

as an addition to his outlay, because, by the use of it, he would save in his other expenses the equivalent of what it cost him: without it he could not do the same quantity of work, unless at an additional expense equal to the rent. The same thing is true of land. The real expenses of production are those incurred on the worst land, or by the capital employed in the least favorable circumstances. This land or capital pays, as we have seen, no rent. Whoever does pay rent, gets back its full value in extra advantages, and the rent which he pays does not place him in a worse position than, but only in the same position as, his fellow-producer who pays no rent, but whose instrument is one of inferior efficiency.

We have now completed the exposition of the laws which regulate the distribution of the produce of land, labour, and capital, as far as it is possible to discuss those laws independently of the instrumentality by which in a civilized society the distribution is effected; the machinery of Exchange and Price. The more complete elucidation and final confirmation of the laws which we have laid down, and the deduction of their most important consequences, must be preceded by an explanation of the nature and working of that machinery—a subject so extensive and complicated as to require a separate Book.

### BOOK III.

---

### EXCHANGE.

## BOOK III.

---

### EXCHANGE.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### OF VALUE.

§ 1. THE subject on which we are now about to enter fills so important and conspicuous a position in political economy, that in the apprehension of some thinkers its boundaries confound themselves with those of the science itself. One eminent writer has proposed as a name for Political Economy, "Catallactics," or the science of exchanges: by others it has been called the Science of Values. If these denominations had appeared to me logically correct, I must have placed the discussion of the elementary laws of value at the commencement of our inquiry, instead of postponing it to the Third Part; and the possibility of so long deferring it is alone a sufficient proof that this view of the nature of Political Economy is too confined. It is true that in the preceding Books we have not escaped the necessity of anticipating some small portion of the theory of Value, especially as to the value of labour and of land. It is nevertheless evident, that of the two great departments of Political Economy, the production of wealth and its distribution, the

consideration of Value has to do with the latter alone; and with that, only so far as competition, and not usage or custom, is the distributing agency. The conditions and laws of Production would be the same as they are, if the arrangements of society did not depend on Exchange, or did not admit of it. Even in the present system of industrial life, in which employments are minutely subdivided, and all concerned in production depend for their remuneration on the price of a particular commodity, exchange is not the fundamental law of the distribution of the produce, no more than roads and carriages are the essential laws of motion, but merely a part of the machinery for effecting it. To confound these ideas, seems to me not only a logical, but a practical blunder. It is a case of the error too common in political economy, of not distinguishing between necessities arising from laws of nature, and those created by social arrangements: an error, which appears to me to be at all times producing two opposite mischiefs; on the one hand, causing political economists to class the merely temporary truths of their subject among its permanent and universal laws; and on the other, leading many persons to mistake the permanent laws of Production (such as those on which the necessity is grounded of restraining population) for temporary accidents, arising from the existing constitution of society—which those who would frame a new system of social arrangements, are at liberty to disregard.

In a state of society, however, in which the industrial system is entirely founded on purchase and sale, each individual, for the most part, living not on things in the production of which he himself bears a part, but on things obtained by a double exchange, a sale followed by a purchase—the question of Value is fundamental. Almost every speculation respecting the economical interests of a society thus constituted, implies some theory of Value: the smallest error on that subject infects with corresponding error all our other conclusions; and anything vague or misty in our conception of it, creates

confusion and uncertainty in everything else. Happily, there is nothing in the laws of Value which remains for the present or any future writer to clear up; the theory of the subject is complete: the only difficulty to be overcome is that of so stating it as to solve by anticipation the chief perplexities which occur in applying it: and to do this, some minuteness of exposition, and considerable demands on the patience of the reader, are unavoidable. He will be amply repaid, however, (if a stranger to these inquiries) by the ease and rapidity with which a thorough understanding of this subject will enable him to fathom most of the remaining questions of political economy.

§ 2. We must begin by settling our phraseology. Adam Smith, in a passage often quoted, has touched upon the most obvious ambiguity of the word value; which in one of its senses, signifies usefulness, in another, power of purchasing; in his own language, value in use and value in exchange. But (as Mr. De Quincey has remarked) in illustrating this double meaning, Adam Smith has himself fallen into another ambiguity. Things (he says) which have the greatest value in use have often little or no value in exchange; which is true, since that which can be obtained without labour or sacrifice will command no price, however useful or needful it may be. But he proceeds to add, that things which have the greatest value in exchange, as a diamond for example, may have little or no value in use. This is employing the word use, not in the sense in which political economy is concerned with it, but in that other sense in which use is opposed to pleasure. Political economy has nothing to do with the comparative estimation of different uses in the judgment of a philosopher or of a moralist. The use of a thing, in political economy, means its capacity to satisfy a desire, or serve a purpose. Diamonds have this capacity in a high degree, and unless they had it, would not bear any price. Value in use, or as Mr. De Quincey calls it, *teleologic* value, is the extreme

limit of value in exchange. The exchange value of a thing may fall short, to any amount, of its value in use; but that it can ever exceed the value in use, implies a contradiction; it supposes that persons will give, to possess a thing, more than the utmost value which they themselves put upon it, as a means of gratifying their inclinations.

The word Value, when used without adjunct, always means, in political economy, value in exchange; or as it has been called by Adam Smith and his successors, exchangeable value, a phrase which no amount of authority that can be quoted for it can make other than bad English. Mr. De Quincey substitutes the term Exchange Value, which is unexceptionable.

Exchange value requires to be distinguished from Price. The words Value and Price were used as synonymous by the early political economists, and are not always discriminated even by Ricardo. But the most accurate modern writers, to avoid the wasteful expenditure of two good scientific terms on a single idea, have employed Price to express the value of a thing in relation to money; the quantity of money for which it will exchange. By the price of a thing, therefore, we shall henceforth understand its value in money; by the value, or exchange value of a thing, its general power of purchasing; the command which its possession gives over purchaseable commodities in general.

§ 3. But here a fresh demand for explanation presents itself. What is meant by command over commodities in general? The same thing exchanges for a great quantity of some commodities, and for a very small quantity of others. A suit of clothes exchanges for a great quantity of bread, and for a very small quantity of precious stones. The value of a thing in exchange for some commodities may be rising, for others falling. A coat may exchange for less bread this year than last, if the harvest has been bad, but for more glass or iron, if a tax has been taken off those commodities,

or an improvement made in their manufacture. Has the value of the coat, in these circumstances, fallen or risen? It is impossible to say: all that can be said is, that it has fallen in relation to one thing, and risen in respect to another. But there is another case, in which no one would have any hesitation in saying what sort of change had taken place in the value of the coat: namely, if the cause in which the disturbance of exchange values originated, was something directly affecting the coat itself, and not the bread, or the glass. Suppose, for example, that an invention had been made in machinery, by which broadcloth could be woven at half the former cost. The effect of this would be to lower the value of a coat, and if lowered by this cause, it would be lowered not in relation to bread only or to glass only, but to all purchaseable things, except such as happened to be affected at the very time by a similar depressing cause. We should therefore say, that there had been a fall in the exchange value or general purchasing power of a coat. The idea of general exchange value originates in the fact, that there really are causes which tend to alter the value of a thing in exchange for things generally, that is, for all things which are not themselves acted upon by causes of similar tendency.

In considering exchange value scientifically, it is expedient to abstract from all causes except those which originate in the very commodity under consideration. Those which originate in the commodities with which we compare it, affect its value in relation to these commodities; but those which originate in itself, affect its value in relation to all commodities. In order the more completely to confine our attention to these last, it is convenient to assume that all commodities but the one in question remain invariable in their relative values. When we are considering the causes which raise or lower the value of corn, we suppose that woollens, silks, cutlery, sugar, timber, &c., while varying in their power of purchasing corn, remain constant in the pro-

portions in which they exchange for one another. On this assumption, any one of them may be taken as a representative of all the rest: since in whatever manner corn varies in value with respect to any one commodity, it varies in the same manner and degree with respect to every other; and the upward or downward movement of its value estimated in some one thing, is all that needs be considered. Its money value, therefore, or price, will represent as well as anything else its general exchange value, or purchasing power; and from an obvious convenience, will often be employed by us in that representative character; with the proviso that money itself do not vary in its general purchasing power, but that the prices of all things, other than that which we happen to be considering, remain unaltered.

§ 4. The distinction between Value and Price, as we have now defined them, is so obvious, as scarcely to seem in need of any illustration. But in political economy the greatest errors arise from overlooking the most obvious truths. Simple as this distinction is, it has consequences with which a reader unacquainted with the subject would do well to begin early by making himself thoroughly familiar. The following is one of the principal. There is such a thing as a general rise of prices. All commodities may rise in their money price. But there cannot be a general rise of values. It is a contradiction in terms. A can only rise in value by exchanging for a greater quantity of B and C; in which case these must exchange for a smaller quantity of A. All things cannot rise relatively to one another. If one-half of the commodities in the market rise in exchange value, the very terms imply a fall of the other half; and reciprocally, the fall implies a rise. Things which are exchanged for one another can no more all fall, or all rise, than a dozen runners can each outrun all the rest, or a hundred trees all overtop one another. Simple as this truth is, we shall presently see that it is lost sight of in some of the most accredited

doctrines both of theorists and of what are called practical men. And as a first specimen, we may instance the great importance attached in the imagination of most people to a rise or fall of general prices. Because when the price of any one commodity rises, the circumstance usually indicates a rise of its value, people have an indistinct feeling when all prices rise, as if all things simultaneously had risen in value, and all the possessors had become enriched. That the money prices of all things should rise or fall, provided they all rise or fall equally, is in itself, and apart from existing contracts, of no consequence. It affects nobody's wages, profits, or rent. Every one gets more money in the one case, and less in the other; but, of all that is to be bought with money they get neither more nor less than before. It makes no other difference than that of using more or fewer counters to reckon by. The only thing which in this case is really altered in value, is money; and the only persons who either gain or lose are the holders of money, or those who have to receive or to pay fixed sums of it. There is a difference to annuitants and to creditors the one way, and to those who are burthened with annuities, or with debts, the contrary way. There is a disturbance, in short, of fixed money contracts; and this is an evil, whether it takes place in the debtor's favour or in the creditor's. But as to future transactions there is no difference to any one. Let it therefore be remembered (and occasions will often arise for calling it to mind) that a general rise or a general fall of values is a contradiction; and that a general rise or a general fall of prices is merely tantamount to an alteration in the value of money, and is a matter of complete indifference, save in so far as it affects existing contracts for receiving and paying fixed pecuniary amounts.

