore, in the national stock destined for  
reproduction, comes, in the progress of society, to have less  
and less influence upon the condition of the labourer.”  
(Ramsay, l. c., pp. 90, 91.)

[16.](#) H. Merivale. “Lectures on Colonisation and Colonies,”  
1841, Vol. I , p. 146.

[17.](#) Malthus, “Principles of Political Economy,” pp. 215, 319,  
320. In this work, Malthus finally discovers, with the help of  
Sismondi, the beautiful Trinity of capitalistic production: over-  
production, over-population, over-consumption — three very  
delicate monsters, indeed. Cf. F. Engels, “Umrisse zu einer  
Kritik der Nationalökonomie,” l. c., p, 107, et seq.

[18.](#) Harriet Martineau, “A Manchester Strike,” 1832, p. 101.

[19.](#) Even in the cotton famine of 1863 we find, in a pamphlet  
of the operative cotton-spinners of Blackburn, fierce  
denunciations of overwork, which, in consequence of the  
Factory Acts, of course only affected adult male labourers.  
“The adult operatives at this mill have been asked to work  
from 12 to 13 hours per day, while there are hundreds who are  
compelled to be idle who would willingly work partial time, in  
order to maintain their families and save their brethren from a  
premature grave through being overworked.... We,” it goes on  
to say, “would ask if the practice of working overtime by a  
number of hands, is likely to create a good feeling between

masters and servants. Those who are worked overtime feel the injustice equally with those who are condemned to forced idleness. There is in the district almost sufficient work to give to all partial employment if fairly distributed. We are only asking what is right in requesting the masters generally to pursue a system of short hours, particularly until a better state of things begins to dawn upon us, rather than to work a portion of the hands overtime, while others, for want of work, are compelled to exist upon charity.” (“Reports of Insp. of Fact., Oct. 31, 1863,” p. 8.) The author of the “Essay on Trade and Commerce” grasps the effect of a relative surplus population on the employed labourers with his usual unerring bourgeois instinct. “Another cause of idleness in this kingdom is the want of a sufficient number of labouring hands .... Whenever from an extraordinary demand for manufactures, labour grows scarce, the labourers feel their own consequence, and will make their masters feel it likewise — it is amazing; but so depraved are the dispositions of these people, that in such cases a set of workmen have combined to distress the employer by idling a whole day together.” (“Essay, &c.,” pp. 27, 28.) The fellows in fact were hankering after a rise in wages.

[20.](#) *Economist*, Jan. 21. 1860.

[21.](#) Whilst during the last six months of 1866, 80-90,000 working people in London were thrown out of work, the Factory Report for that same half year says: “It does not appear absolutely true to say that demand will always produce supply just at the moment when it is needed. It has not done so with labour, for much machinery has been idle last year for

want of hands.” (“Rep. of Insp. of Fact., 31st Oct., 1866,” p. 81.)

[22.](#) Opening address to the Sanitary Conference, Birmingham, January 15th, 1875, by J. Chamberlain, Mayor of the town, now (1883) President of the Board of Trade.

[23.](#) 781 towns given in the census for 1861 for England and Wales “contained 10,960,998 inhabitants, while the villages and country parishes contained 9,105,226. In 1851, 580 towns were distinguished, and the population in them and in the surrounding country was nearly equal. But while in the subsequent ten years the population in the villages and the country increased half a million, the population in the 580 towns increased by a million and a half (1,554,067). The increase of the population of the country parishes is 6.5 per cent., and of the towns 17.3 per cent. The difference in the rates of increase is due to the migration from country to town. Three-fourths of the total increase of population has taken place in the towns.” (“Census, &c.,” pp. 11 and 12.)

[24.](#) “Poverty seems favourable to generation.” (A. Smith.) This is even a specially wise arrangement of God, according to the gallant and witty Abbé Galiani “Iddio af che gli uomini che esercitano mestieri di prima utilità nascono abbondantemente.” (Galiani, l. c., p. 78.) [God ordains that men who carry on trades of primary utility are born in abundance] “Misery up to the extreme point of famine and pestilence, instead of checking, tends to increase population.” (S. Laing, “National Distress,” 1844, p. 69.) After Laing has illustrated this by statistics, he continues: “If the people were

all in easy circumstances, the world would soon be depopulated.”

[25.](#) “De jour en jour il devient donc plus clair que les rapports de production dans lesquels se meut la bourgeoisie n’ont pas un caractère un, un caractère simple, mais un caractère de duplicité; que dans les mêmes rapports dans lesquels se produit la richesse, la misère se produit aussi; que dans les mêmes rapports dans lesquels il y a développement des forces productives, il y a une force productive de répression; que ces rapports ne produisent la richesse bourgeoise, c’est-à-dire la richesse de la classe bourgeoise, qu’en anéantissant continuellement la richesse des membres intégrants de cette classe et en produisant un prolétariat toujours croissant.”

