



## Open Council.

[IN THIS DEPARTMENT, AS ALL OPINIONS, HOWEVER EXTREME, ARE ALLOWED AN EXPRESSION, THE EDITOR NECESSARILY HOLDS HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR NONE.]

There is no learned man but will confess he hath much profited by reading controversies: his senses awakened, and his judgment sharpened. If, then, it be profitable for him to read, why should it not, at least, be tolerable for his adversary to write.—MILTON.

MALTHUS.

Jan. 6, 1851.

SIR,—Forgive my intruding into a subject which you are continuing to discuss,—the Malthusian controversy. My sense that there is great confusion involved in it impels me. Moreover, aiming at conciseness, I will not fear to be abrupt.

What Malthus thought or meant is of secondary importance; yet I do not believe that he meant anything so absurd as that all men should refrain from marriage until middle life. I believe he in so many words declares, that each man is to marry whenever it is prudent, as well as pleasant, to him individually. I have not Malthus's work at hand, but feel certain that this is his doctrine. He desires to leave on each parent and his children the natural consequences of the parent's imprudence.

But let us leave Malthus and come to the facts. It is mere blindman's buff to talk about the fertility of soil and its geometrical increase; and fanaticism to argue from the divine goodness against the manifest certainties that surround us. It is a mathematical certainty that, if the existing population of the world were to increase for about eleven or twelve centuries at the same rate as the British population has done for some time past, no room would be left on the solid earth for men, women, and children to stand upon, allowing only a square foot for each. If you care to see it, I will send you the details of the calculation, which is a very simple one.

The conclusion which I draw from this indubitable certainty is the very opposite to that of current Malthusianism, viz., the case is too desperate for cure, and cannot be dealt with by our social philosophy. A man would be thought mad who refrained from promoting his own moral happiness by marrying, because he desired to postpone by ten years the time when the earth would hold no more men and women. So, also, a legislator is absurd and unjust, who, for the same object, tries to embarrass and retard marriage. The difficulty is too far beyond us in time, to make it our part to provide against it; while in all cases it is beyond our power to bring more than a miserable delay.

Nor is it certain that any moderate retarding of marriage checks population. Rather late marriage of women (I am told) tends to larger families. But I will not embarrass my argument by these details.

I cannot at all agree with Mr. Mill on this subject, who not only omits all attempt to show that the causes which facilitate the feeding of population have not increased, and are not likely to increase, more rapidly than population, but most extravagantly proposes to stigmatize married people for having large families! Every person of mature age, or every married man, will see the injustice and absurdity of this; but it suffices to remark that he overlooks the quality of the families, and directs his reproof at quantity only. A man who brings up twelve children virtuously, and educates all well, surely deserves more credit than one who brings up two children ill. If Mr. Mill's stigma on large families could be worked into our morality as he desires, the virtuous would have small families and the profligate large ones: thus the good would be outbred by the worse members of the community, who would have all the more room to fill with their own brats, because of the public-spirited abstinence of the virtuous.

There is a view of this subject which, I believe, Professor Lawson, of Dublin, first broached, and which deserves fuller consideration: viz., when the difficulty of feeding human population is on the increase this must infallibly betray itself by a larger and larger fraction of the community being devoted to raising food. Now, *primâ facie*, this goes to prove that we are not yet even within sight of the Malthusian danger. All allow that there may be a population too thin to feed itself economically, as well as too thick. During the earlier stage every increase in

population is an economical advantage, which manifests itself by a smaller and smaller fraction of the whole being occupied as agriculturists. When, therefore, we see that our agriculturists have become proportionably fewer, it is (*primâ facie*, I say), a proof of advantage from the increased numbers. Yet there is here a doubt, rising out of the quantity of imported food. We ought to include in our census the labourers who raise it before we decide on the agricultural fraction. Admitting this source of error, still when we remember that from 1832 to 1836 no corn was wanted from abroad, and that foreign corn was thrown into the Thames to avoid paying the duty, it would seem that fifteen years ago it would have sufficed to add to our agriculturists such a percentage of numbers (say 10 per cent.) as expresses the excess of the best harvests over the average harvests, as an allowance for our foreign food-raisers. If so, England was better peopled for economic feeding in 1836 than in 1736, I believe.

Economy in distribution is one great advantage possessed by every dense population; and this, I think, is often overlooked by Malthusians.

But pray understand that I regard myself as a Malthusian. The chief error of Malthus seems to me that he forgot the enactment of private property in land to be wholly artificial and recent in human nature.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

F. W. NEWMAN.

### LETTER TO H. MARTINEAU.

[The name and address being known only to H. Martineau, it is thought that there can be no objection to the publication of this letter, which is believed to express the feelings of a large number of persons.]

Jan. 7, 1851.

MY DEAR MADAM,—I am surprised to find that your happy suggestion of "Associated Homes for Poor Gentlewomen" has been so little noticed in the "Open Council" of the *Leader*, but cannot believe that this silence arises from any want of interest in the subject on the part of those most concerned, but probably from a reluctance to make their sentiments public. I feel sure that hundreds of gentlewomen with small incomes must be living, or rather vegetating, in the metropolis and its environs in comfortable lodgings, in obscurity and loneliness, who would thankfully unite to form a community upon the plan you propose, if they knew how to set about it; and to make known their wishes to each other. It seems to me that it will require the mediation of some individual with a large share of judgment and energy to arrange the matter at first, and of course a certain number must be brought together and agree to join their little incomes before anything can be done. How is that to be accomplished? I for one would gladly join in such a scheme, but am so much out of health that I fear I should scarcely be admissible, especially at first, when all the members should be able to exert themselves to introduce order and comfort into the household; but, should your views be carried out satisfactorily, and my health improve, I should be very glad to become a member of such a home. I think the idea of taking as boarders young women pursuing their studies at Queen's College with the design of becoming governesses a very good one, and when once the home is fairly arranged and settled, I think invalids need not be objected to, as their comparative helplessness would afford employment to the strong and healthy, and call forth the kindly and benevolent feelings and sympathies. Will you, my dear Madam, pardon the liberty I have taken in thus addressing you upon this, to me, interesting subject, and believe me to remain, yours very respectfully,

### HOW TO RAISE CAPITAL FOR CO-OPERATIVE PURPOSES

4, Park-side, Hyde-park-corner, Dec. 9, 1850.