§ 5. Before commencing the inquiry into the laws of value and price, I have one further observation to make. I must give warning, once for all, that the cases I contemplate

are those in which values and prices are determined by competition alone. In so far only as they are thus determined, can they be reduced to any assignable law. The buyers must be supposed as studious to buy cheap, as the sellers to sell dear. The values and prices, therefore, to which our conclusions apply, are mercantile values and prices; such prices as are quoted in price-currents; prices in the wholesale markets, in which buying as well as selling is a matter of business; in which the buyers take pains to know, and generally do know, the lowest price at which an article of a given quality can be obtained; and in which, therefore, the axiom is true, that there cannot be, for the same article, of the same quality, two prices in the same market. Our propositions will be true in a much more qualified sense, of retail prices; the prices paid in shops, for articles of personal consumption. For such things there often are not merely two, but many prices, in different shops, or even in the same shop; habit and accident having as much to do in the matter as general causes. Purchases for private use, even by people in business, are not always made on business principles: the feelings which come into play in the operation of getting and in that of spending their income, are often extremely different. Either from indolence, or insouciance, or because people think it fine to pay and ask no questions, three-fourths of those who can afford it, give much higher prices than necessary for the things they consume; while the poor often do the same from ignorance and defect of judgment, want of time for searching and making inquiry, and not unfrequently from coercion, open or disguised. For these reasons, retail prices do not follow with all the regularity which might be expected, the action of the causes which determine wholesale prices. The influence of those causes is ultimately felt in the retail markets, and is the real source of such variations in retail prices as are of a general and permanent character. But there is no regular or exact correspondence. Shoes of equally good quality are sold in different shops at prices which

differ considerably; and the price of leather may fall without causing the richer class of buyers to pay less for shoes. Nevertheless, shoes do sometimes fall in price; and when they do, the cause is always some such general circumstance as the cheapening of leather: and when leather is cheapened, even if no difference shows itself in shops frequented by rich people, the artisan and the labourer generally get their shoes cheaper, and there is a visible diminution in the contract prices at which shoes are delivered for the supply of a workhouse or of a regiment. In all reasoning about prices the proviso must be understood, "supposing all parties to take care of their own interest." Inattention to these distinctions has led to improper applications of the abstract principles of political economy, and still oftener to an undue discrediting of those principles through their being compared with a different sort of facts from those which they contemplate, or which can fairly be expected to accord with them.

## CHAPTER II.

OF DEMAND AND SUPPLY, IN THEIR RELATION TO  
VALUE.

§ 1. THAT a thing may have any value in exchange, two conditions are necessary. It must be of some use; that is (as already explained) it must conduce to some purpose, satisfy some desire. No one will pay a price, or part with anything which serves some of his purposes, to obtain a thing which serves none of them. But, secondly, the thing must not only have some utility, there must also be some difficulty in its attainment. "Any article whatever," says Mr. De Quincey\*, "to obtain that artificial sort of value which is meant by exchange value, must begin by offering itself as a means to some desirable purpose; and secondly, even though possessing incontestably this preliminary advantage, it will never ascend to an exchange value in cases where it can be obtained gratuitously and without effort; of which last terms both are necessary as limitations. For often it will happen that some desirable object may be obtained gratuitously; stoop, and you gather it at your feet; but still, because the continued iteration of this stooping exacts a laborious effort, very soon it is found, that to gather for yourself virtually is not gratuitous. In the vast forests of the Canadas, at intervals, wild strawberries may be gratuitously gathered by shiploads: yet such is the exhaustion of a stooping posture, and of a labour so monotonous, that everybody is soon glad to resign the service into mercenary hands."

As was pointed out in the last chapter, the utility of a thing in the estimation of the purchaser, is the extreme limit

of its exchange value: higher the value cannot ascend; peculiar circumstances are required to raise it so high. This topic is happily illustrated by Mr. De Quincey. "Walk into almost any possible shop, buy the first article you see; what will determine its price? In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, simply the element D—difficulty of attainment. The other element, U, or intrinsic utility, will be perfectly inoperative. Let the thing (measured by its uses) be, for your purposes, worth ten guineas, so that you would rather give ten guineas than lose it; yet, if the difficulty of producing it be only worth one guinea, one guinea is the price which it will bear. But still not the less, though U is inoperative, can U be supposed absent? By no possibility; for, if it *had* been absent, assuredly you would not have bought the article even at the lowest price. U acts upon *you*, though it does not act upon the price. On the other hand, in the hundredth case, we will suppose the circumstances reversed: you are on Lake Superior in a steam-boat, making your way to an unsettled region 800 miles a-head of civilization, and consciously with no chance at all of purchasing any luxury whatsoever, little luxury or big luxury, for the space of ten years to come. One fellow-passenger, whom you will part with before sunset, has a powerful musical snuffbox; knowing by experience the power of such a toy over your own feelings, the magic with which at times it lulls your agitations of mind, you are vehemently desirous to purchase it. In the hour of leaving London you had forgot to do so; here is a final chance. But the owner, aware of your situation not less than yourself, is determined to operate by a strain pushed to the very uttermost upon U, upon the intrinsic worth of the article in your individual estimate for your individual purposes. He will not hear of D as any controlling power or mitigating agency in the case; and finally, although at six guineas a-piece in London or Paris you might have loaded a waggon with such boxes, you pay sixty rather than lose it when the last knell of the clock has sounded, which sum-

\* *Logic of Political Economy*, p. 13.

mons you to buy now or to forfeit for ever. Here, as before, only one element is operative: before it was D, now it is U. But after all, D was not absent, though inoperative. The inertness of D allowed U to put forth its total effect. The practical compression of D being withdrawn, U springs up like water in a pump, when released from the pressure of air. Yet still that D was present to your thoughts, though the price was otherwise regulated, is evident; both because U and D must coexist in order to found any case of exchange value whatever, and because undeniably you take into very particular consideration this D, the extreme difficulty of attainment (which here is the greatest possible, viz., an impossibility) before you consent to have the price racked up to U. The special D has vanished; but it is replaced in your thoughts by an unlimited D. Undoubtedly you have submitted to U in extremity as the regulating force of the price; but it was under a sense of D's latent presence. Yet D is so far from exerting any positive force, that the retirement of D from all agency whatever on the price—this it is which creates as it were a perfect vacuum, and through that vacuum U rushes up to its highest and ultimate gradation.”

This case, in which the value is wholly regulated by the necessities or desires of the purchaser, is the case of strict and absolute monopoly; in which, the article desired being only obtainable from one person, he can exact any equivalent, short of the point at which no purchaser could be found. But it is not a necessary consequence, even of complete monopoly, that the value should be forced up to this ultimate limit: as will be seen when we have considered the law of value in so far as depending on the other element, difficulty of attainment.

§ 2. The difficulty of attainment which determines value, is not always the same kind of difficulty. It sometimes consists in an absolute limitation of the supply. There

are things of which it is physically impossible to increase the quantity, beyond certain narrow limits. Such are those wines which can be grown only in peculiar circumstances of soil, climate, and exposure. Such also are ancient sculptures; pictures by the old masters; rare books or coins, or other articles of antiquarian curiosity. Among such may also be reckoned houses and building-ground, in a town of definite extent (such as Venice, or any fortified town where fortifications are necessary to security); the most desirable sites in any town whatever; houses and parks peculiarly favoured by natural beauty, in places where that advantage is uncommon. Potentially, all land whatever is a commodity of this class; and might be practically so, in countries fully occupied and cultivated.

But there is another category, (embracing the majority of all things that are bought and sold), in which the obstacle to attainment consists only in the labour and expense requisite to produce the commodity. Without a certain labour and expense it cannot be had; but when any one is willing to incur this, there needs be no limit to the multiplication of the product. If there were labourers enough and machinery enough, cottons, woollens, or linens might be produced by thousands of yards for every single yard now manufactured. There would be a point, no doubt, where further increase would be stopped by the incapacity of the earth to afford more of the material. But there is no need, for any purpose of political economy, to contemplate a time when this ideal limit could become a practical one.

There is a third case, intermediate between the two preceding, and rather more complex, which I shall at present merely indicate, but the importance of which in political economy is extremely great. There are commodities which can be multiplied to an indefinite extent by labour and expenditure, but not by a fixed amount of labour and expenditure. Only a limited quantity can be produced at a given cost; if more is wanted, it must be produced at a greater



cost. To this class, as has been often repeated, agricultural produce belongs; and generally all the rude produce of the earth; and this peculiarity is a source of very important consequences; one of which is the necessity of a limit to population; and another, the payment of rent.

§ 3. These being the three classes, in one or other of which all things that are bought and sold must take their place, we shall consider them in their order. And first, of things absolutely limited in quantity, such as ancient sculptures or pictures.

Of such things it is commonly said, that their value depends upon their scarcity; but the expression is not sufficiently definite to serve our purpose. Others say, with somewhat greater precision, that the value depends on the demand and the supply. But even this statement requires much explanation, to make it a clear exponent of the relation between the value of a thing, and the causes of which that value is an effect.

The supply of a commodity is an intelligible expression: it means the quantity offered for sale; the quantity that is to be had, at a given time and place, by those who wish to purchase it. But what is meant by the demand? Not the mere desire for the commodity. A beggar may desire a pineapple; but his desire, however great, will have no influence on the price. Writers have therefore given a more limited sense to demand, and have defined it, the wish to possess, combined with the power of purchasing. To distinguish demand in this technical sense, from the demand which is synonymous with desire, they call the former *effectual demand*\*. After this explanation, it is usually supposed that

\* Adam Smith, who introduced the expression "effectual demand," employed it to denote the demand of those who are willing and able to give for the commodity what he calls its natural price, that is, the price which will enable it to be permanently produced and brought to market.—See his chapter on Natural and Market Price (book i. ch. 7.)

there remains no further difficulty, and that the value depends upon the ratio between the effectual demand, as thus defined, and the supply.

These phrases, however, fail to satisfy any one who requires clear ideas, and a perfectly precise expression of them. Some confusion must always attach to a phrase so inappropriate as that of a *ratio* between two things not of the same denomination. What ratio can there be between a quantity and a desire, or even a desire combined with a power? A ratio between demand and supply is only intelligible if by demand we mean the quantity demanded, and if the ratio intended is that between the quantity demanded and the quantity supplied. But again, the quantity demanded is not a fixed quantity, even at the same time and place; it varies according to the value: if the thing is cheap, there is usually a demand for more of it than when it is dear. The demand, therefore, partly depends on the value. But it was before laid down, that the value depends on the demand. From this contradiction how shall we extricate ourselves? How solve the paradox, of two things, each depending upon the other?