[From day to day it thus becomes clearer that the production relations in which the bourgeoisie moves have not a simple, uniform character, but a dual character; that in the selfsame relations in which wealth is produced, poverty is produced also; that in the selfsame relations in which there is a development of productive forces, there is also a force producing repression; that these relations produce bourgeois wealth, i.e., the wealth of the bourgeois class, only by continually annihilating the wealth of the individual members of this class and by producing an evergrowing proletariat] (Karl Marx: “Misère de la Philosophie,” p. 116.)

[26.](#) G. Ortes: “Delia Economia Nazionale libri sei, 1777,” in Custodi, Parte Moderna, t. xxi, pp. 6, 9, 22, 25, etc. Ortes says, l. c., p. 32: “In luogo di progettare sistemi inutili per la felicità de’ popoli, mi limiterò a investigare la regione della loro infelicità.” [Instead of projecting useless systems for achieving

the happiness of people, I shall limit myself to investigating the reasons for their unhappiness]

[27.](#) “A Dissertation on the Poor Laws. By a Well-wisher of Mankind. (The Rev. J. Townsend) 1786,” republished Lond. 1817, pp. 15, 39, 41. This “delicate” parson, from whose work just quoted, as well as from his “Journey through Spain,” Malthus often copies whole pages, himself borrowed the greater part of his doctrine from Sir James Steuart, whom he however alters in the borrowing. *E.g.*, when Steuart says: “Here, in slavery, was a forcible method of making mankind diligent,” [for the non-workers] ... “Men were then forced to work” [*i.e.*, to work gratis for others], “because they were slaves of others; men are now forced to work” [*i.e.*, to work gratis for non-workers] “because they are the slaves of their necessities,” he does not thence conclude, like the fat holder of benefices, that the wage labourer must always go fasting. He wishes, on the contrary, to increase their wants and to make the increasing number of their wants a stimulus to their labour for the “more delicate.”

[28.](#) Storch, l. c., t. iii, p. 223.

[29.](#) Sismondi, l. c., pp. 79, 80, 85.

[30.](#) Destutt de Tracy, l. c., p. 231: “Les nations pauvres, c’est là où le peuple est à son aise; et les nations riches, c’est là où il est ordinairement pauvre.” [The poor nations are those where the people are comfortably off; and the rich nations, those where the people are generally poor]

[31.](#) “Tenth Report of the Commissioners of H. M. Inland

Revenue.” Lond., 1866. p. 38.

[32.](#) *Ibidem.*

[33.](#) These figures are sufficient for comparison, but, taken absolutely, are false, since, perhaps, £100,000,000 of income are annually not declared. The complaints of the Inland Revenue Commissioners of systematic fraud, especially on the part of the commercial and industrial classes, are repeated in each of their reports. So *e.g.*, “A Joint-stock company returns £6,000 as assessable profits, the surveyor raises the amount to £88,000, and upon that sum duty is ultimately paid. Another company which returns £190,000 is finally compelled to admit that the true return should be £250,000.” (*Ibid.*, p, 42.)

[34.](#) “Census, &c.,” l. c., p. 29. John Bright’s assertion that 150 landlords own half of England, and 12 half the Scotch soil, has never been refuted.

[35.](#) “Fourth Report, &c., of Inland Revenue.” Lond., 1860, p. 17.

[36.](#) These are the net incomes after certain legally authorised abatements.

[37.](#) At this moment, March, 1867, the Indian and Chinese market is again overstocked by the consignments of the British cotton manufacturers. In 1866 a reduction in wages of 5 per cent. took place amongst the cotton operatives. In 1867, as consequence of a similar operation, there was a strike of 20,000 men at Preston. [*Added in the 4th German edition.* — That was the prelude to the crisis which broke out immediately afterwards. — *F. E.*]

[38.](#) “Census, &C.,” l. c., P. 11.

[39.](#) Gladstone in the House of Commons, Feb. 13th, 1843. *Times*, Feb. 14th, 1843 — “It is one of the most melancholy features in the social state of this country that we see, beyond the possibility of denial, that while there is at this moment a decrease in the consuming powers of the people, an increase of the pressure of privations and distress; there is at the same time a constant accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, an increase of the luxuriousness of their habits, and of their means of enjoyment.” (Hansard, 13th Feb.)

[40.](#) Gladstone in the House of Commons, April 16th, 1863. *Morning Star*, April 17th.

