

A
TREATISE
ON THE
WEALTH, POWER, AND RESOURCES,

OF THE
British Empire,
IN EVERY QUARTER OF THE WORLD,

INCLUDING THE EAST INDIES:

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE FUNDING SYSTEM EXPLAINED;

*With Observations on the National Resources for the beneficial Employment of a redundant
Population, and for rewarding the Military and Naval Officers, Soldiers, and Seamen,
for their Services to their Country during the late War.*

ILLUSTRATED BY
COPIOUS STATISTICAL TABLES,

CONSTRUCTED ON A NEW PLAN,
AND EXHIBITING A COLLECTED VIEW OF THE DIFFERENT SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN THIS WORK.

BY P. COLQUHOUN, LL.D.

THE SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

QUIDQUID AGUNT HOMINES NOSTRI FARRAGO LIBELLI.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

EARLY in the month of November last, when the Composition of the text of this Work first commenced, the Tables were nearly completed, including the captured, as well as the British colonies then in the possession of the Crown. In its progress, many of these Tables were printed before the war, which had so long afflicted Europe, assumed a new and more favourable aspect, and had happily terminated in a treaty of peace restoring the general tranquillity, after twenty years of tyranny and devastation, which had disorganized the general system of Continental Europe.

The cession of various colonies to the Sovereigns of France, Holland, and Denmark, will of course diminish the population stated in page 7 of the text, and in the statistical Table in page 47, as amounting to 61,157,433 souls, which must be considered as now reduced to 59,655,725; ‡ thus yielding up to the belligerents a population estimated at 1,398,608, with colonies valued upon the whole at £87,707,130 sterling.

‡ Since the period when this Advertisement was first published it has been understood that the Dutch Colonies of Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo remain with Great Britain, the population of which being estimated at 95,000, extends the aggregate population in the whole of the British Empire to 59,758,825 souls.—The value of the ceded colonies will consequently be reduced to £61,881,490 sterling.

These cessions, necessary in themselves, and politically wise with a view to the future tranquillity of Europe, still appear in the Tables as a mark of British liberality ; but they are not noticed in the text, which is confined intirely to what relates to the various extra-marine possessions now acknowledged by the late belligerent powers to belong in perpetuity to the British Crown.

Such instances of generous magnanimity, on the part of the British Government, cannot fail to exalt the nation in a still greater degree in the minds of the people of Europe, more especially when the extent and value of the sacrifice are disclosed ; and since these cessions have been made to obtain advantages to all the allied powers, no less perhaps than to those to whom the boon had been granted, a confident hope is entertained that their feelings on this occasion will be manifested by liberal commercial treaties.

The gratitude of France, Holland, and Denmark, is, in a peculiar manner, due to this nation, since, in relinquishing the colonies, the monopoly of a beneficial trade is also conceded to them, and that too without any equivalent, at a time when a considerable proportion of the commerce of the world must, in justice to all nations, be divided, and can no longer centre in this country.

*James Street, Westminster,
20th July, 1814.*

CHAPTER I.

ON THE POPULATION OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

The importance of the Subject.—The general principles of Population explained.—The Tables annexed embrace the population of the Empire in every quarter of the Globe.—A Summary View of the same.—Population limited by the quantity and species of accessible food.—The United Kingdom capable of producing food for an extensive population.—The importance of extending the Fisheries as a means of increasing the population.—Where a redundant population prevails, emigration to the British Settlements desirable.—The progress of population in different countries.—Deaths decreased in Great Britain.—Population of the Towns and in the Country.—Increase of Houses and People in ten years.—A greater tendency to people the Towns than the Country.—The subject of Population pursued.—The demand for corn in Great Britain has exceeded the supply.—Prices have advanced beyond their true level. The Farmers greatly benefited.—The advantages to be derived from a more extended cultivation. Its progress has been considerable in the United Kingdom.—The improvement of morals of great importance in respect to population.—The education of Youth strongly recommended.—The dense population of Towns not favourable to morals.—The progressive increase of the Metropolis during the last fifty years.—Population only becomes a blessing to a Country when its people are industrious and virtuous.—Where this becomes the national character, there will always be found the greatest portion of happiness, producing results favourable to the power of States and Empires.

THE population of states and empires is, perhaps, one of the most interesting and important subjects which can engage the public attention: but more particularly those elevated individuals to whom it peculiarly belongs to exercise the powers of government.

It has not only attracted the attention of many eminent writers of the British nation, but also of foreign countries. (a)

In delineating, therefore, the power, opulence, and resources of the British Empire in every quarter of the habitable globe, as contemplated in the years 1812 and 1813, it should seem to be most appropriate to commence with a *general view of the population*.