Although the solution of these difficulties is obvious enough, the difficulties themselves are not fanciful; and I bring them forward thus prominently, because I am certain that they obscurely haunt every inquirer into the subject who has not openly faced and distinctly realized them. Undoubtedly the true solution must have been frequently given, although I cannot call to mind any one who had given it before myself, except the eminently clear thinker and skilful expositor, J. B. Say. I should have imagined, however, that it must be familiar to all political economists, if the writings of several did not give evidence of some want of clearness on the point, and if the instance of Mr. De Quincey did not prove that the complete non-recognition and implied denial of it are compatible with great intellectual ingenuity, and close intimacy with the subject-matter.

§ 4. Meaning, by the word demand, the quantity demanded, and remembering that this is not a fixed quantity, but in general varies according to the value, let us suppose that the demand at some particular time exceeds the supply, that is, there are persons ready to buy, at the market value, a greater quantity than is offered for sale. Competition takes place on the side of the buyers, and the value rises: but how much? In the ratio (some may suppose) of the deficiency: if the demand exceeds the supply by one-third, the value rises one-third. By no means: for when the value has risen one-third, the demand may still exceed the supply; there may, even at that higher value, be a greater quantity wanted than is to be had; and the competition of buyers may still continue. If the article is a necessary of life, which, rather than resign, people are willing to pay for at any price, a deficiency of one-third may raise the price to double, triple, or quadruple\*. Or, on the contrary, the competition may cease before the value has risen in even the proportion of the deficiency. A rise, short of one-third, may place the article beyond the means, or beyond the inclinations, of purchasers to the full amount. At what point, then, will the rise be arrested? At the point, whatever it be, which equalizes the demand and the supply: at the price which cuts off the extra third from the demand, or brings forward additional sellers sufficient to supply it. When, in either of these ways, or by a combination of both, the demand becomes equal and no more than equal to the supply, the rise of value will stop.

The converse case is equally simple. Instead of a demand

---

\* "The price of corn in this country has risen from 100 to 200 per cent and upwards, when the utmost computed deficiency of the crops has not been more than between one-sixth and one-third below an average, and when that deficiency has been relieved by foreign supplies. If there should be a deficiency of the crops amounting to one-third, without any surplus from a former year, and without any chance of relief by importation, the price might rise five, six, or even ten-fold."—Tooke's *History of Prices*, vol. i. pp. 13—5.

beyond the supply, let us suppose a supply exceeding the demand. The competition will now be on the side of the sellers: the extra quantity can only find a market, by calling forth an additional demand equal to itself. This is accomplished by means of cheapness; the value falls, and brings the article within the reach of more numerous consumers, or induces those who were already consumers to make increased purchases. The fall of value required to re-establish equality, is different in different cases. The kinds of things in which it is commonly greatest, are at the two extremities of the scale; absolute necessities, or those peculiar luxuries, the taste for which is confined to a small class. In the case of food, as those who have already enough do not require more on account of its cheapness, but rather expend in other things what they save in food, the increased consumption occasioned by cheapness carries off, as experience shows, a very small part of the extra supply caused by a good harvest\*; and the fall is practically arrested only when the farmers withdraw their corn, and hold it back in hopes of a higher price; or by the operations of speculators who buy corn when it is cheap, and store it up to be brought forth when more urgently wanted. Whether the demand and supply are equalized by an increased demand, the result of cheapness, or by withdrawing a part of the supply, equalized they are in either case.

Thus we see that the idea of a *ratio*, as between demand and supply, is out of place, and has no concern in the matter: the proper mathematical analogy is that of an *equation*. Demand and supply, the quantity demanded and the quantity supplied, will be made equal. If unequal at any moment, competition equalizes them, and the manner in which this is done is by an adjustment of the value. If the demand increases, the value rises; if the demand diminishes, the value falls: again, if the supply falls off, the value rises; and

---

\* See Tooke, and the Report of the Agricultural Committee in 1821.

falls, if the supply is increased. The rise or the fall continues until the demand and supply are again equal to one another: and the value which a commodity will bring in any market, is no other than the value which, in that market, gives a demand just sufficient to carry off the existing or expected supply.

This, then, is the Law of Value, with respect to all commodities not susceptible of being multiplied at pleasure. Such commodities, no doubt, are exceptions. There is another law for that much larger class of things, which admit of indefinite multiplication. But it is not the less necessary to conceive distinctly and grasp firmly the theory of this exceptional case. In the first place, it will be found to be of great assistance in rendering the more common case intelligible. And in the next place, the principle of the exception stretches wider, and embraces more cases, than might at first be supposed.

§ 5. There are but few commodities which are naturally and necessarily limited in supply. But any commodity whatever may be artificially so. Any commodity may be the subject of a monopoly; like tea, in this country, up to 1834; tobacco in France, salt and opium in British India, at present. The price of a monopolized commodity is commonly supposed to be arbitrary; depending on the will of the monopolist, and limited only (as in Mr. De Quincey's case of the musical box in the wilds of America) by the buyer's extreme estimate of its worth to himself. This is in one sense true, but forms no exception, nevertheless, to the dependence of the value on supply and demand. The monopolist can fix the value as high as he pleases, short of what the consumer either could not or would not pay; but he can only do so by limiting the supply. The Dutch East India Company obtained a monopoly price for the produce of the Spice Islands, but to do so they were obliged, in good seasons, to destroy a portion of the crop. Had they persisted

in selling all that they produced, they must have forced a market by reducing the price, so low, perhaps, that they would have received for the larger quantity a less total return than for the smaller: at least they showed that such was their opinion by destroying the surplus. Even on Lake Superior, Mr. De Quincey's huckster could not have sold his box for sixty guineas, if he had possessed two musical boxes and desired to sell them both. Supposing the cost price of each to be six guineas, he would have taken seventy for the two in preference to sixty for one; that is, although his monopoly was the closest possible, he would have sold the boxes at thirty-five guineas each, notwithstanding that sixty was not beyond the buyer's estimate of the article for his purposes. Monopoly value, therefore, does not depend on any peculiar principle, but is a mere variety of the ordinary case of demand and supply.

Again, although there are few commodities which are at all times and for ever unsusceptible of increase of supply, any commodity whatever may be temporarily so, and with some commodities this is habitually the case. Agricultural produce, for example, cannot be increased in quantity before the next harvest; the quantity of corn already existing in the world, is all that can be had for sometimes a year to come. During that interval, corn is practically assimilated to things of which the quantity cannot be increased. In the case of most commodities, it requires a certain time to increase their quantity; and if the demand increases, then until a corresponding supply can be brought forward, that is until the supply can accommodate itself to the demand, the value will so rise as to accommodate the demand to the supply.

There is another case, the exact converse of this. There are some articles of which the supply may be indefinitely increased, but cannot be rapidly diminished. There are things so durable that the quantity in existence is at all times very great in comparison with the annual produce. Gold,

and the more durable metals, are things of this sort; and also houses. The supply of such things might of course be at once diminished by destroying them; but to do this could only be the interest of the possessor if he had a monopoly of the article, and could repay himself for the destruction of a part by the increased value of the remainder. The value, therefore, of such things may continue for a long time so low, either from excess of supply or falling off in the demand, as to put a complete stop to further production; the diminution of supply by wearing out being so slow a process, that a long time is requisite, even under a total suspension of production, to restore the original value. During that interval the value will be regulated solely by supply and demand, and will rise very gradually as the existing stock wears out, until there is again a remunerating value, and production resumes its course.

Finally, there are commodities of which, though capable of being increased or diminished to a great, and even an unlimited extent, the value never depends upon anything but demand and supply. This is the case, in particular, with the commodity Labour; of the value of which we have treated copiously in the preceding Book: and there are many cases besides in which we shall find it necessary to call in this principle to solve difficult questions of exchange value. This will be particularly exemplified when we treat of International Values; that is, of the terms of interchange between things produced in different countries, or, to speak more generally, in distant places. But into these questions we cannot enter until we shall have examined the case of commodities which can be increased in quantity indefinitely and at pleasure; and shall have determined by what law, other than that of Demand and Supply, the permanent or average values of such commodities are regulated. This we shall do in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III.

### OF COST OF PRODUCTION, IN ITS RELATION TO VALUE.

§ 1. WHEN the production of a commodity is the effect of labour and expenditure, whether the commodity is susceptible of unlimited multiplication or not, there is a minimum value which is the essential condition of its being permanently produced. The value at any particular time is the result of supply and demand; and is always that which is necessary to create a market for the existing supply. But unless that value is sufficient to repay the Cost of Production, and to afford, besides, the ordinary expectations of profit, the commodity will not continue to be produced. Capitalists will not go on permanently producing at a loss. They will not even go on producing at a profit less than they can live upon. Persons whose capital is already embarked, and cannot easily be extricated, will persevere for a considerable time without profit, and have been known to persevere even at a loss, in hopes of better times. But they will not do so indefinitely, or when there is nothing to indicate that times are likely to improve. No new capital will be invested in an employment, unless there be an expectation not only of some profit, but of a profit as great (regard being had to the degree of eligibility of the employment in other respects,) as can be hoped for in any other occupation at that time and place. When such profit is evidently not to be had, if people do not actually withdraw their capital, they at least abstain from replacing it when consumed. The cost of production, together with the ordinary profit, may therefore be called the *necessary* price, or value, of all things made by labour and capital. Nobody willingly produces in the prospect of loss.

Whoever does so, does it under a miscalculation, which he corrects as fast as he is able.

When a commodity is not only made by labour and capital, but can be made by them in indefinite quantity, this Necessary Value, the minimum with which the producers will be content, is also, if competition is free, the maximum which they can expect. If the value of a commodity is such that it repays the cost of production not only with the customary but with a higher rate of profit, capital rushes to share in this extra gain, and by increasing the supply of the article, reduces its value. This is not a mere supposition or surmise, but a fact familiar to those conversant with commercial operations. Whenever a new line of business presents itself, offering a hope of unusual profits, and whenever any established trade or manufacture is believed to be yielding a greater profit than customary, there is sure to be in a short time so large a production or importation of the commodity, as not only destroys the extra profit, but generally goes beyond the mark, and sinks the value as much too low as it had before been raised too high; until the oversupply is corrected by a total or partial suspension of further production. As I have already intimated\*, these variations in the quantity produced do not presuppose or require that any person should change his employment. Those whose business is thriving, increase their produce by availing themselves more largely of their credit, while those who are not making the ordinary profit, restrict their operations, and (in manufacturing phrase) work short time. In this mode is surely and speedily effected the equilization, not of profits perhaps, but of the expectations of profit, in different occupations.

