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Some Remarks on Consumption

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Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 36 (Dec., 1899), pp. 505-519

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

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The Economic Journal

THE ECONOMIC JOURNAL

DECEMBER, 1899

SOME REMARKS ON CONSUMPTION.¹

THE prime concern of the economist and of the statistician is the condition of the people. Other matters which engage their attention—particular problems, questions of history, discussions of method, developments of theory—all derive their ultimate importance from their bearing upon this central subject. The statistician measures the changing phenomena of the production, distribution, and consumption of wealth, which to a large extent reflect and determine the material condition of the people. The economist analyses the motives of these phenomena, and endeavours to trace the connection between cause and effect. He is unable to push his analysis far without a firm mastery of the theory of value, the perfecting of which has been the chief stride made by economic science in the nineteenth century. When we read the *Wealth of Nations* we are forced to admit that in sheer sagacity Adam Smith is unsurpassed by any of his successors. It is only when we come to his imperfect and unconnected views upon value that we feel the power of increased knowledge. J. S. Mill supposed in 1848 that the last word had been said on the theory of value. In his third book he writes: “In a state of society in which the industrial system is entirely founded on purchase and sale . . . 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 this 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

¹ Presidential Address to the Economic Science and Statistics Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, at Dover, 1899.

else." And he adds: "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."

We know now that he was wrong. Thanks in the main to economists still alive, and especially to the mathematical economists, we have at length a theory of value so formally exact that, whatever may be added to it in the future, time can take nothing from it, while it is sufficiently flexible to lend itself as well to a *régime* of monopoly as to one of competition. Yet our confidence in this instrument of analysis is far from inspiring us with the assurance which has done so much to discredit economics by provoking its professors to dogmatise upon problems with the whole facts of which they were imperfectly acquainted. Given certain conditions of supply and certain conditions of demand, the economist should have no doubt as to the resulting determination of value; but he is more than ever alert to make sure that he has all the material factors of the case before him; that he understands the facts and their mutual relation before he ventures to pronounce an opinion upon any mixed question. He must have the facts before he can analyse them. A small array of syllogisms, which, as Bacon says, "master the assent and not the subject," are not an adequate equipment for him. He sees more and more the need for careful and industrious investigation, and prominent among the subjects which await his trained observation are the condition of the people and the related subject of the consumption of wealth. Training is, indeed, indispensable. Every social question has its purely economic elements for the skilled economist to unravel, and when this part of his task has been achieved, he is at an advantage in approaching the other parts of it, while his habit of mind helps him to know what to look out for and what to expect.

It is a curious paradox that, busying ourselves as we do with the condition of the people, we are lamentably lacking in precision in our knowledge of the economic life and state of the British people in the present day. Political economy has, however, followed the lines of development of political power. At one time it was, as the Germans say, cameralistic—an affair of the council chamber, a question of the power and resources of the king. Taking a wider but still restricted view of society, it became capitalistic, identifying the economic interests of the community to a too great extent with those of the capitalist class. It has at length become frankly democratic, looking consciously and directly to the prosperity of the people at large.