[41.](#) See the official accounts in the Blue book: “Miscellaneous Statistics of the United Kingdom,” Part vi., London, 1866, pp. 260-273, *passim*. Instead of the statistics of orphan asylums, &c., the declamations of the ministerial journals in recommending dowries for the Royal children might also serve. The greater dearness of the means of subsistence is never forgotten there.

[42.](#) Gladstone, House of Commons, 7th April, 1864. — “The Hansard version runs: ‘Again, and yet more at large — what is human life, but, in the majority of cases, a struggle for existence.’ The continual crying contradictions in Gladstone’s Budget speeches of 1863 and 1864 were characterised by an English writer by the following quotation from Boileau:

“Voilà l’homme en effet. Il va du blanc au noir,  
Il condamne au matin ses sentiments du soir.

Importun à tout autre, à soi-même incommode,  
Il change à tout moment d'esprit comme de mode.”

[Such is the man: he goes from black to white. / He condemns in the morning what he felt in the evening. / A nuisance to everyone else, and an inconvenience to himself, / he changes his way of thinking as easily as he changes his way of dressing]

(“The Theory of Exchanges, &c.,” London, 1864, p. 135.)

[43.](#) H. Fawcett, l. c., pp. 67-82. As to the increasing dependence of labourers on the retail shopkeepers, this is the consequence of the frequent oscillations and interruptions of their employment.

[44.](#) Wales here is always included in England.

[45.](#) A peculiar light is thrown on the advance made since the time of Adam Smith, by the fact that by him the word “workhouse” is still occasionally used as synonymous with “manufactory”; *e.g.*, the opening of his chapter on the division of labour; “those employed in every different branch of the work can often be collected into the same workhouse.”

[46.](#) “Public Health. Sixth Report, 1864,” p. 13.

[47.](#) l. c., p. 17.

[48.](#) l. c., p. 13.

[49.](#) l. c., Appendix, p. 232.

[50.](#) l. c., pp. 232, 233.

[51.](#) l. c., pp. 14, 15.

[52.](#) “In no particular have the rights of *persons* been so



avowedly and shamefully sacrificed to the rights of *property* as in regard to the lodging of the labouring class. Every large town may be looked upon as a place of human sacrifice, a shrine where thousands pass yearly through the fire as offerings to the moloch of avarice,” S. Laing, l. c., p. 150.

[53.](#) “Public Health, Eighth Report. 1866.” p. 14, note.

[54.](#) l. c., p. 89. With reference to the children in these colonies, Dr. Hunter says: “People are not now alive to tell us how children were brought up before this age of dense agglomerations of poor began, and he would be a rash prophet who should tell us what future behaviour is to be expected from the present growth of children, who, under circumstances probably never before paralleled in this country, are now completing their education for future practice, as ‘dangerous classes’ by sitting up half the night with persons of every age, half naked, drunken, obscene, and quarrelsome.” (l. c., p. 56.)

[55.](#) l. c., p. 62.

[56.](#) “Report of the Officer of Health of St. Martins-in-the-Fields, 1865.”

[57.](#) “Public Health, Eighth Report, 1866,” p. 91.

[58.](#) l. c., p. 88.

[59.](#) l. c., p. 88.

[60.](#) l. c., p. 89.

[61.](#) l. c., p. 55 and 56.

[62.](#) l. c., p. 149.

[63.](#) l. c., p. 50.

[64.](#)

<b>COLLECTING AGENTS LIST (BRADFORD).</b>		
	<i>Houses</i>	
Vulcan Street, No. 122	1 room	16 persons
Lumiev Street, No. 13	1 room	11 persons
Bower Street, No. 41	1 room	11 persons
Portland Street. No. 112	1 room	10 persons
Hardy Street, No. 17	1 room	10 persons
North Street, No. 18	1 room	16 persons
North Street, No. 17	1 room	13 persons
Wymer Street, No. 19	1 room	8 adults
Jowett Street, No. 56	1 room	12 persons
George Street, No. 150	1 room	3 families
Rifle Court Marygate, No. 11	1 room	11 persons
Marshall Street, No. 28	1 room	10 persons
Marshall Street, No. 49	1 room	3 families
George Street, No. 128	1 room	18 persons
George Street, No. 130	1 room	16 persons
Edward Street, No. 4	1 room	17 persons

George Street, No. 49	1 room	2 families
York Street, No. 34	1 room	2 families
Salt Pie Street (bottom)	2 room	26 persons
	<i>Cellars</i>	
Regent Square	1 cellar	8 persons
Acre Street	1 cellar	7 persons
33 Roberts Court	1 cellar	7 persons
Back Pratt Street used as a brazier's shop	1 cellar	7 persons
27 Ebenezer Street	1 cellar	6 persons
l. c.,	p. 111.	(no male above 18).