As a general rule, then, things tend to exchange for one another at such values as will enable each producer to be repaid the cost of production with the ordinary profit; in other words, such as will give to all producers the same rate

\* *Supra*, p. 487.

of profit on their outlay. But in order that the profit may be equal where the outlay, that is, the cost of production, is equal, things must on the average exchange for one another in the ratio of their cost of production; things, of which the cost of production is the same, must be of the same value. For only thus will an equal outlay yield an equal return. If a farmer with a capital equal to 1,000 quarters of corn, can produce 1,200 quarters, yielding him a profit of 20 per cent; whatever else can be produced in the same time by a capital of 1,000 quarters, must be worth, that is, must exchange for, 1,200 quarters, otherwise the producer would gain either more or less than 20 per cent.

Adam Smith and Ricardo have called that value of a thing which is proportional to its cost of production, its Natural Value (or its Natural Price). They meant by this, the point about which the value oscillates, and to which it always tends to return; the central value, towards which, as Adam Smith expresses it, the market value of a thing is constantly gravitating; and any deviation from which is but a temporary irregularity, which, the moment it exists, sets forces in motion tending to correct it. On an average of years, sufficient to enable the oscillations on one side of the central line to be compensated by those on the other, the market value agrees with the natural value; but it very seldom coincides exactly with it at any particular time. The sea everywhere tends to a level; but it never is at an exact level; its surface is always ruffled by waves, and often agitated by storms. It is enough that no point, at least in the open sea, is permanently higher than another. Each place is alternately elevated and depressed; but the ocean preserves its level.

§ 2. The latent influence by which the values of things are made to conform in the long run to the cost of production, is the variation that would otherwise take place in the supply of the commodity. The supply would be increased if the thing continued to sell above the ratio of its cost of production,

and would be diminished if it fell below that ratio. But we must not therefore suppose it to be necessary that the supply should *actually* be either diminished or increased. Suppose that the cost of production of a thing is cheapened by some mechanical invention, or increased by a tax. The value of the thing would in a little time, if not immediately, fall in the one case and rise in the other; and it would do so, simply because if it did not, the supply would in the one case be increased, until the price fell, in the other diminished, until it rose. For this reason, and from the erroneous notion that value depends on the *proportion* between the demand and the supply, many persons suppose that this proportion must be altered whenever there is any change in the value of the commodity; that the value cannot fall through a diminution of the cost of production, unless the supply is permanently increased; nor rise, unless the supply is permanently diminished. But this is not the fact: there is no need that there should be any actual alteration of supply; and when there is, the alteration, if permanent, is not the cause but the consequence of the alteration in value. If, indeed, the supply *could* not be increased, no diminution in the cost of production would lower the value: but there is by no means any necessity that it *should*. The mere possibility often suffices; the dealers are aware of what *would* happen, and their mutual competition makes them anticipate the result by lowering the price. Whether there will be a greater permanent supply of the commodity after its production has been cheapened, depends on quite another question, namely, on whether a greater quantity is wanted, at the reduced value. Most commonly a greater quantity is wanted, but not necessarily. "A man," says Mr. De Quincey\*, "buys an article of instant applicability to his own purposes the more readily and the more largely as it happens to be cheaper. Silk handkerchiefs having

\* *Logic of Political Economy*, pp. 230—1.

fallen to half price, he will buy, perhaps, in threefold quantity; but he does not buy more steam-engines because the price is lowered. His demand for steam-engines is almost always predetermined by the circumstances of his situation. So far as he considers the cost at all, it is much more the cost of working this engine than the cost upon its purchase. But there are many articles for which the market is absolutely and merely limited by a pre-existing *system*, to which those articles are attached as subordinate parts or members. How could we force the dials or faces of timepieces by artificial cheapness to sell more plentifully than the inner works or movements of such timepieces? Could the sale of wine-vaults be increased without increasing the sale of wine? Or the tools of shipwrights find an enlarged market whilst ship-building was stationary? . . . Offer to a town of 3,000 inhabitants a stock of hearses, no cheapness will tempt that town into buying more than one. Offer a stock of yachts, the chief cost lies in manning, victualling, repairing; no diminution upon the mere price to a purchaser will tempt into the market any man whose habits and propensities had not already disposed him to such a purchase. So of professional costume for bishops, lawyers, students at Oxford." Nobody doubts, however, that the price and value of all these things would be eventually lowered by any diminution of their cost of production; and lowered through the apprehension entertained of new competitors, and an increased supply: though the great hazard to which a new competitor would expose himself, in an article not susceptible of any considerable extension of its market, would enable the established dealers to maintain their original prices much longer than they could do in an article offering more encouragement to competition.

Again, reverse the case, and suppose the cost of production increased, as for example by laying a tax on the commodity. The value would rise; and that, probably, immediately. Would the supply be diminished? Only if the increase of value diminished the demand. Whether this

effect followed, would soon appear, and if it did, the value would recede somewhat, from excess of supply, until the production was reduced, and would then rise again. There are many articles for which it requires a very considerable rise of price, materially to reduce the demand; in particular, articles of necessity, such as the habitual food of the people; in England, wheaten bread: of which there is probably as much produced, at a high cost price, as there would be at a price considerably lower. Yet it is especially in such things, that dearness or high price is popularly confounded with scarcity. Food may be dear from scarcity, as after a bad harvest; but the dearness (for example) which is the effect of taxation, or of corn laws, has nothing whatever to do with insufficient supply: such causes do not much diminish the quantity of food in a country: it is other things rather than food that are diminished in quantity by them, since, those who pay more for food not having so much to expend otherwise, the production of other things contracts itself to the limits of a smaller demand.

It is, therefore, strictly correct to say, that the value of things which can be increased in quantity at pleasure, does not depend (except accidentally, and during the time necessary for production to adjust itself,) upon demand and supply; on the contrary, demand and supply depend upon it. There is a demand for a certain quantity of the commodity at its *natural* value, and to that the supply in the long run endeavours to conform. When it fails of so conforming, it is either from miscalculation, or from a change in some of the elements of the problem; either in the natural value, that is, in the cost of production; or in the demand, from an alteration in public taste or in the number or wealth of the consumers. These causes of disturbance are very liable to occur, and when any one of them does occur, the market value of the article ceases to agree with the natural value. The real law of demand and supply, the equation between them, holds good in all cases: if a value different from the

natural value be necessary to make the demand equal to the supply, the market value will deviate from the natural value: but only for a time; for the permanent tendency of supply is to conform itself to the demand which is found by experience to exist for the commodity when selling at its natural value. If the supply is either more or less than this, it is so accidentally, and affords either more or less than the ordinary rate of profit; which under free competition cannot long continue to be the case.

To recapitulate; demand and supply govern the value of all things which cannot be indefinitely increased; except that even for them, when produced by industry, there is a minimum value, determined by the cost of production. But in all things which admit of indefinite multiplication, demand and supply only determine the perturbations of value, during a period which cannot exceed the length of time necessary for altering the supply. While thus ruling the oscillations of value, they themselves obey a superior force, which makes value gravitate towards Cost of Production, and which would settle it and keep it there, if fresh disturbing influences were not continually arising to make it again deviate. To pursue the same strain of metaphor, demand and supply always rush to an equilibrium, but the condition of *stable* equilibrium is when things exchange for each other according to their cost of production, or, in the expression we have used, when things are at their Natural Value.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ULTIMATE ANALYSIS OF COST OF PRODUCTION.

§ 1. THE component elements of Cost of Production have been set forth in the First Part of this enquiry\*. The principal of them, and so much the principal as to be nearly the sole, we found to be Labour. What the production of a thing costs to its producer, or its series of producers, is the labour expended in producing it. If we consider as the producer the capitalist who makes the advances, the word Labour may be replaced by the word Wages: what the produce costs to him, is the wages which he has had to pay. At the first glance indeed this seems to be only a part of his outlay, since he has not only paid wages to labourers, but has likewise provided them with tools, materials, and perhaps buildings. These tools, materials, and buildings, however, were produced by labour and capital; and their value, like that of the article to the production of which they are subservient, depends on cost of production, which again is resolvable into labour. The cost of production of broadcloth does not wholly consist in the wages of weavers; which alone are directly paid by the cloth manufacturer. It consists also of the wages of spinners and woolcombers, and, it may be added, of shepherds, all of which the clothier has paid for in the price of yarn. It consists too of the wages of builders and brickmakers, which he has reimbursed in the contract price of erecting his factory. It partly consists of the wages of machine makers, iron founders, and miners. And to these must be added the wages of the carriers who transported any of the means and appliances of the production to the

\* *Supra*, pp. 37-9.

### ULTIMATE ANALYSIS OF COST OF PRODUCTION. 541

place where they were to be used, and the product itself to the place where it is to be sold.

The value of commodities, therefore, depends principally (we shall presently see whether it depends solely) on the quantity of labour required for their production; including in the idea of production, that of conveyance to the market. "In estimating" says Ricardo\*, "the exchangeable value of stockings, for example, we shall find that their value, comparatively with other things, depends on the total quantity of labour necessary to manufacture them and bring them to market. First, there is the labour necessary to cultivate the land on which the raw cotton is grown; secondly, the labour of conveying the cotton to the country where the stockings are to be manufactured, which includes a portion of the labour bestowed in building the ship in which it is conveyed, and which is charged in the freight of the goods; thirdly, the labour of the spinner and weaver; fourthly, a portion of the labour of the engineer, smith, and carpenter, who erected the buildings and machinery by the help of which they are made; fifthly, the labour of the retail dealer, and of many others, whom it is unnecessary further to particularize. The aggregate sum of these various kinds of labour, determines the quantity of other things for which these stockings will exchange, while the same consideration of the various quantities of labour which have been bestowed on those other things, will equally govern the portion of them which will be given for the stockings.

"To convince ourselves that this is the real foundation of exchangeable value, let us suppose any improvement to be made in the means of abridging labour in any one of the various processes through which the raw cotton must pass before the manufactured stockings come to the market to be exchanged for other things; and observe the effects which will follow. If fewer men were required to cultivate the

\* *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, ch. i. sect. 3.



raw cotton, or if fewer sailors were employed in navigating, or shipwrights in constructing, the ship in which it was conveyed to us; if fewer hands were employed in raising the buildings and machinery, or if these, when raised, were rendered more efficient; the stockings would inevitably fall in value, and command less of other things. They would fall, because a less quantity of labour was necessary to their production, and would therefore exchange for a smaller quantity of those things in which no such abridgment of labour had been made.

“Economy in the use of labour never fails to reduce the relative value of a commodity, whether the saving be in the labour necessary to the manufacture of the commodity itself, or in that necessary to the formation of the capital, by the aid of which it is produced. In either case the price of stockings would fall, whether there were fewer men employed as bleachers, spinners, and weavers, persons immediately necessary to their manufacture; or as sailors, carriers, engineers, and smiths, persons more indirectly concerned. In the one case, the whole saving of labour would fall on the stockings, because that portion of labour was wholly confined to the stockings; in the other, a portion only would fall on the stockings, the remainder being applied to all those other commodities, to the production of which the buildings, machinery, and carriage, were subservient.”