Thus, then, we have at once a more accurate theory, a livelier sense of caution as to its limitations in practice, and the widest possible field of study. So far as most of us are concerned, we might as well spend our time in verifying the ready reckoner as in tracing and retracing the lines of pure theory. These tools are made for use. Economic science is likely to make the most satisfactory progress if we watch the social forces that surround us, detecting the operation of economic law in all its manifestations, and in observing, coordinating, and recording the facts of economic life. It is not enough to borrow the language of the biologist (part of which he himself borrowed from the old economists), to talk of the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, and of evolution. We want, above all, his spirit and his method—the careful, minute, systematic observation of life as affected by environment, heredity, and habit. Different problems are brought to the front by different circumstances and appeal to different minds; but at all times and to all economists the condition of the people is of chief interest, and the consumption of wealth is so closely connected with it that it might seem superfluous to plead for its study. Yet some such plea is necessary. The arts of production improve apace. The victories of science are rapidly utilised by manufacturers anxious to make a fortune. Even here the descriptive study of the subject is hampered by the trade secrets involved in many processes, and by a feeling that production may safely be left to the unrelenting intelligence of captains of industry, so that the onlooker is chiefly concerned in this branch of the subject with solicitude for the health and safety of the workmen employed. The departments of distribution and exchange appeal especially to the pride of intellect. The delicate theorems of value in all their branches—wages, rent, interest, profits, the problems of taxation, the alluring study of currency, the mechanism of banking and exchange—have attracted the greatest share of the economist's attention. On the practical side of distribution the growth of trade unions, the spread of education, the improved standard of living, have increased the bargaining power of the working classes and combined with other causes to effect a gratifying improvement in the distribution of wealth, so that they receive a growing share of the growing national dividend. The practical and the speculative aspects alike of the consumption of wealth have received less consideration. Nobody sees his way to a fortune through the spread of more knowledge of domestic economy in workmen's homes; and the scientific observer has curbed his curiosity before what might seem an

inquisitorial investigation into the question, What becomes of wages? Economists long ago discovered the necessity of distinguishing between money wages and real wages. It is now necessary for us to distinguish between real wages and utilities—not to stop at the fact that so many shillings a week *might* procure such and such necessities, comforts, or luxuries, but to ascertain how they *are* expended. From the first we can deduce what the economic condition of the people might be; from the second we shall know what it is. And when we know what it is we shall see more clearly what with more wisdom it might become. Wealth, after all, is a means to an end. It is not enough to maximise wealth, we must strive to maximise utilities. And we can no more judge of the condition of a people from its receipts alone, than we can judge of the financial condition of a nation from a mere statement of its revenues.

The condition of the people has, of course, improved, and is improving. Public hygiene has made great progress, and houses are better and more sanitary, though for this and other reasons rents have risen. Wages are higher. Commodities are cheaper. Co-operation and the better organisation of retail business, giving no credit, have saved some of the profits of middlemen for the benefit of the consumer, while authority fights without ceasing against frauds in weights and measures, and adulteration. Free libraries, museums, picture galleries, parks, public gardens, and promenades have multiplied, and it is almost sufficient to observe that no one seems to be too poor to command the use of a bicycle. But with all this progress it is to be feared that housekeeping is no better understood than it was two centuries ago—perhaps even not so well. In the interval it has become enormously simplified. The complete housewife is no longer a brewer, a baker, a weaver, a dyer, and a host of other specialists rolled into one. But among the working classes the advent of the factory system has increased the employment of women and girls away from home to such an extent that many of them now marry with a minimum of domestic experience, and are with the best intentions the innocent agents of inefficiency and waste, even in this simplified household.

If we were suddenly swallowed up by the ocean it appears probable that the foreign student would find it easier to describe from existing documents the life and home of the British craftsman in the middle ages than of his descendant of to-day. In part, no doubt, our fiscal system, with its few taxes upon articles of food and its light pressure on the working classes, is responsible for this neglect. During the Napoleonic war Pitt sent for Arthur

Young to ask him what were the ordinary and necessary expenses of a workman's family, and the question would again become one of practical politics if any large addition were required in the proceeds of indirect taxation. Taxation has the one advantage of providing us with statistics. We know tolerably well the facts in the mass about the consumption of tea and coffee, dried fruits and tobacco, and of alcohol, while the income tax (aided in the near future by returns of the death duties) may give us some idea of the stratification of the wealthier classes. But the details of consumption are still obscure. It has already been suggested that some restraint may arise from the sentiment that individuals are likely to resent what they may regard as a prying into their affairs. But when we travel abroad we are curious to notice, and do notice without giving offence, the dress, the habits, and the food of peasants and workmen; and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that we are less observant at home because these common and trivial details appear to us unworthy of attention. In his *Principles of Economics* Professor Marshall says:—"Perhaps £100,000,000 annually are spent even by the working classes, and £400,000,000 by the rest of the population of England, in ways that do little or nothing towards making life nobler or truly happier." And, again, speaking before the Royal Statistical Society in 1893:—"Something like the whole imperial revenue, say 100 millions a year, might be saved if a sufficient number of able women went about the country and induced the other women to manage their households as they did themselves." These figures show, at any rate, the possibilities of greatness in the economic progress which may result from attention to the humblest details of domestic life.

