

**ON CERTAIN TESTS OF A
THRIVING POPULATION, FOUR
LECTURES DELIVERED BEFORE
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN
LENT TERM, 1845**

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On Certain Tests of a Thriving Population, Four Lectures Delivered before the University of Oxford in Lent Term, 1845 by Travers Twiss

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CERTAIN TESTS
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THRIVING POPULATION.

FOUR LECTURES

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN LENT TERM, 1845.



BY

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1845.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Lectures have been selected for publication from the course delivered in Lent Term, 1845, in accordance with the conditions of the foundation of the Professorship of Political Economy. Their form has been slightly remodelled, from the necessity of omitting some portions which were connected with the subsequent Lectures, and the tabular results of M. Mallet's researches at Geneva have been inserted for the first time in the fourth Lecture, as they could not well be delivered orally. The title which has been prefixed has been selected as explanatory of the questions which have been chiefly discussed; but the general scope of the course of Lectures was more comprehensive. If, therefore, the accompanying discussions should seem to be incomplete, the requisitions of the foundation must furnish my excuse for their fragmentary character.

T. T.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD,
April 10. 1845. •

relative number of inhabitants, who are of full age and strength to labour, is in one respect the surest indication of the thriving and prosperous state of a community, his position might have been unassailable. Experience, however, has abundantly shown that there are circumstances under which the absolute numbers of a community may increase without any amelioration in their physical condition, and sometimes even with considerable deterioration.

"The Wealth of Nations" was published in 1776. At that time its author, in illustration of his statement above quoted, and in confirmation of what he had previously asserted in respect to North America being much more thriving than England, observes, that in Great Britain and most other European countries, the inhabitants "are not supposed to double in less than 500 years. In the British Colonies and in North America it has been found that they double in twenty or twenty-five years." How little did this eminent writer then anticipate that within the comparatively short interval which has elapsed since he wrote his great work, the population of Great Britain would have actually doubled itself, that is, within a period of less than seventy years. For, if we take the average estimate of the population of Great Britain in 1776, at 9,100,000, we shall find, from the census

of 1841, the numbers increased to 18,844,434. Again, if we cast our eyes a little further back, we shall perceive this acceleration steadily in progress, since the population of England and Wales more than doubled itself in the period between 1740 and 1821.

It would be an interesting investigation to ascertain accurately the corresponding progress of Great Britain, in its various branches of material prosperity. Such an enquiry, however, would exceed the limits to which I propose to confine myself on the present occasion. I shall therefore briefly direct your attention to a few facts. That the prosperity of Great Britain should have increased, would require not merely that its population and the means of subsistence should have doubled in a given period; for so long as population and subsistence march abreast, no change can take place in the material condition of a people, but that its capital should have increased faster than its population. A money estimate of the capital of Great Britain would not enable us to determine this problem, for such an estimate would be so much affected by the variations in the exchangeable value of money, as to furnish no safe criterion. For instance, the increased money value of the rental of land in England would not necessarily indicate the proportion in which the productiveness of

agriculture had been augmented: if in the course of the last 150 years the money rents in England should have been trebled, or in some cases quadrupled, we should not therefore be warranted in concluding that the landlord's proportion of the produce had been increased in that ratio. Again, the *declared value* or *money value* of our manufactured exports would be a totally false measure of the increase of the quantity exported, if their quantity be looked to as an index of the growth of our manufacturing capital. For our present purpose, therefore, I shall prefer to test the increase in the prosperity of the population by their increased consumption of certain given articles of food, which implies an increased power of procuring the necessaries of life, resulting undoubtedly from the increased efficiency of their labour.

Let us take, for instance, the article of grain in the first place. Mr. Charles Smith, in his Tracts on the Corn Trade, estimated the population of England and Wales in 1760 at 6,000,000, which is sufficiently near the truth for our present enquiry. The entire consumption of grain at that time he estimated to be 7,550,350 quarters, of which 3,750,000 quarters were wheat, and of the remainder 1,026,125 consisted of barley, 999,000 of rye, and 1,791,225 of oats.

The change which has taken place in the spe-

cies of grain used for bread in England since the period referred to by Mr. Smith, is notorious. Rye has almost entirely ceased to be employed. The same remark might almost be applied to barley; and oatmeal and oatcake are not consumed to anything like the same extent as in the previous century. Almost every individual now uses wheaten bread, and in some of our manufacturing towns the inferior sorts even of wheaten flour have been rejected by all, except the most indigent, classes.

The total average produce of grain in England and Wales has been estimated, within the last ten years, at 29,450,000 quarters, of which 12,450,000 quarters consist of wheat. (M'Culloch's Statistics of the British Empire, i. 529.) It would thus appear that whilst the population of England and Wales has doubled, the consumption of wheat, as well as of other grain, has nearly quadrupled; for the home producer is unable to supply the demand of the consumers, and an annual average of at least 500,000 quarters of wheat may be added to the total quantity produced at home, on account of foreign importations.

In a similar manner, in regard to butcher's meat, if we take the market of the metropolis, we shall find that the number of cattle and sheep annually sold at Smithfield has doubled within