§ 2. It will have been observed that Ricardo expresses himself as if the *quantity* of labour which it costs to produce a commodity and bring it to market, were the only thing on which its value depended. But since the cost of production to the capitalist is not labour but wages, and since wages may be either greater or less, the quantity of labour being the same; it would seem that the value of the product cannot be determined solely by the quantity of labour, but by the quantity together with the remuneration; and that values must partly depend on wages.

In order to decide this point, it must be considered, that value is a relative term; that the value of a commodity is not a name for an inherent and substantive quality of the thing itself, but means the quantity of other things which can be obtained in exchange for it. The value of one thing, must always be understood relatively to some other thing or to things in general. Now the relation of one thing to another cannot be altered by any cause which affects them both alike. A rise or fall of general wages is a fact which affects all commodities in the same manner, and therefore affords no reason why they should exchange for each other in one rather than in another proportion. To suppose that high wages make high values, is to suppose that there can be such a thing as general high values. But this is a contradiction in terms: the high value of some things is synonymous with the low value of others. The mistake arises from not attending to values but only to prices. Though there is no such thing as a general rise of values, there is such a thing as a general rise of prices. As soon as we form distinctly the idea of values, we see that high or low wages can have nothing to do with them; but that high wages make high prices, is a popular and widely-spread opinion. The whole amount of error involved in this proposition can only be seen thoroughly when we come to the theory of money; at present we need only say that if it be true, there can be no such thing as a real rise of wages; for if wages could not rise without a proportional rise of the price of everything, they could not, for any substantial purpose, rise at all. This surely is a sufficient *reductio ad absurdum*, and shows the amazing folly of the propositions which may and do become, and long remain, accredited doctrines of popular political economy. It must be remembered too, that general high prices, even supposing them to exist, can be of no use to a producer or dealer, considered as such; for if they increase his money returns, they increase in the same degree all his expenses. There is no mode in which capitalists can com-

pensate themselves for a high cost of labour, through any action on values or prices. It cannot be prevented from taking its effect in low profits. If the labourers really get more, that is, get the produce of more labour, a smaller percentage must remain for profit. From this Law of Distribution, resting as it does on a law of arithmetic, there is no escape. The mechanism of Exchange and Price may hide it from us, but is quite powerless to alter it.

§ 3. Although, however, *general* wages, whether high or low, do not affect values, yet if wages are higher in one employment than in another, or if they rise or fall permanently in one employment without doing so in others, these inequalities do really operate upon values. The causes which make wages vary from one employment to another, have been considered in a former chapter. When the wages of an employment permanently exceed the average rate, the value of the thing produced will, in the same degree, exceed the standard determined by mere quantity of labour. Things, for example, which are made by skilled labour, exchange for the produce of a much greater quantity of unskilled labour; for no reason but because the labour is more highly paid. If, through the extension of education, the labourers competent to skilled employments were so increased in number as to diminish the difference between their wages and those of common labour, all things produced by labour of the superior kind would fall in value, compared with things produced by common labour, and these might be said therefore to rise in value. We have before remarked that the difficulty of passing from one class of employments to a class greatly superior, has hitherto caused the wages of all those classes of labourers who are separated from one another by any very marked barrier, to depend more than might be supposed upon the increase of the population of each class, considered separately; and that the inequalities in the remuneration of labour which cannot be accounted for by differences of hard-

ness or disagreeableness, are much greater than could exist if the competition of the labouring people generally could be brought practically to bear on each particular employment. It follows from this that wages in different employments do not rise or fall simultaneously, but are, for short and sometimes even for long periods, nearly independent of one another. All such disparities evidently alter the *relative* costs of production of different commodities, and will therefore be completely represented in their natural or average value.

It thus appears that the maxim laid down by some of the best political economists, that wages do not enter into value, is expressed with greater latitude than the truth warrants, or than accords with their own meaning. Wages do enter into value. The relative *wages* of the labour necessary for producing different commodities, affect their value just as much as the relative *quantities* of labour. It is true, the absolute wages paid have no effect upon values; but neither has the absolute quantity of labour. If that were to vary simultaneously and equally in all commodities, values would not be affected. If, for instance, the general efficiency of all labour were increased, so that all things without exception could be produced in the same quantity as before with a smaller amount of labour, no trace of this general diminution of cost of production would show itself in the values of commodities. Any change which might take place in them would only represent the unequal degrees in which the improvement affected different things; and would consist in cheapening those in which the saving of labour had been the greatest, while those in which there had been some, but a less saving of labour, would actually rise in value. In strictness, therefore, wages of labour have as much to do with value as quantity of labour: and neither Ricardo nor any one else has denied the fact. In considering, however, the causes of *variations* in value, quantity of labour is the thing of chief importance; for when that varies, it is generally in one or a few commodities at a time, but the variations of wages (except

passing fluctuations) are usually general, and have no considerable effect on value.

§ 4. Thus far of labour, or wages, as an element in cost of production. But in our analysis, in the First Book, of the requisites of production, we found that there is another necessary element in it besides labour. There is also capital; and this being the result of abstinence, the produce, or its value, must be sufficient to remunerate, not only all the labour required, but the abstinence of all the persons by whom the remuneration of the different classes of labourers was advanced. The return for abstinence is Profit. And profit, we have also seen, is not exclusively the surplus remaining to the capitalist after he has been compensated for his outlay, but forms, in most cases, no unimportant part of the outlay itself. The flax-spinner, part of whose expenses consists of the purchase of flax and of machinery, has had to pay, in their price, not only the wages of the labour by which the flax was grown and the machinery made, but the profits of the grower, the flax-dresser, the miner, the iron-founder, and the machine-maker. All these profits, together with those of the spinner himself, were again advanced by the weaver, in the price of his material, linen yarn: and along with them the profits of a fresh set of machine-makers, and of the miners and iron-workers who supplied them with their metallic material. All these advances form part of the cost of production of linen. Profits, therefore, as well as wages, enter into the cost of production which determines the value of the produce.

Value, however, being purely relative, cannot depend upon absolute profits, no more than upon absolute wages, but upon relative profits only. High general profits cannot, any more than high general wages, be a cause of high values, because high general values are an absurdity and a contradiction. In so far as profits enter into the cost of production of all things, they cannot affect the value of any. It is

only by entering in a greater degree into the cost of production of some things than of others, that they can have any influence on value.

For example, we have seen that there are causes which necessitate a permanently higher rate of profit in certain employments than in others. There must be a compensation for superior risk, trouble, and disagreeableness. This can only be obtained by selling the commodity at a value above that which is due to the quantity of labour necessary for its production. If gunpowder exchanged for other things in no higher ratio than that of the labour required from first to last for producing it, no one would set up a powder-mill. Butchers are certainly a more prosperous class than bakers, and do not seem to be exposed to greater risks, since it is not remarked that they are oftener bankrupts. They seem, therefore, to obtain higher profits, which can only arise from the more limited competition, caused by the unpleasantness, and to a certain degree, the unpopularity of their trade. But this higher profit implies that they sell their commodity at a higher value than that due to their labour and outlay. All inequalities of profit which are necessary and permanent, are represented in the relative values of the commodities.

§ 5. Profits, however, may enter more largely into the conditions of production of one commodity than of another, even though there be no difference in the *rate* of profit between the two employments. The one commodity may be called upon to yield profit during a longer period of time than the other. The example by which this case is usually illustrated is that of wine. Suppose a quantity of wine, and a quantity of cloth, made by equal amounts of labour, and that labour paid at the same rate. The cloth does not improve by keeping; the wine does. Suppose that, to attain the desired quality, the wine requires to be kept five years. The producer or dealer will not keep it, unless at the end of five years he can sell it for as much more than the cloth, as

amounts to five years' profit, accumulated at compound interest. The wine and the cloth were made by the same original outlay. Here then is a case in which the natural values, relatively to one another, of two commodities, do not conform to their cost of production alone, but to their cost of production *plus* something else. Unless, indeed, for the sake of generality in the expression, we include the profit which the wine-merchant foregoes during the five years, in the cost of production of the wine: looking upon it as a kind of additional outlay, over and above his other advances, for which outlay he must be indemnified at last.

All commodities made by machinery are assimilated, at least approximatively, to the wine in the preceding example. In comparison with things made wholly by immediate labour, profits enter more largely into their cost of production. Suppose two commodities, A and B, each requiring a year for its production, by means of a capital which we will on this occasion denote by money, and suppose to be 1,000*l.* A is made wholly by immediate labour, the whole 1,000*l.* being expended directly in wages. B is made by means of labour which cost 500*l.* and a machine which cost 500*l.*, and the machine is worn out by one year's use. The two commodities will be exactly of the same value; which, if computed in money, and if profits are 20 per cent. per annum, will be 1,200*l.* But of this 1,200*l.*, in the case of A, only 200*l.*, or one-sixth, is profit: while in the case of B there is not only the 200*l.*, but as much of 500*l.* (the price of the machine,) as consisted of the profits of the machine-maker; which, if we suppose the machine also to have taken a year for its production, is again one-sixth. So that in the case of A only one-sixth of the entire return is profit, whilst in B the element of profit comprises not only a sixth of the whole, but an additional sixth of a large part.

The greater the proportion of the whole capital which consists of machinery, or buildings, or material, or anything else which must be provided before the immediate labour

can commence, the more largely will profits enter into the cost of production. It is equally true, though not so obvious at first sight, that greater durability in the portion of capital which consists of machinery or buildings, has precisely the same effect as a greater amount of it. As we just supposed one extreme case, that of a machine entirely worn out by a year's use, let us now suppose the opposite and still more extreme case, of a machine which lasts for ever, and requires no repairs. In this case, which is as well suited for the purpose of illustration as if it were a possible one, it will be unnecessary that the manufacturer should ever be repaid the 500*l.* which he gave for the machine, since he has always the machine itself, worth 500*l.*: but he must be paid, as before, a profit on it. The commodity B, therefore, which in the case previously supposed was sold for 1,200*l.* of which sum 1,000*l.* were to replace the capital and 200*l.* were profit, can now be sold for 700*l.*, being 500*l.* to replace wages, and 200*l.* profit on the entire capital. Profit, therefore, enters into the value of B in the ratio of 200*l.* out of 700*l.*, being two-sevenths of the whole, or 28 $\frac{2}{7}$  per cent., while in the case of A, as before, it enters only in the ratio of one-sixth, or 16 $\frac{2}{3}$  per cent. The case is of course purely ideal, since no machinery or other fixed capital lasts for ever; but the more durable it is, the nearer it approaches to this ideal case, and the more largely does profit enter into the return. If, for instance, a machine worth 500*l.* loses one-fifth of its value by each year's use, 100*l.* must be added to the return to make up this loss, and the price of the commodity will be 800*l.* Profit therefore will enter into it in the ratio of 200*l.* to 800*l.*, or one-fourth, which is still a much higher proportion than one-sixth, or 200*l.* in 1,200*l.*, as in case A.