Economics, like other sciences, lies under a great debt of obligation to French pioneers. The Physiocrats, or *économistes*, of the eighteenth century were the first school of writers to make it worthy of the name of a science. In Cournot France gave us a giant of originality in pure theory. In Comte we have a philosopher fruitful in suggestion to the narrower economist. In Le Play we have a writer as yet little known in England, but to whom recognition and respect are gradually coming for his early perception of the importance of ascertaining the facts of consumption, and it is to Le Play's "family Budgets," the receipts and expenses of workmen's families, that I desire especially to call attention. I have given elsewhere an account of his life and

work.¹ Broadly speaking, he set himself by the comparative study of workmen's families in different countries of Europe to arrive at the causes of well-being and of misery among the labouring classes. The subject was too large to lead him in many directions to very precise conclusions. We are reminded in reading him of an incident at a dinner of the Political Economy Club in 1876, when Mr. Robert Lowe propounded the question, "What are the more important results which have followed from the publication of the *Wealth of Nations* just one hundred years ago?" Some of the most enthusiastic admirers of Adam Smith were present, Mr. Gladstone and M. Léon Say among the number: and Mr. Lowe trenchantly declared that it all came to this: "The causes of wealth are two, industry and thrift; the causes of poverty are two, idleness and waste." It was left to Mr. W. E. Forster to make the rugged remark, "You don't want to go to Adam Smith for that—you can get that out of the Proverbs of Solomon." And Le Play's conclusions frequently go still further back, to the Decalogue. There are, however, many observations, suggestive and original, upon the material facts, the economic life, of the families he brought under review. And we are now concerned rather with his method than with his conclusions. Given half a dozen Le Plays applying their minds to the study of the consumption of wealth among the working classes of England, we might expect soon to see a greater advance in comfort, a greater rise in the standard of life, than improved arts of production alone are likely to yield in a generation. Certain English writers had, indeed, prepared family budgets before Le Play arose. But their method was usually incomplete, except for the specific purpose they had before them. David Davies and Sir F. Eden were chiefly concerned with the poor law, Arthur Young and Cobbett with agricultural politics, Dudley Baxter and Leone Levi with taxation. Le Play may fairly be called the father of the scientific family budget. His studies of four English families² are the most complete economic pictures of English popular life to be found in literature. With the aid of some local authority he chose what was thought a fairly typical family, and then, frankly explaining his scientific object and securing confidence, he set himself to study it. Nothing of

¹ *Harvard Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. iv., 1890; *Journal of Royal Statistical Society*, March, 1893; Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy*, s.v. Le Play, 1896.

² *Les Ouvriers Européens*, Paris, folio, 1855.