SIR,—The *Times* of Nov. 15, in advertising to Mr. Cobden's speech at the peace meeting at Wrexham, attempts to excuse the Russian loan by hinting that American bonds, French rentes, Dutch stock, East India stock, British funds, &c., are all equally ill employed—that is, employed in supporting some injustice, oppression, or cruelty. But the capitalist can have no wish to promote such: on the contrary, could he see his way, he would no doubt prefer a safe home market for his capital to vesting it thus in political lucifer matches scattered all over the world! He does so because the capital market at home is glutted. Yet the labour market, too, is glutted! Naked, starving Labour, stands there with haggard eyes and folded arms, looking on at Capital making his lucifer matches; while Capital scowls grudgingly over his shoulder at naked, starving Labour, and thinks:—"How many more lucifer matches I could make were it not for the poor-rates." Labour, however, if he could obtain the loan of Capital, would no longer be naked and starving, would no longer need poor-rates, but could afford to pay the capitalist as good interest for his money as he gets by his lucifer matches. To realize this desirable result what, then, is required? Cooperation! The individual labourer

cannot give security to the capitalist; but joint-stock companies of associated labourers could give or obtain sufficient guarantee to do so, and thus emancipate the actual hands that execute the work from sweaters and middlemen of every description, by thus enabling them to hire or purchase for themselves land, raw material, and that gigantic slave and future liberator of the human race—mechanical power. This done, we should shortly see every acre of waste land in the kingdom fertilized, every hungry mouth fed, every naked limb clothed, and every wretched hovel converted into a comfortable, healthful dwelling.

Let it not be said that such anticipations are extravagant. The extravagance, the madness, consists in neglecting to bring together the elements of this real wealth, which exists in the country in unlimited abundance, and devoting our whole energies to the indefinite increase of mere conventional wealth, no matter at what sacrifice of happiness or even of life itself. That the real prosperity described above would follow upon arrangements enabling labour to borrow capital (with, of course, every precaution of prudent direction), becomes a matter of sober calculation, when we consider that the labour of one man on land is estimated to produce the food of nine men, and that the labour of a few hands with the aid of machinery can clothe, house, and provide furniture for thousands. Why, then, should suffering which is not really unavoidable be permitted to continue? Have we not a sufficient number of able, practical men, among all those who belong to our various associations, leagues, and societies, who speak well on such subjects at public meetings, and write well on such in public journals, and who devote themselves, in one way or other, to the well being of the people, to form out of them all one great, general, and widely-influential Protection of Labour League; and with the far-spread network of secretaries, delegates, corresponding members, and travelling members already in existence, arrange safe and prudent means of giving guarantees to capital for such advances as shall be found necessary to assist the birth struggles of all working men's associations (such as the Working Tailors' Association, and all others which are a step in the right direction), until gradually, without injustice or violence to any one, the whole race of middlemen, the sweater of every description, all, in short, who derive profit beyond the interest of their own capital, and the wages of their own skill, from the labour of another, whether on the land, in the factory, or in the work-shop, shall have disappeared as utterly from our social system as the wolf has from our forests?

Middlemen, by not resting satisfied with this, their honest share, have become a baneful excrescence on the social body, intercepting the nutriment which ought to give health and vigour to its natural limbs. Witness "respectable-looking" Farmer Green agreeing for one halfpenny per week with his harvest labourers! The Protection of Labour League must render the intervention of such agricultural sweaters unnecessary, by giving to landlords guarantee for the rent of farms to be taken on lease and worked by associations of agricultural labourers, care being taken that a sufficient number of each association shall be skilled in farming; and, as a useful precaution for the future, that good agricultural schools, as well as schools of industry in manufactures, handicrafts, &c., be made general, to secure the advantage of superior skill in farming and all useful employments to all the rising generation. Labour thus relieved by cooperation from the at once murderous and suicidal mania of competition, by association from the vampire-like suction of the sweating system, by organization from the blind scramble of a gambling market, and by the ownership of machinery for its assistant instead of rival, from the overwhelming depression of the labour market, all else would follow. The Protection of Labour League would make itself acquainted with all markets, home and foreign, and be able to direct production by information and advice to all companies of associated labourers. Thus, when trade became slack in any department, companies of associated labourers, having capital to fall back upon, could employ such intervals of leisure in multiplying comforts, luxuries, and elegancies for themselves and each other, instead of glutting the general market with productions for which there was no immediate demand.

When the seven hundred million man-power of machinery now at work in this kingdom had thus become, by virtue of the possession or the loan of capital, the associate, instead of the rival of manual labour, surely all the work necessary to the comfort and prosperity of thirty millions of people, may be done by this wood and iron slave, without making flesh and blood slaves of any class! With competency and leisure would come literary education and refinement to an extent that would now be deemed Utopian if described. Many of those who had derived so great economical advantages from cooperating to earn would probably find great social delight, as well as additional economical advantages, in cooperating to spend, and so form themselves into perfect societies, based on land, but embracing all varieties of employments, pursuits, and recreations. While