From the unequal proportion in which in different employments profits enter into the advances of the capitalist, and therefore into the returns required by him, two consequences follow in regard to value. One is, that commodities do not exchange in the ratio simply of the quantities of

labour required to produce them; not even if we allow for the unequal rates at which different kinds of labour are permanently remunerated. We have already illustrated this by the example of wine: we shall now further exemplify it by the case of commodities made by machinery. Suppose, as before, an article A made by a thousand pounds worth of immediate labour. But instead of B, made by 500*l.* worth of immediate labour and a machine worth 500*l.*, let us suppose C, made by 500*l.* worth of immediate labour with the aid of a machine which has been produced by another 500*l.* worth of immediate labour: the machine requiring a year for making, and worn out by a year's use; profits being as before 20 per cent. A and C are made by equal quantities of labour, paid at the same rate: A costs 1,000*l.* worth of direct labour; C, only 500*l.* worth, which however is made up to 1,000*l.* by the labour expended in the construction of the machine. If labour, or its remuneration, were the sole ingredient of cost of production, these two things would exchange for one another. But will they do so? Certainly not. The machine having been made in a year by an outlay of 500*l.*, and profits being 20 per cent, the natural price of the machine is 600*l.*: making an additional 100*l.* which must be advanced, over and above his other expenses, by the manufacturer of C, and repaid to him with a profit of 20 per cent. While, therefore, the commodity A is sold for 1,200*l.*, C cannot be permanently sold for less than 1,320*l.*

A second consequence is, that every rise or fall of general profits will have an effect on values. Not indeed by raising or lowering them generally, (which, as we have so often said, is a contradiction and an impossibility): but by altering the proportion in which the values of things are affected by the unequal lengths of time for which profit is due. When two things, though made by equal labour, are of unequal value because the one is called upon to yield profit for a greater number of years or months than the other; this difference of value will be greater when profits are greater, and less when they

are less. The wine which has to yield five years' profit more than the cloth, will surpass it in value much more if profits are 40 per cent, than if they are only 20. The commodities A and C, which, though made by equal quantities of labour, were sold for 1,200*l.* and 1,320*l.*, a difference of 10 per cent, would if profits had been only half as much, have been sold for 1100*l.* and 1155*l.*, a difference of only 5 per cent.

It follows from this that even a general rise of wages, when it involves a real increase in the cost of labour, does in some degree influence values. It does not affect them in the manner vulgarly supposed, by raising them universally. But an increase of the cost of labour, lowers profits; and therefore lowers in natural value the things into which profits enter in a greater proportion than the average, and raises those into which they enter in a less proportion than the average. All commodities in the production of which machinery bears a large part, especially if the machinery is very durable, are lowered in their relative value when profits fall; or, what is equivalent, other things are raised in value relatively to them. This truth is sometimes expressed in a phraseology more plausible than sound, by saying that a rise of wages raises the values of things made by labour, in comparison with those made by machinery. But things made by machinery, just as much as any other things, are made by labour, namely the labour which made the machinery itself: the only difference being that profits enter somewhat more largely into the production of things for which machinery is used, though the principal item of the outlay is still labour. It is better, therefore, to associate the effect with fall of profits than with rise of wages; especially as this last expression is extremely ambiguous, suggesting the idea of an increase of the labourer's real remuneration, rather than of what is alone to the purpose here, namely, the cost of labour to its employer.

§ 6. Besides the natural and necessary elements in cost

of production—labour and profits—there are others which are artificial and casual, as for instance, a tax. The taxes on bricks and malt are as much a part of the cost of production of those articles, as the wages of the labourers. The expenses which the law imposes, as well as those which the nature of things imposes, must be reimbursed with the ordinary profit from the value of the produce, or the things will not continue to be produced. But the influence of taxation on value is subject to the same conditions as the influence of wages and of profits. It is not general taxation, but differential taxation, that produces the effect. If all productions were taxed by a fixed percentage on their value, relative values would be in no way disturbed. If only a few commodities were taxed, their value would rise: and if only a few were left untaxed, their value would fall. If half were taxed and the remainder untaxed, the first half would rise and the last would fall relatively to each other. This would be necessary in order to equalize the expectation of profit in all employments, without which the taxed employments would ultimately, if not immediately, be abandoned. But general taxation, when equally imposed, and not disturbing the relation of different productions to one another, cannot produce any effect on values.

We have thus far supposed that all the means and appliances which enter into the cost of production of commodities, are things whose own value depends on their cost of production. Some of them, however, may belong to the class of things which cannot be increased *ad libitum* in quantity, and which therefore, if the demand goes beyond a certain amount, command a scarcity value. The materials of many of the ornamental articles manufactured in Italy are the substances called rosso, giallo, and verde antico, which, whether truly or falsely I know not, are asserted to be solely derived from the destruction of ancient columns and other ornamental structures; the quarries from which the stone was originally cut being exhausted, or their locality forgotten. A material

of such a nature, if in much demand, must be at a scarcity value; and this value enters into the cost of production, and, consequently, into the value of the finished article. The time seems to be approaching when the more valuable furs will come under the influence of a scarcity value of the material. Hitherto the diminishing number of the animals which produce them, in the wildernesses of Siberia and on the coasts of the Esquimaux Sea, has operated on the value only through the greater labour which has become necessary for securing any given quantity of the article, since, without doubt, by employing labour enough, it might still be obtained in much greater abundance for some time longer.

But the case in which scarcity value chiefly operates in adding to cost of production, is the case of natural agents. These, when unappropriated, and to be had for the taking, do not enter into cost of production, save to the extent of the labour which may be necessary to fit them for use. Even when appropriated, they do not (as we have already seen) bear a value from the mere fact of the appropriation, but only from scarcity, that is, from limitation of supply. But it is equally certain that they often do bear a scarcity value. Suppose a fall of water, in a place where there are more mills wanted than there is water-power to supply: the use of the fall of water will have a scarcity value, sufficient either to bring the demand down to the supply, or to pay for the creation of an artificial power, by steam or otherwise, equal in efficiency to the water-power.

A natural agent being a possession in perpetuity, and being only serviceable by the products resulting from its continued employment, the ordinary mode of deriving benefit from its ownership is by an annual equivalent, paid by the person who uses it, from the proceeds of its use. This equivalent always might be, and generally is, termed a rent. The question, therefore, respecting the influence which the appropriation of natural agents produces on values, is often stated in this form: Does Rent enter into Cost of Produc-

tion? and the answer of the best political economists is in the negative. The temptation is strong to the adoption of these sweeping expressions, even by those who are aware of the restrictions with which they must be taken; for there is no denying that they stamp a general principle more firmly in the mind, than if it were hedged round in theory with all its practical limitations. But they also puzzle and mislead, and create an impression unfavourable to political economy, as if it disregarded the evidence of facts. Who can deny that rent sometimes enters into cost of production? If I buy or rent a piece of ground, and build a cloth manufactory on it, does not the ground-rent form legitimately a part of my expenses of production, which must be repaid by the product? And since all factories are built on ground, and most of them in places where ground is peculiarly valuable, the rent paid for it must, on the average, be compensated in the values of all things made in factories. In what sense it is true that rent does not enter into the cost of production or affect the value of agricultural produce, will be shown in the succeeding chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

### OF RENT, IN ITS RELATION TO VALUE.

§ 1. WE have investigated the laws which determine the value of two classes of commodities: the small class which, being limited to a definite quantity, have their value entirely determined by demand and supply, save that their cost of production (if they have any) constitutes a minimum below which they cannot permanently fall; and the large class which can be multiplied *ad libitum* by labour and capital, and of which the cost of production fixes the maximum as well as the minimum at which they can permanently exchange. But there is still a third kind of commodities to be considered; those which have, not one, but several costs of production; which can always be increased in quantity by labour and capital, but not by the same amount of labour and capital; of which so much may be produced at a given cost, but a further quantity not without a greater cost. These commodities form an intermediate class, partaking of the character of both the others. The principal of them is agricultural produce. We have already made abundant reference to the fundamental truth, that in agriculture, the state of the art being given, doubling the labour does not double the produce; that if an increased quantity of produce is required, the additional supply is obtained at a greater cost than the first. Where a hundred quarters of corn are all that is at present required from the lands of a given village, if the growth of population made it necessary to raise a hundred more, either by breaking up worse land now uncultivated, or by a more elaborate cultivation of the land already under the plough, the additional hundred, or some part of them at least,

might cost double or treble as much per quarter as the former supply.

If the first hundred quarters were all raised at the same expense (only the best land being cultivated); and if that expense would be remunerated with the ordinary profit by a price of 20s. the quarter; the natural price of wheat, so long as no more than that quantity was required, would be 20s.; and it could only rise above, or fall below that price, from vicissitudes of seasons, or other casual variations in supply. But if the population of the district advanced, a time would arrive when more than a hundred quarters would be necessary to feed it. We must suppose that there is no access to any foreign supply. By the hypothesis, no more than a hundred quarters can be produced in the district, unless by either bringing worse land into cultivation, or altering the system of culture to a more expensive one. Neither of these things will be done without a rise of price. This rise of price will gradually be brought about by the increasing demand. So long as the price has risen, but not risen enough to repay with the ordinary profit the cost of producing an additional quantity, the increased value of the limited supply partakes of the nature of a scarcity value. Suppose that it will not answer to cultivate the second best land, or land of the second degree of remoteness, for a less return than 25s. the quarter; and that this price is also necessary to remunerate the expensive operations by which an increased produce might be raised from land of the first quality. If so, the price will rise, through the increased demand, until it reaches 25s. That will now be the natural price; being the price without which the quantity, for which society has a demand at that price, will not be produced. At that price, however, society can go on for some time longer; could go on perhaps for ever, if population did not increase. The price, having attained that point, will not again permanently recede, (though it may fall temporarily from accidental abundance); nor will it advance further, so long as society can obtain the

supply it requires without a second increase of the cost of production.

I have made use of Price, in this reasoning, as a convenient symbol of Value, from the greater familiarity of the idea: and I shall continue to do so as far as may appear to be necessary.