economic interest is too unimportant for him to record. A minute inventory and valuation of clothes, furniture, and household goods; a detailed account, item by item, of income from all sources, and of expenditure upon all objects for a year, with the quantities and prices of foods, &c.; a description of the family member by member, their past history, their environment, how they came to be where they are and to earn their living as they do; their resources in the present, their provision for the future; their meals, hygiene, and recreations; their social, moral, political, and religious observances—nothing escapes him. And the whole is organised, classified, fitted into a framework identical for all cases, with the painstaking and methodical industry of the naturalist. Contrasted with this the realism of novelists, the occasional excursions of journalists, the observations of professed economists, are pitifully incomplete. As early as 1857 Le Play found one ardent admirer in England, Mr. W. L. Sargant, whose *Economy of the Labouring Classes*, avowedly inspired by Le Play, is a valuable and interesting piece of work. Since then, however, with the magnificent exception of Mr. Charles Booth, little has been done to throw light upon the mode of life of the wage-earners of England. The Board of Trade heralded the formation of its Labour Department by issuing a Blue Book—unhappily without sequel—entitled *Returns of Expenditure by Working Men*, 1889, and the Economic Club has published a useful collection of studies in *Family Budgets*, 1896. But we shall probably still depend very much upon foreign observers for fuller knowledge of the subject. M. René Lavollée, an adherent who may almost be called a colleague of Le Play, has devoted to England a whole volume of his important work *Les Classes Ouvrières en Europe : études sur leur situation matérielle et morale*.¹ M. Urbain Guérin, another member of the Société d'Économie Sociale founded by Le Play to carry on his work, has recently added a study of a tanner's family in Nottingham to Le Play's gallery of portraits; and some of the young members of the Musée Social and the École Libre des Sciences Politiques have come among us animated with the same scientific curiosity. A vivid (and, so far as Newcastle is concerned, a trustworthy) sketch by a German miner, *How the English Workman Lives*, just translated into English, is our latest debt to foreign observers. It may be hoped that the British Association, largely attended as it is by persons who would shrink from more ambitious scientific labours, will furnish some workers ready to do their country the very real service

¹ Paris, 1896, tom. iii. 656 pp., large 8vo.

of recording such facts as they can collect about the economic habits of our own people, and so helping us to know ourselves.

Consider, for a moment, the consumption of food. To the ordinary English workman life would seem unendurable without white wheaten bread. Other forms of bread he knows there are, but he has unreasoning prejudices against wholemeal bread—the food of workhouses and prisons—and against rye bread or other kinds of bread, the food of foreigners. But in many parts of Europe the working classes have no bread. Cereals of some sort, prepared in some way, they of course employ. Wheat, oats, rye, barley, maize, buckwheat, even chestnuts, are used indifferently in different places, and rice and potatoes are among the substitutes. What is the relative value of these as food-stuffs, and what is the best mode of preparing them? The reasons which induced men in the middle ages to consume the cereals of their own neighbourhood have been so much weakened by the cheapening of transport and the international specialisation of industries, that the conservatism of food habits is brought into strong relief when we find neighbouring people abandoning, first in town and then in country, marked distinctions of national costumes, but clinging everywhere to national differences of food. We are perhaps on the eve of considerable changes here. Two years ago an American economist told me in Boston that fruit had been the great ally of the workmen in a recent severe strike. There had been an exceptionally large crop of bananas, which were sold at one cent. apiece, and the strikers had sustained themselves and their families almost entirely upon bananas at a trifling cost—very greatly below their usual expense for food. Returning to London I found bananas on sale in the streets for a halfpenny. No doubt they were consumed here in addition to, and not in substitution for, ordinary food; but they illustrate the fact that the foods of other latitudes are no longer the sole luxury of the rich, but are brought within the reach of all classes, and that our popular food habits need no longer be made to conform to the narrow range of former days, but may be put upon a wider rational basis. The vegetarians, largely dependent upon other countries, have recognised this. The chemist and the physiologist might give us great assistance in these matters. Most of the calculations which I have seen as to the constituents of foods, their heat-giving and nutritive properties, appear to ignore the greater or less facility with which the different foods are assimilated. It is surprising that rice, in some respects the most economical of all grains, needing no milling, easily cooked and easily digested, is

not more largely consumed by the poorer families in this country.