[65.](#) l. c., p. 114.

[66.](#) l. c., p. 50.

[67.](#) “Public Health. Seventh Report. 1865,” p. 18.

[68.](#) l. c., p. 165.

[69.](#) l. c., p. 18, Note. — The Relieving Officer of the Chapel-en-le-Frith Union reported to the Registrar-General as follows: — “At Doveholes, a number of small excavations have been

made into a large hillock of lime ashes (the refuse of lime-kilns), and which are used as dwellings, and occupied by labourers and others employed in the construction of a railway now in course of construction through that neighbourhood. The excavations are small and damp, and have no drains or privies about them, and not the slightest means of ventilation except up a hole pulled through the top, and used for a chimney. In consequence of this defect, small-pox has been raging for some time, and some deaths [amongst the troglodytes] have been caused by it.” (l. c., note 2.)

[70.](#) The details given at the end of Part IV. refer especially to the labourers in coal mines. On the still worse condition in metal mines, see the very conscientious Report of the Royal Commission of 1864.

[71.](#) l. c., pp. 180, 182.

[72.](#) l. c., pp. 515, 517.

[73.](#) l. c., p. 16.

[74.](#) “Wholesale starvation of the London Poor.... Within the last few days the walls of London have been placarded with large posters, bearing the following remarkable announcement: — ‘Fat oxen! Starving men! The fat oxen from their palace of glass have gone to feed the rich in their luxurious abode, while the starving men are left to rot and die in their wretched dens.’ The placards bearing these ominous words are put up at certain intervals. No sooner has one set been defaced or covered over, than a fresh set is placarded in the former, or some equally public place.... This ... reminds

one of the secret revolutionary associations which prepared the French people for the events of 1789.... At this moment, while English workmen with their wives and children are dying of cold and hunger, there are millions of English gold — the produce of English labour — being invested in Russian, Spanish, Italian, and other foreign enterprises.” —*Reynolds’ Newspaper*, January 20th, 1867.

[75.](#) James E. Thorold Rogers. (Prof. of Polit. Econ. in the University of Oxford.) “A History of Agriculture and Prices in England.” Oxford, 1866, v. 1, p. 690. This work, the fruit of patient and diligent labour, contains in the two volumes that have so far appeared, only the period from 1259 to 1400. The second volume contains simply statistics. It is the first authentic “History of Prices” of the time that we possess.

[76.](#) “Reasons for the Late Increase of the Poor-Rates: or a comparative view of the prices of labour and provisions.” Lond., 1777, pp. 5, 11.

[77.](#) Dr. Richard Price: “Observations on Reversionary Payments,” 6th Ed. By W. Morgan, Lond., 1803, v. II., pp. 158, 159. Price remarks on p. 159: “The nominal price of day-labour is at present no more than about four times, or, at most, five times higher than it was in the year 1514. But the price of corn is seven times, and of flesh-meat and raiment about fifteen times higher. So far, therefore, has the price of labour been even from advancing in proportion to the increase in the expenses of living, that it does not appear that it bears now half the proportion to those expenses that it did bear.”

[78.](#) Barton, l. c., p. 26. For the end of the 18th century cf.

Eden, l. c.

[79.](#) Parry, l. c., p. 86.

[80.](#) id., p. 213.

[81.](#) S. Laing, l. c., p. 62.

[82.](#) "England and America." Lond., 1833, Vol. 1, p. 47.

[83.](#) The landed aristocracy advanced themselves to this end, of course per Parliament, funds from the State Treasury, at a very low rate of interest, which the farmers have to make good at a much higher rate.

[84.](#) London *Economist*, May 29th, 1845, p. 290.

[85.](#) The decrease of the middle-class farmers can be seen especially in the census category: "Farmer's son, grandson, brother, nephew, daughter, granddaughter, sister, niece"; in a word, the members of his own family, employed by the farmer. This category numbered, in 1851, 216,851 persons; in 1861, only 176,151. From 1851 to 1871, the farms under 20 acres fell by more than 900 in number; those between 50 and 75 acres fell from 8,253 to 6,370; the same thing occurred with all other farms under 100 acres. On the other hand, during the same twenty years, the number of large farms increased; those of 300-500 acres rose from 7,771 to 8,410, those of more than 500 acres from 2,755 to 3,914, those of more than 1,000 acres from 492 to 582.

[86.](#) The number of shepherds increased from 12,517 to 25,559.

[87.](#) Census, l. c., p. 36.

[88.](#) Rogers, l. c., p. 693, p. 10. Mr. Rogers belongs to the

Liberal School, is a personal friend of Cobden and Bright, and therefore no *laudator temporis acti*.