In the case supposed, different portions of the supply of corn have different costs of production. Though the 20, or 50, or 150 quarters additional have been produced at a cost proportional to 25s., the original hundred quarters per annum are still produced at a cost only proportional to 20s. This is self-evident, if the original and the additional supply are produced on different qualities of land. It is equally true if they are produced on the same land. Suppose that land of the best quality, which produced 100 quarters at 20s., has been made to produce 150 by an expensive process, which it would not answer to undertake without a price of 25s. The cost which requires 25s. is incurred for the sake of 50 quarters alone: the first hundred might have continued for ever to be produced at the original cost, and with the benefit, on that quantity, of the whole rise of price caused by the increase of demand: no one, therefore, will incur the additional expense for the sake of the additional fifty, unless they alone will pay for the whole of it. The fifty, therefore, will be produced at their natural price, proportioned to the cost of their production; while the other hundred will now bring in 5s. a quarter more than their natural price—than the price corresponding to, and sufficing to remunerate, their lower cost of production.

If the production of any, even the smallest, portion of the supply, requires as a necessary condition a certain price, that price will be obtained for all the rest. We are not able to buy one loaf cheaper than another because the corn from which it was made, being grown on a richer soil, has cost less to the grower. The value, therefore, of an article (meaning its natural, which is the same with its average,



value) is determined by the cost of that portion of the supply which is produced and brought to market at the greatest expense. This is the Law of Value of the third of the three classes into which all commodities are divided.

§ 2. If the portion of produce raised in the most unfavourable circumstances, obtains a value proportioned to its cost of production; all the portions raised in more favourable circumstances, selling as they must do at the same value, obtain a value more than proportioned to their cost of production. Their value is not, correctly speaking, a scarcity value, for it is determined by the circumstances of the production of the commodity, and not by the degree of dearness necessary for keeping down the demand to the level of a limited supply. The owners, however, of those portions of the produce enjoy a privilege; they obtain a value which yields them more than the ordinary profit. If this advantage depends upon any special exemption, such as being free from a tax, or upon any personal advantages, physical or mental, or any peculiar process only known to themselves, or upon the possession of a greater capital than other people, or upon various other things which might be enumerated, they retain it to themselves as an extra gain, over and above the general profits of capital, of the nature, in some sort, of a monopoly profit. But when, as in the case which we are more particularly considering, the advantage depends on the possession of a natural agent of peculiar quality, as for instance of more fertile land than that which determines the general value of the commodity; and when this natural agent is not owned by themselves; the person who does own it, is able to exact from them, in the form of rent, the whole extra gain derived from its use. We are thus brought by another road to the Law of Rent, investigated in the concluding chapter of the Second Book. Rent, we again see, is the difference between the unequal returns to different parts of the capital employed on the soil. Whatever surplus any portion of

agricultural capital produces, beyond what is produced by the same amount of capital on the worst soil, or under the most expensive mode of cultivation, which the existing demands of society compel a recourse to; that surplus will naturally be paid as rent from that capital, to the owner of the land on which it is employed.

It was long thought by political economists, among the rest even by Adam Smith, that the produce of land is always at a monopoly value, because (they said) in addition to the ordinary rate of profit, it always yields something further for rent. This we now see to be erroneous. A thing cannot be at a monopoly value, when its supply can be increased to an indefinite extent if we are only willing to incur the cost. If no more corn than the existing quantity is grown, it is because the value has not risen high enough to remunerate any one for growing it. Any land which at the existing price, and by the existing processes, will yield the ordinary profit, is tolerably certain, unless some artificial hindrance intervenes, to be cultivated, although nothing may be left for rent. As long as there is any land, fit for cultivation, which at the existing price cannot be profitably cultivated at all, there must be some land a little better, which will yield the ordinary profit, but allow nothing for rent: and that land, if within the boundary of a farm, will be cultivated by the farmer; if not so, probably by the proprietor, or by some other person on sufferance. Some such land at least, under cultivation, there can scarcely fail to be.

Rent, therefore, forms no part of the cost of production which determines the value of agricultural produce. Circumstances no doubt may be conceived in which it might do so, and very largely too. We can imagine a country so fully peopled, and with all its cultivable soil so completely occupied, that to produce any additional quantity would require more labour than the produce would feed: and if we suppose this to be the condition of the whole world, or of a country debarred from foreign supply, then, if population

continued increasing, both the land and its produce would really rise to a monopoly or scarcity price. But this state of things never can have really existed anywhere, unless possibly in some small island cut off from the rest of the world; nor is there any danger whatever that it should exist. It certainly exists in no known region at present. Monopoly, we have seen, can take effect on value, only through limitation of supply. In all countries of any extent there is more cultivable land than is yet cultivated; and while there is any such surplus, it is the same thing, so far as that quality of land is concerned, as if there were an infinite quantity. What is practically limited in supply is only the better qualities; and even for those, so much rent cannot be demanded as would bring in the competition of the lands not yet in cultivation; the rent of a piece of land must be somewhat less than the whole excess of its productiveness over that of the best land which it is not yet profitable to cultivate; that is, it must be about equal to the excess above the worst land which it *is* profitable to cultivate. The land or the capital most unfavourably circumstanced among those actually employed, pays no rent; and that land or capital determines the cost of production which regulates the value of the whole produce. Thus rent is, as we have already seen, no cause of value, but the price of the privilege which the inequality of the returns to different portions of agricultural produce confers on all except the least favoured portion.

Rent, in short, merely equalizes the profits of different farming capitals, by enabling the landlord to appropriate all extra gains occasioned by superiority of natural advantages. If all landlords were unanimously to forego their rent, they would but transfer it to the farmers, without benefiting the consumer; for the existing price of corn would still be an indispensable condition of the production of part of the existing supply, and a part could not obtain that price unless the whole obtained it. Rent, therefore, unless artificially increased by restrictive laws, is no burthen on the consumer:

it does not raise the price of corn, and is no otherwise a detriment to the public, than inasmuch as if the state had retained it, or imposed an equivalent in the shape of a land-tax, it would then have been a fund applicable to general instead of private advantage.

§ 3. Agricultural productions are not the only commodities which have several different costs of production at once, and which, in consequence of that difference, and in proportion to it, afford a rent. Mines are also an instance. Almost all kinds of raw material extracted from the interior of the earth—metals, coals, precious stones, &c., are obtained from mines differing considerably in fertility, that is, yielding very different quantities of the product to the same quantity of labour and capital. This being the case, it is an obvious question, why are not the most fertile mines so worked as to supply the whole market? No such question can arise as to land; it being self-evident, that the most fertile lands could not possibly be made to supply the whole demand of a fully peopled country; and even of what they do yield, a part is extorted from them by a labour and outlay as great as that required to grow the same amount on worse land. But it is not so with mines; at least, not universally. There are, perhaps, cases in which it is impossible to extract from a particular vein, in a given time, more than a certain quantity of ore, because there is only a limited surface of the vein exposed, on which more than a certain number of labourers cannot be simultaneously employed. But this is not true of all mines. In collieries, for example, some other cause of limitation must be sought for. In some instances the owners limit the quantity raised, in order not too rapidly to exhaust the mine: in others there are said to be combinations of owners, to keep up a monopoly price by limiting the production. Whatever be the causes, it is a fact that mines of different degrees of richness are in operation, and since the value of the produce must be proportional to the

cost of production at the worst mine (fertility and situation taken together), it is more than proportional to that of the best. All mines superior in produce to the worst actually worked, will yield, therefore, a rent, equal to the excess. They may yield more; and the worst mine may itself yield a rent. Mines being comparatively few, their qualities do not graduate gently into one another, as the qualities of land do; and the demand may be such as to keep the value of the produce considerably above the cost of production at the worst mine now worked, without being sufficient to bring into operation a still worse. During the interval the produce is really at a scarcity value.

Fisheries are another example. Fisheries in the open sea are not appropriated, but fisheries in lakes or rivers almost always are so, and likewise oyster-beds or other particular fishing grounds on coasts. We may take salmon fisheries as an example of the whole class. Some rivers are far more productive in salmon than others. None, however, without being exhausted, can supply more than a very limited demand. The demand of a country like England can only be supplied by taking salmon from many different rivers, of unequal productiveness, and the value must be sufficient to repay the cost of obtaining the fish from the least productive of these. All others, therefore, will, if appropriated, afford a rent equal to the value of their superiority. Much higher than this it cannot be, if there are salmon rivers accessible which from distance or inferior productiveness have not yet contributed to supply the market. If there are not, the value, doubtless, may rise to a scarcity rate, and the worst fisheries in use may then yield a considerable rent.

Both in the case of mines and of fisheries, the natural order of events is liable to be interrupted by the opening of a new mine, or a new fishery, of superior quality to some of those already in use. The first effect of such an incident is an increase of the supply; which of course lowers the value, to call forth an increased demand. This reduced value may

be no longer sufficient to remunerate the worst of the existing mines or fisheries, and these may consequently be abandoned. If the superior mines or fisheries, with the addition of the one newly opened, produce as much of the commodity as is required at the lower value corresponding to their lower cost of production, the fall of value will be permanent, and there will be a corresponding fall in the rents of those mines or fisheries which are not abandoned. In this case, when things have permanently adjusted themselves, the result will be, that the scale of qualities which supply the market will have been cut short at the lower end, while a new insertion will have been made in the scale at some point higher up; and the worst mine or fishery in use—the one which regulates the rents of the superior qualities and the value of the commodity—will be a mine or fishery of better quality than that by which they were previously regulated.

Land is used for other purposes than agriculture, especially for residence; and when so used yields a rent, determined by principles similar to those already laid down. The ground rent of a building, and the rent of a garden or park attached to it, will not be less than the rent which the same land would afford in agriculture: but it may be greater than this, to an indefinite amount; the surplus being either in consideration of beauty or of convenience, the convenience often consisting in superior facilities for pecuniary gain. Sites of remarkable beauty are generally limited in supply, and therefore, if in great demand, are at a scarcity value. Sites superior only in convenience are governed as to their value by the ordinary principles of rent. The ground rent of a house in a small village is but little higher than the rent of a similar patch of ground in the open fields: but that of a shop in Cheapside will exceed these, by the whole amount at which people estimate the superior facilities of money-making in the more crowded place. The rents of wharfage, dock and harbour room, water-power, and many other privileges, may be analysed on similar principles.