The effect upon our food habits of the introduction of railways and the supply of comparatively cheap fuel to every household is almost incalculable. But for this the consumption of tea, perhaps even of potatoes when there is no peat, would be very small. The preference of the French for liquid, and of the English for solid, food has been attributed to the greater relative facilities which the French once enjoyed for making a fire, though the persistence (if not the origin) of our popular habits in this respect probably lies rather in the fact that a Frenchwoman's cookery makes greater demands upon her time and attention. One result of this preference is that the essential juices of meat preserved by the French in soups and ragouts are with us to a large extent absolutely wasted. Owners of small house properties complain that, however well trapped their sinks may be, the pipes are constantly choked, and that the mysterious mischief is almost invariably cured by liberal doses of boiling water which melt the solidified fats cast away in a state of solution. The number of persons who died of starvation in the administrative county of London in 1898, or whose death was accelerated by privation, amounted to 48; and we shall be pretty safe in estimating the total number in the United Kingdom at something less than 500. The common and inevitable reflection is that they might have been easily relieved from the superfluities of the rich; but it is true also that their sufficient sustenance was destroyed many times over through the ignorance of the poor. It would be difficult to find an English cookery book which a workman's wife would not reject as too fanciful and ambitious to be practical. A little French treatise, *La parfaite Cuisinière, ou l'Art d'utiliser les Restes*, strikes in its title at any rate the keynote of the popular domestic economy of which we stand much in need in England. Housekeeping, even the humblest, is a skilled business. To know what to buy, how to use it, and how to utilise waste does not come by the light of nature. If more knowledge and more imagination were devoted to the teaching of cookery in our Board schools, the family meal might be made more varied, more appetising, more attractive, and more economical, leaving a larger margin for the comforts, culture, and recreations which help to develop the best social qualities. A happy family is a family of good citizens. It would be discourteous to another Section of this Association to quote without reserve the *mot* of Brillat-Savarin: "He who discovers a new dish does more for the happiness of mankind than he who

discovers a new planet." We must stipulate that the new dish effects an improvement in the economy of the working classes.

Take, again, the consumption of coal. Mr. Sargant says, "It is impossible to say how much of the superiority of English health and longevity is owing to the use of open fire-places; probably a considerable part is owing to it. We all know how close and stifling is the atmosphere of a room heated by a stove, and how much more difficult it is to keep a room perfectly ventilated in summer than it is in winter, when the fire is constantly changing the air. It may be true that three-fourths of the heat of our fire-places passes up the chimney and is lost to us; but we gain far more advantage by the fresh air constantly introduced into the room." Now with improved grates and improved fire-places we may retain all the advantages of the open fire without so great a waste either of the substance of the consumer or of the national stock of coal; and attention is already being devoted to this fact in middle-class households, but some time must yet elapse before the advantage is reaped by the working classes. At a former meeting of this Association Mr. Edward Atkinson exhibited a portable oven or cooking-stove, which was a marvel of simplicity and economy. He has described it at length in his *Science of Nutrition*, 1892. He argues that the attempts to combine cooking with the warming of a room or house are absurdly wasteful; that almost the whole of the fuel used in cooking is wasted; and that nine-tenths of the time devoted to watching the process of cooking is wasted; and he estimates the waste of food from bad cooking in the United States at 1,000,000,000 dollars a year. I have not, however, heard of his oven being at all extensively used.

Upon the thorny subject of dress it is perilous to venture; but it is impossible to be in the neighbourhood of a London park on a Sunday afternoon without feeling that the efforts of domestic servants to follow the rapidly changing vagaries of fashion are carried to a pernicious degree of waste. The blouse of the French workman, and the bare head of the Parisian factory-girl or flower-girl are infinitely more pleasing than the soiled and frowsy woollens or the dowdy hats of their English fellows, nor does the difference of climate afford an adequate explanation of the difference of habit. We must perhaps admit a greater dislike in England to any external indication of a difference in wealth by a costume different in kind.

M. Lavollée, after referring to the low price of the ready-made suits which the English factories "fling by the million on the markets of the world, including their own," adds: "This extra-

ordinary cheapness is, however, not always without inconvenience to the consumer. If the clothes he buys cost little, they are not lasting, and their renewal becomes in the long run very burdensome. This renewal is, too, the more frequent in that the wife of the English workman is in general far from skilful in sewing and mending. Whether she lacks inclination, or the necessary training, or whether the fatigues of a too frequent maternity make her *rôle* as a housewife too difficult for her to support, the woman of the people is generally, on the other side of the Channel, a rather poor cook, an indifferent needle-woman, and a still more indifferent hand at repairs." As a consequence, he says, the English workman has often no alternative but to wear his garments in holes or to replace them by others. Given an equal income, there is probably no doubt that a French working-class family will be better fed and better clad than a corresponding English family dealing in the same market, and will lay up a larger stock of the household goods, and especially linen, which are the pride of the French peasant.