[89.](#) “Public Health. Seventh Report,” 1865, p. 242. It is therefore nothing unusual either for the landlord to raise a labourer’s rent as soon as he hears that he is earning a little more, or for the farmer to lower the wage of the labourer, “because his wife has found a trade,” l. c.

[90.](#) l. c., p. 135.

[91.](#) l. c., p. 134.

[92.](#) “Report of the Commissioners ... relating to Transportation and Penal Servitude,” Lond., 1863, pp. 42, 50.

[93.](#) l. c., p. 77. “Memorandum by the Lord Chief Justice.”

[94.](#) l. c., Vol. II, Minutes of Evidence.

[95.](#) l. c., Vol. 1. Appendix, p. 280.

[96.](#) l. c., pp. 274, 275.

[97.](#) “Public Health, Sixth Report,” 1864, pp. 238, 249, 261, 262.

[98.](#) l. c., p. 262.

[99.](#) l. c., p. 17. The English agricultural labourer receives only 1/4 as much milk, and 1/2 as much bread as the Irish. Arthur Young in his “Tour in Ireland,” at the beginning of this century, already noticed the better nourishment of the latter. The reason is simply this, that the poor Irish farmer is incomparably more humane than the rich English. As regards Wales, that which is said in the text holds only for the

southwest. All the doctors there agree that the increase of the death-rate through tuberculosis, scrofula, etc., increases in intensity with the deterioration of the physical condition of the population, and all ascribe this deterioration to poverty. "His (the farm labourer's) keep is reckoned at about five pence a day, but in many districts it was said to be of much less cost to the farmer" [himself very poor].... "A morsel of the salt meat or bacon, ... salted and dried to the texture of mahogany, and hardly worth the difficult process of assimilation ... is used to flavour a large quantity of broth or gruel, of meal and leeks, and day after day this is the labourer's dinner." The advance of industry resulted for him, in this harsh and damp climate, in "the abandonment of the solid homespun clothing in favour of the cheap and so-called cotton goods," and of stronger drinks for so-called tea. "The agriculturist, after several hours' exposure to wind and rain, pins his cottage to sit by a fire of peat or of balls of clay and small coal kneaded together, from which volumes of carbonic and sulphurous acids are poured forth. His walls are of mud and stones, his floor the bare earth which was there before the hut was built, his roof a mass of loose and sodden thatch. Every crevice is topped to maintain warmth, and in an atmosphere of diabolic odour, with a mud floor, with his only clothes drying on his back, he often sups and sleeps with his wife and children. Obstetricians who have passed parts of the night in such cabins have described how they found their feet sinking in the mud of the floor, and they were forced (easy task) to drill a hole through the wall to effect a little private respiration. It was attested by numerous witnesses in various grades of life, that to these insanitary



influences, and many more, the underfed peasant was nightly exposed, and of the result, a debilitated and scrofulous people, there was no want of evidence.... The statements of the relieving officers of Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire show in a striking way the same state of things. There is besides “a plague more horrible still, the great number of idiots.” Now a word on the climatic conditions. “A strong south-west wind blows over the whole country for 8 or 9 months in the year, bringing with it torrents of rain, which discharge principally upon the western slopes of the hills. Trees are rare, except in sheltered places, and where not protected, are blown out of all shape. The cottages generally crouch under some bank, or often in a ravine or quarry, and none but the smallest sheep and native cattle can live on the pastures.... The young people migrate to the eastern mining districts of Glamorgan and Monmouth. Carmarthenshire is the breeding ground of the mining population and their hospital. The population can therefore barely maintain its numbers.” Thus in Cardiganshire:

	1851	1861
Males	45,155	44,446
Females	52,459	52,955
	97,614	97,401

Dr. Hunter’s Report in “Public Health, Seventh Report. 1865,” pp. 498-502, passim.

[100.](#) In 1865 this law was improved to some extent. It will soon be learnt from experience that tinkering of this sort is of no use.

[101.](#) In order to understand that which follows, we must remember that “Close Villages” are those whose owners are one or two large landlords. “Open villages,” those whose soil belongs to many smaller landlords. It is in the latter that building speculators can build cottages and lodging-houses.

[102.](#) A show-village of this kind looks very nice, but is as unreal as the villages that Catherine II. saw on her journey to the Crimea. In recent times the shepherd also has often been banished from these show-villages; *e.g.*, near Market Harboro is sheep-farm of about 500 acres, which only employs the labour of one man. To reduce the long trudges over these wide plains, the beautiful pastures of Leicester and Northampton, the shepherd used to get a cottage on the farm. Now they give him a thirteenth shilling a week for lodging, that he must find far away in an open village.