§ 4. Cases of extra profit analogous to rent, are more frequent in the transactions of industry than is sometimes supposed. Take the case, for example, of a patent, or exclusive privilege for the use of a process by which cost of production is lessened. If the value of the product continues to be regulated by what it costs to those who are obliged to persist in the old process, the patentee will make an extra profit equal to the advantage which his process possesses over theirs. This extra profit is essentially similar to rent, and sometimes even assumes the form of it; the patentee allowing to other producers the use of his privilege, in consideration of an annual payment. So long as he, and those whom he associates in the privilege, do not produce enough to supply the whole market, so long the original cost of production, being the necessary condition of producing a part, will regulate the value of the whole; and the patentee will be enabled to keep up his rent to a full equivalent for the advantage which his process gives him. In the commencement indeed he will probably forego a part of this advantage for the sake of underselling others: the increased supply which he brings forward will lower the value, and make the trade a bad one for those who do not share in the privilege; many of whom therefore will gradually retire, or restrict their operations, or enter into arrangements with the patentee: as his supply increases theirs will diminish, the value meanwhile continuing slightly depressed. But if he stops short in his operations before the market is wholly supplied by the new process, things will again adjust themselves to what was the natural value before the invention was made, and the benefit of the improvement will accrue solely to the patentee.

The extra gains which any producer or dealer obtains through superior talents for business, or superior business arrangements, are very much of a similar kind. If all his competitors had the same advantages, and used them, the benefit would be transferred to their customers, through the diminished value of the article: he only retains it for himself

because he is able to bring his commodity to market at a lower cost, while its value is determined by a higher. All advantages, in fact, which one competitor has over another, whether natural or acquired, whether personal or the result of social arrangements, bring the commodity, so far, into our Third Class, and assimilate the possessor of the advantage to a receiver of rent. Wages and profits represent the universal elements in production, while rent may be taken to represent the differential and peculiar: any difference in favour of certain producers, or in favour of production in certain circumstances, being the source of a gain, which, although not called rent unless paid periodically by one person to another, is governed by laws entirely the same with it. The price paid for a differential advantage in producing a commodity, cannot enter into the general cost of production of the commodity.

A commodity may, no doubt, in some contingencies, yield a rent even under the most disadvantageous circumstances of its production; but only when it is, for the time, in the condition of those commodities which are absolutely limited in supply, and is therefore selling at a scarcity value; which never is, nor has been, nor can be, a permanent condition of any of the great rent-yielding commodities: unless through their approaching exhaustion, if they are mineral products, (coal, for example), or through an increase of population, continuing after a further increase of production becomes impossible; a contingency, which the almost inevitable progress of human culture and improvement in the long interval which has first to elapse, forbids us to consider as probable.

## CHAPTER VI.

## SUMMARY OF THE THEORY OF VALUE.

§ 1. WE have now attained a favourable point for looking back, and taking a simultaneous view of the space which we have traversed since the commencement of the present Book. The following are the principles of the theory of Value, so far as we have yet ascertained them.

I. Value is a relative term. The value of a thing means the quantity of some other thing, or of things in general, which it exchanges for. The values of all things can never, therefore, rise or fall simultaneously. There is no such thing as a general rise or a general fall of values. Every rise of value supposes a fall, and every fall a rise.

II. The temporary, or market value of a thing, depends on the demand and supply; rising as the demand rises, and falling as the supply rises. The demand, however, varies with the value, being generally greater when the thing is cheap than when it is dear; and the value always adjusts itself in such a manner, that the demand is equal to the supply.

III. Besides their temporary value, things have also a permanent, or as it may be called, a Natural Value, to which the market value, after every variation, always tends to return: and the oscillations compensate for one another; so that, on the average, commodities exchange at about their natural value.

IV. The natural value of some things is a scarcity value: but most things naturally exchange for one another in the ratio of their cost of production, or at what may be termed their Cost Value.

V. The things which are naturally and permanently at a

scarcity value, are those of which the supply cannot be increased at all, or not sufficiently to satisfy the whole of the demand which would exist for them at their cost value.

VI. A monopoly value means a scarcity value. Monopoly cannot give a value to anything, except through a limitation of the supply.

VII. Every commodity of which the supply can be indefinitely increased by labour and capital, exchanges for other things proportionally to the cost necessary for producing and bringing to market the most costly portion of the supply required. The natural value is synonymous with the Cost Value, and the cost value of a thing, means the cost value of the most costly portion of it.

VIII. Cost of Production consists of several elements, some of which are constant and universal, others occasional. The universal elements of cost of production are, the wages of the labour, and the profits of the capital. The occasional elements are, taxes, and any extra cost occasioned by a scarcity value of some of the requisites.

IX. Rent is not an element in the cost of production of the commodity which yields it; except in the cases, (rather conceivable than actually existing) in which it results from, and represents, a scarcity value. But when land capable of yielding rent in agriculture, is applied to some other purpose, the rent which it would have yielded is an element in the cost of production of the commodity which it is employed to produce.

X. Omitting the occasional elements; things which admit of indefinite increase, naturally and permanently exchange for each other according to the comparative amount of wages which must be paid for producing them, and the comparative amount of profits which must be obtained by the capitalists who pay those wages.

XI. The comparative amount of wages does not depend on what wages are in themselves. High wages do not make high values, nor low wages low values. The comparative

amount of wages depends partly on the comparative quantities of labour required, and partly on the comparative rates of its remuneration.

XII. So, the comparative rate of profits does not depend on what profits are in themselves; nor do high or low profits make high or low values. It depends partly on the comparative lengths of time during which the capital is employed, and partly on the comparative rate of profits in different employments.

XIII. If two things are made by the same quantity of labour, and that labour paid at the same rate, and if the wages of the labourer have to be advanced for the same space of time, and the nature of the employment does not require that there be a permanent difference in their rate of profit; then, whether wages and profits be high or low, and whether the quantity of labour expended be much or little, these two things will, on the average, exchange for one another.

XIV. If one of two things commands, on the average, a greater value than the other, the cause must be that it requires for its production either a greater quantity of labour, or a kind of labour permanently paid at a higher rate; or that the capital, or part of the capital, which supports that labour, must be advanced for a longer period; or, lastly, that the production is attended with some circumstance which requires to be compensated by a permanently higher rate of profit.

XV. Of these elements, the quantity of labour required for the production is the most important: the effect of the others is smaller, though none of them are insignificant.

XVI. The lower profits are, the less important become the minor elements of cost of production, and the less do commodities deviate from a value proportioned to the quantity and quality of the labour required for their production.

XVII. But every fall of profits lowers, in some degree, the cost value of things made with much or durable ma-

chinery, and raises that of things made by hand; and every rise of profits does the reverse.

§ 2. Such is the general theory of Exchange Value. It is necessary, however, to remark that this theory contemplates a system of production carried on by capitalists for profit, and not by labourers for subsistence. In proportion as we admit this last supposition—and in most countries we must admit it, at least in respect of agricultural produce, to a very great extent—such of the preceeding theorems as relate to the dependence of value on cost of production will require modification. Those theorems are all grounded on the supposition, that the producer's object and aim is to derive a profit from his capital. This granted, it follows that he must sell his commodity at the price which will afford the ordinary rate of profit, that is to say, it must exchange for other commodities at its cost value. But the peasant-proprietor, the metayer, and even the peasant-farmer, or allotment-holder—the labourer, under whatever name, producing on his own account—is seeking, not an investment for his little capital, but an advantageous employment for his time and labour. His disbursements, beyond his own maintenance and that of his family, are so small, that nearly the whole proceeds of the sale of his produce are the wages of labour. When he and his family have been fed from the produce of his farm (and perhaps clothed with materials grown thereon, and manufactured in the family) he may, in respect of the supplementary remuneration derived from the sale of his surplus produce, be compared to those labourers who, deriving their subsistence from an independent source, can afford to sell their labour at any price which is to their minds worth the exertion. A peasant, who supports himself and his family with one portion of his produce, will often sell the remainder very much below what would be its cost value to a capitalist.

There is, however, even in this case, a minimum, or infe-

rior limit, of value. The part of his produce which he carries to market, must bring in to him the value of all necessaries which he is compelled to purchase; and it must enable him to pay his rent. Rent, under peasant cultivation, is not governed by the principles set forth in the chapters immediately preceding, but is either determined by custom, as in the case of métayers, or, if fixed by competition, depends on the ratio of population to land. Rent, therefore, in this case, is an element of cost of production. The peasant must work until he has cleared his rent and the price of all purchased necessaries. After this, he will go on working only if he can sell the produce for such a price as will overcome his aversion to labour.

The minimum just mentioned is what the peasant must obtain in exchange for the whole of his surplus produce. But inasmuch as this surplus is not a fixed quantity, but may be either greater or less according to the degree of his industry, a minimum value for the whole of it does not give any minimum value for a definite quantity of the commodity. In this state of things, therefore, it can hardly be said, that the value depends at all on cost of production. It depends entirely on demand and supply, that is, on the proportion between the quantity of surplus food which the peasants choose to produce, and the numbers of the non-agricultural, or rather of the non-peasant population. If the buying class is numerous and the growing class lazy, food may be permanently at a scarcity price. I am not aware that this case has anywhere a real existence. If the growing class is energetic and industrious, and the buyers few, food will be extremely cheap. This also is a rare case, though some parts of France perhaps approximate to it. The common cases are, either that, as in Ireland, the peasant class is indolent and the buyers few, or the peasants industrious and the town population numerous and opulent, as in Belgium, the north of Italy, and parts of Germany. The price of the produce will adjust itself to these varieties of circumstances, unless modified, as

in many cases it is, by the competition of producers who are not peasants, or by the prices of foreign markets.

§ 3. Another anomalous case is that of slave-grown produce: which presents, however, by no means the same degree of complication. The slave-owner is a capitalist, and his inducement to production consists in a profit on his capital. This profit must amount to the ordinary rate. In respect to his expenses, he is in the same position as if his slaves were free labourers working with their present efficiency, and were hired with wages equal to their present cost. If the cost is less, in proportion to the work done, than the wages of free labour would be, so much the greater are his profits: but if all other producers in the country possess the same advantage, the values of commodities will not be at all affected by it. The only case in which they can be affected, is when the privilege of cheap labour is confined to particular branches of production, free labourers at proportionably higher wages being employed in the remainder. In this case, as in all cases of permanent inequality between the wages of different employments, prices and values receive the impress of the inequality. Slave-grown will exchange for non-slave-grown commodities in a less ratio than that of the quantity of labour required for their production; the value of the former will be less, and of the latter greater, than if slavery did not exist.

The further adaptation of the theory of value to the varieties of existing or possible industrial systems may be left with great advantage to the intelligent reader. It is well said by Montesquieu, "Il ne faut pas toujours tellement épuiser un sujet, qu'on ne laisse rien à faire au lecteur. Il ne s'agit pas de faire lire, mais de faire penser\*."

\* *Esprit des Loix*, liv. xi. *ad finem*.