But previously to those details which apply particularly to the British Empire, it may be useful shortly to explain those general principles, upon which the population of the nations of the world is regulated, whether they apply to a civilized or a savage state of society.

In contemplating this interesting subject, it must be admitted that in almost every country considerable checks exist to the rapid increase of population; and that they apply, even in a greater degree, to a savage state of life than to countries where civilization prevails.

According to the actual circumstances of every country the principle of population appears to be always ready to exert itself in full force. In savage life, it is checked principally by the impossibility of finding food, always uncertain and precarious where subsistence is only to be derived from hunting or fishing; from a limited or imperfect agriculture; or from the uncertain and scanty resources arising from a pastoral state of society having no

(a) The principal writers of the British Nation, during the two last and the present century, are these following,

Sir William Temple	Hume	Anderson	Muret	Duberdieu
Sir William Petty	Sir James Stewart	A. Young	Godwin	Bushe
Dr. Davenant	Dr. Adam Smith	Wallace	Cook	Tighe
Gregory King	Dr. Price	Sir John Sinclair	Vancouver	Newenham
South	Dr. Robertson	Sir Frederick Eden	Sym	Paley
Brackenridge	Lord Kaimes	Dirom	Chalmers	Lord Lauderdale
Dr. Short	Mr. Burke	Ferguson	Collins	Malthus.

Among the principal foreign writers are Euler, Towrend, Neckar, Condorcet, Charlevoix, Meau, Volney, &c. But of all the writers on the subject of population, Mr. Malthus appears to take the lead as an advocate for the principle which he labours with great learning and ingenuity to establish. As a political economist his knowledge is profound; and as an able, acute, and logical reasoner, he has perhaps never been surpassed. His talents and learning are unquestionably of the first class; and if in attempting to establish a favourite hypothesis he has perhaps in some instances carried his arguments too far; yet no preceding writer appears to have thrown so much light on a branch of political economy in itself of the greatest importance to the well-being of society. In spite of the alarms which this masterly work has excited in the minds of some men of acknowledged learning and talents, Mr. Malthus will be found (on a full consideration of his arguments and observations taken in connection) to be no friend to a *depopulating system*. On the contrary, he declares in the most explicit terms

“ That an increase of population when it follows its natural order is not only a *positive good* in itself, and absolutely necessary in the further increase of the annual produce of the land and labour of the country—
 “ *He shall be the last to deny.*” *Malthus, page 497.*

fixed residence. The propensity to war also, and the cruelties attending the system of hostility in savage life, to which infanticide may be added, tend in an eminent degree to the destruction of the human species, and when aided by ardent spirits and diseases introduced in most instances where the incivilized come in contact with civilized society; all combine in preventing an increase of people. And hence it is, that the savages appear rather to decrease, particularly in those countries settled by Europeans.

On the contrary, wherever civilization prevails, an augmentation of people will be found in every country where the means of subsistence are redundant, and where from local circumstances it is accessible to the mass of the people. Thus in North America where superabundant resources for the support of a family remove from the mind all apprehension of extreme poverty, misery, or want, the principle of population exerts itself to the utmost, so as to produce a doubling upon an average in less than 25 years, though in districts in the back settlements, where the children of a family are enabled from peculiar circumstances speedily to support themselves, and ultimately to become valuable auxiliaries to their parents in agricultural pursuits, the population doubles in a much shorter period. Its rapidity depends on the number of children born to each marriage, and the proportion of that number which lives to form a fresh and an early union. Under the most favourable circumstances Sir William Petty supposed a doubling possible in ten years. The measure of this rapidity is the proportion which the excess of births above the deaths bears to the whole population.

Where very few checks exist, and where lands can be obtained on easy terms, such is the tendency to procreation that the increase will always be progressive and considerable. According to a table of Euler calculating on a mortality of one in 36, if the births will be to the deaths in the proportion of three to one, the period of doubling will only be $12\frac{1}{2}$ years.

In states, however, where considerable resources are not to be found for the support of a redundant population, the checks to an unshackled increase exist in their full force; and the degree of increase or diminution depends not only on the quantity of food raised in a country, but on the existing resources for the employment of the people through which medium only can food be accessible. During a period of 63 years England uniformly exported a considerable quantity of corn and grain arising from the surplus produce of the soil; and although during the period (from 1701 to 1764) the average price of wheat did not exceed 33s. 3d. a quarter (while there was no depreciation of money) yet these low prices, and an apparent abundance, had little effect on the population of the country which advanced slowly; from which it may be inferred that the means of obtaining subsistence by productive labour were scanty, and that it operated powerfully even in the midst of apparent plenty in restraining marriages and a consequent rapid multiplication of the people. On the contrary, from 1796 to 1811, during which years the prices of corn rose to an enormous height and every other article of the first necessity in the same proportion, the population, notwithstanding the drains for the public service in the naval and military departments, has advanced in a ratio exceeding those years, when no corn