[103.](#) “The labourers’ houses (in the open villages, which, of course, are always overcrowded) are usually in rows, built with their backs against the extreme edge of the plot of land which the builder could call his, and on this account are not allowed light and air, except from the front.” (Dr. Hunter’s Report, l. c., p. 135.) Very often the beerseller or grocer of the village is at the same time the letter of its houses. In this case the agricultural labourer finds in him a second master, besides the farmer. He must be his customer as well as his tenant. “The hind with his 10s. a week, minus a rent of £4 a year ... is obliged to buy at the seller’s own terms, his modicum of tea, sugar, flour, soap, candles, and beer.” (l. c., p. 132.) These open villages form, in fact, the “penal settlements” of the English agricultural proletariat. Many of the cottages are

simply lodging-houses, through which all the rabble of the neighbourhood passes. The country labourer and his family who had often, in a way truly wonderful, preserved, under the foulest conditions, a thoroughness and purity of character, go, in these, utterly to the devil. It is, of course, the fashion amongst the aristocratic shylocks to shrug their shoulders pharisaically at the building speculators, the small landlords, and the open villages. They know well enough that their “close villages” and “show-villages” are the birth-places of the open villages, and could not exist without them. “The labourers ... were it not for the small owners, would, for by far the most part, have to sleep under the trees of the farms on which they work.” (l. c., p. 135.) The system of “open” and “closed” villages obtains in all the Midland counties and throughout the East of England.

[104.](#) “The employer ... is ... directly or indirectly securing to himself the profit on a man employed at 10s. a week, and receiving from this poor hind £4 or £5 annual rent for houses not worth £20 in a really free market, but maintained at their artificial value by the power of the owner to say ‘Use my house, or go seek a hiring elsewhere without a character from me....’ Does a man wish to better himself, to go as a plate-layer on the railway, or to begin quarry-work, the same power is ready with ‘Work for me at this low rate of wages or begone at a week’s notice; take your pig with you, and get what you can for the potatoes growing in your garden.’ Should his interest appear to be better served by it, an enhanced rent is sometimes preferred in these cases by the owner (*i.e.*, the farmer) as the penalty for leaving his service.” (Dr. Hunter, l.

c., p. 132.)

[105.](#) “New married couples are no edifying study for grown-up brothers and sisters: and though instances must not be recorded, sufficient data are remembered to warrant the remark, that great depression and sometimes death are the lot of the female participator in the offence of incest.” (Dr. Hunter, l. c., p. 137.) A member of the rural police who had for many years been a detective in the worst quarters of London, says of the girls of his village: “their boldness and shamelessness I never saw equalled during some years of police life and detective duty in the worst parts of London .... They live like pigs, great boys and girls, mothers and fathers, all sleeping in one room, in many instances.” (“Child. Empl. Com. Sixth Report, 1867,” p. 77 sq. 155.)

[106.](#) “Public Health. Seventh Report, 1865,” pp. 9, 14 passim.

[107.](#) “The heaven-born employment of the hind gives dignity even to his position. He is not a slave, but a soldier of peace, and deserves his place in married men’s quarters to be provided by the landlord, who has claimed a power of enforced labour similar to that the country demands of the soldier. He no more receives market-price for his work than does the soldier. Like the soldier he is caught young, ignorant, knowing only his own trade, and his own locality. Early marriage and the operation of the various laws of settlement affect the one as enlistment and the Mutiny Act affect the other.” (Dr. Hunter, l. c., p. 132.) Sometimes an exceptionally soft-hearted landlord relents as the solitude he has created. “It is a melancholy thing to stand alone in one’s country,” said

Lord Leicester, when complimented on the completion of Hookham. “I look around and not a house is to be seen but mine. I am the giant of Giant Castle, and have eat up all my neighbours.”

[108.](#) A similar movement is seen during the last ten years in France; in proportion as capitalist production there takes possession of agriculture, it drives the “surplus” agricultural population into the towns. Here also we find deterioration in the housing and other conditions at the source of the surplus population. On the special “prolétariat foncier,” to which this system of parcelling out the land has given rise, see, among others, the work of Colins, already quoted, and Karl Marx “Der Achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte.” 2nd edition. Hamburg, 1869, pp. 56, &c. In 1846, the town population in France was represented by 24.42, the agricultural by 75.58; in 1861, the town by 28.86, the agricultural by 71.14 per cent. During the last 5 years, the diminution of the agricultural percentage of the population has been yet more marked. As early as 1846, Pierre Dupont in his “[Ouvriers](#)” sang:

Mal vêtus, logés dans des trous,  
Sous les combles, dans les décombres,  
Nous vivons avec les hiboux  
Et les larrons, amis des ombres.