The waste resulting from the immoderate use of alcohol and from the widespread habit of betting, serious as they are, need not detain me, as I wish to confine myself more particularly to waste which can hardly be called intentional. It is not suggested that every man should confine his expenditure to what is strictly necessary to maintain his social position. The great German writer on finance, Professor Wagner, is accustomed to say that "parsimony is not a principle." It is sometimes, indeed, a bad policy and a wasteful policy; and life would be a very dull business if its monotony were not relieved by amusement and variety even at the occasional expense of thrift. Le Play refers to tobacco as "the most economical of all recreations." How else, he asks, could the Hartz miner "give himself an agreeable sensation" a thousand times in a year at so low a cost as 10 francs! But nobody would wish to see a free man using his tobacco like the Russian prisoners described to me by Prince Kropotkin, as chewing it, drying and smoking it, and finally snuffing the ashes! Nor should we desire to eradicate from society the impulses of hospitality, and even of a certain measure of display. An austere and selfish avarice, if generally diffused, may strike at the very existence of a nation.

Another respect in which French example may be profitable to us is the municipal management of funerals (*pompes funèbres*). Many a struggling family of the working classes has been seriously crippled by launching out into exaggerated expenses at

the death of one of its members, and especially of a bread-winner. The French system, while preserving the highest respect for the dead, has some respect for the living, who are frequently unable and unwilling at a time of bereavement to resist any suggestion for expensive display which seems to them a last token of affection as well as a proof of self-respect.

As regards housing, the English cottage or artisan's house is regarded on the Continent rather as a model for imitation than as a subject for criticism; but the pressure of population upon space in our large cities, joined with a love of life in the town, may possibly prove too strong for the individualist's desire for a house to himself. If we should be driven to what Mrs. Leonard Courtney has proposed to call Associated Homes, the *famillistère* founded by M. Godin at Guise, and rooted in the idea of Fourier's *phalanstère*, will show us what has already been achieved in this direction. Dissociated from industrial enterprise it might easily become popular in England. Some of its collective economies are certainly deserving of imitation, and the experience not only of the Continent, but also of America, may soon bring us face to face with the question whether the preparation of dinners, in large towns, should not—at least for the working classes—be left to the outside specialist like the old home industries of baking and brewing. An excellent example of scientific observation is *Les Maisons types* by M. de Foville, the well-known master of the French Mint. He describes in detail the various forms of huts, cottages, and houses scattered over France in such a fashion that it is said the traveller in a railway train may tell, by reading the book, through what part of the country he is passing; and he gives the reasons, founded upon history or local circumstances, for the peculiarities in architecture to be observed. The book is a useful warning against rash generalisations as to the best type of house for a working man.

A well-informed writer shows, in an article in the *Times* of the 28th August, that not less than fifty million gallons of water a day might be saved in London “without withdrawing a drop from any legitimate purpose, public or private, including the watering of plants.” He says: “The detection of waste is carried out by means of meters placed on the mains, which record automatically the quantity of water passing hour by hour throughout the day and night. The whole area served by a given water supply is mapped out into small districts, each of which is controlled by one of these detective meters. The chart traced by the apparatus shows precisely how much water is used in each of the twenty-

four hours. It records in a graphic form and with singular fidelity the daily life of the people. It shows when they get up in the morning, when they go to bed at night, when they wash the tea-things, the children, and the clothes; it shows in a suburban district when the head of the household comes home from the city and starts watering his flowers; it shows when the watering-cart goes round; but, above all, it shows when the water is running away to waste and how much."