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was imported, and when the agriculture of the country was more than sufficient for the whole population. This can only be accounted for by the vast increase of manufactures and consequent opulence which burst upon the country, affording profitable employment for the mass of the people. And hence it follows, that a country may raise enough of corn for the support of its population, and even export a considerable surplus without materially affecting the population; which can only acquire great activity when the demand for labour somewhat exceeds the supply. It is by the labour of the people alone, and by means of the property created yearly by that labour that all empires, kingdoms, and states, are supported, whether employed in agriculture, (which is the best of all) or in manufactures, commerce, or any other course of productive industry.

Yet where these advantages do not exist, and in some instances even where the sterility of the country renders it impracticable to raise sufficient food for the support of the people, in spite of the moral restraint and the misery which ought to give efficacy to those checks which are opposed to a redundant population, there is a strong tendency to increase and multiply. Switzerland may be adduced as a proof of the justice of this remark, where the density of the population, the insufficiency of food, and the paucity of resources for profitable employment, produce much misery: and where no relief can be found but by emigration to countries, where for want of colonies the labour of the people is lost to the Parent State.

Generally speaking, whatever is the rate of increase in the *means of subsistence* so will be the legitimate increase of population. The one is decidedly limited by the other. All the children born beyond what would be necessary to keep up the population to this level can find relief only in emigration. Otherwise, great distress will ensue, while the support of the surplus population must fall upon the most opulent classes of society for the purpose of maintaining in idleness a portion of the community for whose labour there is no demand, and where without such support they must starve, or become noxious to the public by acts of criminal delinquency.

But while the principle of population is ever ready to exert its full force and even where the means of subsistence exist, it is extremely difficult, and appears almost impracticable, for any government so to direct the industry of the people as either to obtain the greatest quantity of food which the earth could produce, or otherwise advantageously to dispose of their labour so as to yield the most abundant return of which it is capable. In the British dominions it could not be effectually accomplished without a violation of the law of property, and the rights of the people. Yet much might be done by a wise and enlightened government towards the attainment of this object by appropriate laws and stimulating encouragements.

As far as respects agriculture, it is an object of the most vital importance to the nation at large that this desideratum should arrest the attention of the executive government at all times, but more especially at the present crisis in consequence of the rapid increase of the British and Irish population; and more particularly, when it is considered that

in all countries where the population is not only extensive but progressive in a geometrical ratio, an importation of corn equal to the demand is not possible where the deficiency is great. Vide page 23.

And hence (although it appears to have escaped observation) it becomes obvious, that every nation of considerable extent must necessarily not only support the greatest part of its population from the produce of its own soil, but, by promoting resources for *productive labour* enable those who possess *this only*, to apply it to the best purposes so as to obtain the means of subsistence. It is within the reach of possibility that this country, aided by a proper and uniform direction of the national industry, might in the course of a couple of centuries (or perhaps less) contain three times its present population, and every man in the kingdom be better fed and clothed than at present. While the springs of industry continue in vigour and a sufficient part of that industry is directed to agriculture, population will rapidly increase.

A nation like the British Empire, possessed of a vast territory, is unavoidably subject to a degree of uncertainty in its means of subsistence, where the commercial and manufacturing community is nearly equal to, or has extended beyond the produce of its cultivation. In numerous instances of depopulation which occur in history the cause of it may generally be traced to the want of industry, or to its improper direction, arising from bad government—inattention on the part of those who govern, and ignorance combined with despotism, all which operate in producing a want of food and of course depopulation follows. When Rome first adopted the custom of importing her corn, and converted the whole of Italy into pasture, her population diminished, and her power was in proportion abridged. The average importation of corn into Great Britain bears as yet but a small proportion to that which is produced from the national cultivation; and therefore the power of supporting so vast a body of people not concerned in agriculture must be attributed principally to the greatness of the surplus labour in other pursuits. See pages 22 and 23.

It has indeed frequently happened, that where a great diminution of people has suddenly arisen from war, famine, and pestilence, the chasm has been filled up after the cause ceased to operate, and that with a rapidity which is almost incredible: this however is easily to be accounted for by reverting to the principle of population, and it shews the extreme difficulty of depopulating any civilized country by the death or removal of the people where the sources of subsistence and industry remain.—*Let these be taken away, and the mischief is done at once*; but let these resources remain, and men will crowd to the situation which is most tempting and where there is the least competition for the disposal of labour, and in a few generations will people any country to the measure of its means of subsistence. No destruction of inhabitants is so permanently hurtful to population as a revolution in that spirit which is necessary for the increase and support of numbers. Let that spirit be kept up, and let

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