[Badly clothed, living in holes, under the eaves, in the ruins,  
with the owls and the thieves, companions of the shadows]

[109.](#) “Sixth and last Report of the Children’s Employment Commission,” published at the end of March, 1867. It deals solely with the agricultural gang-system.

[110.](#) “Child. Emp. Comm., VI. Report.” Evidence 173, p. 37.

[111.](#) Some gang-masters, however, have worked themselves up to the position of farmers of 500 acres, or proprietors of whole rows of houses.

[112.](#) “Half the girls of Ludford have been ruined by going out” (in gangs). l. c., p. 6, § 32.

[113.](#) “They (gangs) have greatly increased of late years. In some places they are said to have been introduced at comparatively late dates; in others where gangs ... have been known for many years ... more and younger children are employed in them.” (l. c., p. 79, § 174).

[114.](#) “Small farmers never employ gangs.” “It is not on poor land, but on land which affords rent of from 40 to 50 shillings, that women and children are employed in the greatest numbers.” (l. c., pp. 17, 14.)

[115.](#) To one of these gentlemen the taste of his rent was so grateful that he indignantly declared to the Commission of Inquiry that the whole hubbub was only due to the name of the system. If instead of “gang” it were called “the Agricultural Juvenile Industrial Self-supporting Association,” everything would be all right.

[116.](#) “Gang work is cheaper than other work; that is why they are employed,” says a former gang-master (l. c., p. 17, § 14). “The gang-system is decidedly the cheapest for the farmer, and decidedly the worst for the children,” says a farmer (l. c., p. 16, § 3.)

[117.](#) “Undoubtedly much of the work now done by children in

gangs used to be done by men and women. More men are out of work now where children and women are employed than formerly.” (l. c., p. 43, n. 202.) On the other hand, “the labour question in some agricultural districts, particularly the arable, is becoming so serious in consequence of emigration, and the facility afforded by railways for getting to large towns that I (the “I” is the steward of a great lord) think the services of children are most indispensable,” (l. c., p. 80, n. 180.) For the “labour question” in English agricultural districts, differently from the rest of the civilised world, means the landlords’ and farmers’ question, viz., how is it possible, despite an always increasing exodus of the agricultural folk, to keep up a sufficient relative surplus population in the country, and by means of it keep the wages of the agricultural labourer at a minimum?

[118.](#) The “Public Health Report,” where in dealing with the subject of children’s mortality, the gang-system is treated in passing, remains unknown to the press, and, therefore, to the English public. On the other hand, the last report of the “Child. Empl. Comm.” afforded the press sensational copy always welcome. Whilst the Liberal press asked how the fine gentlemen and ladies, and the well-paid clergy of the State Church, with whom Lincolnshire swarms, could allow such a system to arise on their estates, under their very eyes, they who send out expressly missions to the Antipodes, “for the improvement of the morals of South Sea Islanders” — the more refined press confined itself to reflections on the coarse degradation of the agricultural population who are capable of selling their children into such slavery! Under the accursed

conditions to which these “delicate” people condemn the agricultural labourer, it would not be surprising if he ate his own children. What is really wonderful is the healthy integrity of character, he has, in great part, retained. The official reports prove that the parents, even in the gang districts, loathe the gang-system. “There is much in the evidence that shows that the parents of the children would, in many instances, be glad to be aided by the requirements of a legal obligation, to resist the pressure and the temptations to which they are often subject. They are liable to be urged, at times by the parish officers, at times by employers, under threats of being themselves discharged, to be taken to work at an age when ... school attendance ... would be manifestly to their greater advantage.... All that time and strength wasted; all the suffering from extra and unprofitable fatigue produced to the labourer and to his children; every instance in which the parent may have traced the moral ruin of his child to the undermining of delicacy by the over-crowding of cottages, or to the contaminating influences of the public gang, must have been so many incentives to feelings in the minds of the labouring poor which can be well understood, and which it would be needless to particularise. They must be conscious that much bodily and mental pain has thus been inflicted upon them from causes for which they were in no way answerable; to which, had it been in their power, they would have in no way consented; and against which they were powerless to struggle.” (l. c., p. xx., § 82, and xxiii., n. 96.)

[119.](#) Population of Ireland, 1801, 5,319,867 persons; 1811, 6,084,996; 1821, 6,869,544; 1831, 7,828,347; 1841,



8,222,664.

[120.](#) The result would be found yet more unfavourable if we went further back. Thus: Sheep in 1865, 3,688,742, but in 1856, 3,694,294. Pigs in 1865, 1,299,893, but in 1858, 1,409,883.