I quote this not to multiply examples of the waste of wealth, but to illustrate the insight which a few figures, such as those recorded by this meter, give us into the lives of the people. How much more does the account-book, a detective meter of every economic action, give us an animated photograph of the family life. Nothing is so calculated to stimulate social sympathy or to suggest questions for consideration. Like a doctor's notes of his patients the facts are not for publication in any form which will reveal the identity of the subject; but when we have enough of them they will be of the highest scientific value. We have at present too few to offer any useful generalisations. All that can be done is to serve as a finger-post to point the road along which there is work to be done.

If nothing has been said about the waste and extravagance of the wealthier classes, it is because economy is with them of less moment. They suffer little or no privation from extravagance, and derive less advantage from checking it than those to whom every little is a help. And so far as much of this waste is concerned, they sin against the light. It is one thing to point out a more excellent way to the unwary, another to preach to those who, seeing the better, follow the worse.

But the expenditure of the working classes is also, from a scientific point of view, vastly more important. Their expenses are more uniform, less disturbed by fantasy, or hospitality, or expensive travel, and will give us more insight into the hitherto inscrutable laws of demand. The time is far removed when any reduction in the cost of living could be successfully made the pretext for a reduction in the rate of wages. The Committee on the Aged Deserving Poor recommends under certain conditions pensions varying with the "cost of living in the locality." The same factor, we are told, enters into the adjustment of postmen's wages as between town and town. How are we to know the comparative cost of living without these details of expenditure? How else can we measure with any exactness the progress of

civilisation itself? How else can we discover the cohesive force of the family in holding together the structure of society, the mutual succour of young and old, the strong and the infirm or sick, the well-to-do and the victim of accident or ill-luck? To what department soever of economic life we turn our eyes we find livemen and women, born into families, living in families, their social happiness and efficiency largely dependent on their family lives, and when we consider how greatly our knowledge and insight into society will be increased by a more intimate acquaintance with the economics of the family, we may well cherish the highest hopes for the future progress of our science. The theory of this subject, at any rate, is not "complete." It has not even been begun.

Upon certain aspects of the spending or using of wealth as opposed to the getting of wealth, like the expenditure of central and local governments, it would hardly be proper for me to enlarge. The first is subject to the watchful control of the taxpayer, of Parliament, and of a highly trained civil service; the second to the jealous criticism of the ratepayer and his representative. But there is some social expenditure, like the scandalous multiplication of advertisements (which by a refinement of cruelty give us no rest night or day), which is wicked to a degree. In all these matters of the consumption of wealth, individually and collectively, we are as yet, it must be again repeated, too ignorant of the facts. An unimaginative people as we are, we are fortunately fond enough of travel to have suggestions constantly forced upon us by the different experiences and habits of foreign countries. And we are happy in a neighbour like France, with her literary and social charms and graces, her scientific lucidity and inventiveness, and the contrasts of her social genius to inspire comparisons, and in many respects to set us examples. I have singled out one of her many writers for attention, precisely because of this quality of suggestiveness. Other investigators have, of course, attacked the subject. In Belgium and Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Austria, and the United States, governments and individuals have recently undertaken the preparation of family budgets; but in many respects, Le Play's monographs are the first and greatest of all. They yield excellent material, upon which Science, in its various branches, has yet to do work which will benefit mankind in general, and promises especially to benefit the people of this country. The cosmopolitan attitude of the older economists was largely

due to their centring their attention upon the problems of exchange. To them the globe was peopled by men like ourselves, producing the fruits of the earth, anxious to exchange them to the greatest mutual advantage, but hindered from doing so by the perversity of national governments. The facts of consumption, at any rate, are local. They are often determined by geology, geography, climate, and occupation; and, however fully we may admit the economic solidarity of the world, and the advantage which one part of it derives from the prosperity of another, yet we may be easily forgiven for thinking that our first duty lies to our own brethren; that our natural work is that which lies at our own doors; that, as the old proverb says, "the skin is nearer than the shirt." And we may fairly be excused if we attempt to make our contribution to the welfare of the human family through the improvement of the consumption of wealth and the condition of the people in our own land.

HENRY HIGGS.