[121.](#) The data of the text are put together from the materials of the “Agricultural Statistics, Ireland, General Abstracts, Dublin,” for the years 1860, *et seq.*, and “Agricultural Statistics, Ireland. Tables showing the estimated average produce, &c., Dublin, 1866.” These statistics are official, and laid before Parliament annually.

*Note to 2nd edition.* The official statistics for the year 1872 show, as compared with 1871, a decrease in area under cultivation of 134,915 acres. An increase occurred in the cultivation of green crops, turnips, mangold-wurzel, and the like; a decrease in the area under cultivation for wheat of 16,000 acres; oats, 14,000; barley and rye, 4,000; potatoes, 66,632; flax, 34,667; grass, clover, vetches, rape-seed, 30,000. The soil under cultivation for wheat shows for the last 5 years the following stages of decrease: — 1868, 285,000 acres; 1869, 280,000; 1870, 259,000; 1871, 244,000; 1872, 228,000. For 1872 we find, in round numbers, an increase of 2,600 horses, 80,000 horned cattle, 68,609 sheep, and a decrease of 236,000 pigs.

[122.](#) The total yearly income under Schedule D. is different in this table from that which appears in the preceding ones, because of certain deductions allowed by law.

[123.](#) If the product also diminishes relatively per acre, it must not be forgotten that for a century and a half England has indirectly exported the soil of Ireland, without as much as allowing its cultivators the means for making up the constituents of the soil that had been exhausted.

[124.](#) As Ireland is regarded as the promised land of the “principle of population,” Th. Sadler, before the publication of his work on population, issued his famous book, “Ireland, its Evils and their Remedies.” 2nd edition, London, 1829. Here, by comparison of the statistics of the individual provinces, and of the individual counties in each province, he proves that the misery there is not, as Malthus would have it, in proportion to the number of the population, but in inverse ratio to this.

[125.](#) Between 1851 and 1874, the total number of emigrants amounted to 2,325,922.

[126.](#) According to a table in Murphy’s “Ireland Industrial, Political and Social,” 1870, 94.6 per cent. of the holdings do not reach 100 acres, 5.4 exceed 100 acres.

[127.](#) “Reports from the Poor Law Inspectors on the Wages of Agricultural Labourers in Dublin,” 1870. See also “Agricultural labourers (Ireland). Return, etc.” 8 March, 1861, London, 1862.

[128.](#) l. c., pp. 29, 1.

[129.](#) l. c., p. 12.

[130.](#) l. c., p. 12.

[131.](#) l. c., p. 25.

[132.](#) l. c., p. 27.

[133.](#) l. c., p. 25.

[134.](#) l. c., p. 1.

[135.](#) l. c., pp. 31, 32.

[136.](#) l. c., p. 25.

[137.](#) l. c., p. 30.

[138.](#) l. c., pp. 21, 13.

[139.](#) “Rept. of Insp. of Fact., 31st Oct., 1866,” p. 96.

[140.](#) The total area includes also peat, bogs, and waste land.

[141.](#) How the famine and its consequences have been deliberately made the most of, both by the individual landlords and by the English legislature, to forcibly carry out the agricultural revolution and to thin the population of Ireland down to the proportion satisfactory to the landlords, I shall show more fully in Vol. III. of this work, in the section on landed property. There also I return to the condition of the small farmers and the agricultural labourers. At present, only one quotation. Nassau W. Senior says, with other things, in his posthumous work, “Journals, Conversations and Essays relating to Ireland.” 2 vols. London, 1868; Vol. II., p. 282. “Well,” said Dr. G., “we have got our Poor Law and it is a great instrument for giving the victory to the landlords. Another, and a still more powerful instrument is emigration.... No friend to Ireland can wish the war to be prolonged [between the landlords and the small Celtic farmers] — still less, that it should end by the victory of the tenants. The

sooner it is over — the sooner Ireland becomes a grazing country, with the comparatively thin population which a grazing country requires, the better for all classes.” The English Corn Laws of 1815 secured Ireland the monopoly of the free importation of corn into Great Britain. They favoured artificially, therefore, the cultivation of corn. With the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846, this monopoly was suddenly removed. Apart from all other circumstances, this event alone was sufficient to give a great impulse to the turning of Irish arable into pasture land, to the concentration of farms, and to the eviction of small cultivators. After the fruitfulness of the Irish soil had been praised from 1815 to 1846, and proclaimed loudly as by Nature herself destined for the cultivation of wheat, English agronomists, economists, politicians, discover suddenly that it is good for nothing but to produce forage. M. Léonce de Lavergne has hastened to repeat this on the other side of the Channel. It takes a “serious” man, à la Lavergne, to be caught by such childishness.

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Transcribed by Zodiac

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