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Review

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## REVIEWS

*Das Malthus'sche Bevölkerungsgesetz und die theoretische Nationalökonomie der letzten Jahrzehnte.* Von DR. SIEGFRIED BUDGE (Frankfurt). Braun: Karlsruhe. 1912. Pp. 221.

*The Population Problem, a study in Human Evolution.* By A. M. CARR-SAUNDERS. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1922. Pp. 482. 21s. net.

THESE two strong books are in complete contrast, but not in conflict, and they might well be taken as complementary of each other. Mr. Carr-Saunders surveys a vaster field than Dr. Budge, no less a field than the evolution of man from the beginning of life on this planet. The German author limits himself to one book and its critics; but he gives us an independent economic discussion, which, some of us feel, was bound to come in the end, if not sooner.

Taking the "Malthusian law" to be roughly this: that population tends to increase beyond the means of subsistence, he considers whether, in face of many objections presented by economic writers in the last two or three decades, the said "law" still holds its own. He decides in its favour; and it is no hasty judgment. He has the rare qualification of a thorough knowledge of his author, and is thus able to show that most of the objections were forestalled in the second and later editions of the *Essay on Population*. Many critics, for example, seem unaware of the importance attached by Malthus himself to the notion of the "standard of living," the meaning of "necessaries" to the people concerned (Budge, 27 *seq.*). Dr. Budge is the first for a long time to do him full justice in this vital particular. Some of the critics make his "tendency" into a prophecy of the remote future, when, in the last days, there is to be an appalling replenishment of the earth.<sup>1</sup> It was meant for a statement of present facts. Some think that Malthus stands or falls with the exactitude of the relation between a geometrical ratio of human increase and an arithmetical of food; some even think he had no knowledge of the principle of "decreasing

<sup>1</sup> The possibilities of fecundity are given by Mr. Carr-Saunders, p. 105, without any thought of a prophecy.

returns" in agriculture. He really takes the geometrical increase as a minimum for an unhindered growth of population, and goes on: "The rate according to which the productions of the earth may be supposed to increase it will not be so easy to determine. Of this, however, we may be perfectly certain, that the ratio of their increase must be totally of a different nature from the ratio of the increase of population. A thousand millions are just as easily doubled every twenty-five years by the power of population as a thousand. But the food to support the increase from the greater number will by no means be obtained with the same facility. Man is necessarily confined in room. When acre has been added to acre till all the fertile land is occupied, the yearly increase of food must depend on the amelioration of the land already in possession. This is a stream which from the nature of all soils, instead of increasing, must be gradually diminished. But population, could it be supplied with food, would go on with unexhausted vigour" (*Essay*, 2nd ed., 1803, I, i. 5). In fact Malthus makes the principle of decreasing returns the very basis of his conclusions (cf. Budge, p. 17, more fully ch. ii. 49 *seq.*).

His problem was therefore a present one. So far as he forecasts the future, he anticipates not an overcrowded, growing population, but a stationary one (Budge, p. 156 note, *Essay*, 6th ed., Bk. III, ch. xiii.), though, unlike Mill, he took no pleasure in the prospect. It is true that the modern restriction of births was neither anticipated nor desired by him. Still, the motive of it is just the retention of the standard of living in which he saw the chief hope of the future.

Dr. Budge will not allow us to present the last question so barely; in an interesting section (the second of ch. iii. 156 foll.) he argues that the phenomenon cannot be traced to prosperity or to economic hindrances or the fear of them. The great cause of the change observable since 1870<sup>1</sup> is one lying outside economics and psychology, and, as it were, thrust upon us, namely, the exploits of science in lengthening life and lessening the death-rate. If more children survive and at the same time the standard of comfort is not to suffer, then there must be fewer children (184, 185). Malthus (says Dr. Budge) had a glimpse of this situation when he remarked (*Essay*, 6th ed., 1825, II, vii. 395) that the rate of increase in France, 1813 to

<sup>1</sup> In France forty years before, and therefore hardly explainable in this way. Budge, 177-180.—For our author's view of economic hindrances in Germany at present see *ECONOMIC JOURNAL*, June, 1917, p. 311.

1820, was kept up (in spite of a diminution of births) "owing to a diminished mortality, occasioned by the improved situation of the labouring classes since the Revolution, and aided probably by the introduction of vaccination." He says elsewhere "it will generally be found true that the increasing healthiness of a country will not only diminish the proportions of deaths, but the proportions of births and marriages" (*ib.* ch. ix. 449).

Nowadays we must say the proportions of births, not necessarily of marriages. Diminution of births is not now brought about simply by the Malthusian deferment of marriage. Dr. Budge allows that the figures point to a kind of prudential restraint that would not, to Malthus, have been a moral restraint. Since Malthus thought the risks of the deferment of marriage a less terrible evil than high mortality (Append. 4th ed., 1807, vol. II, 463, Budge, 197), he might conceivably, were he living now, have taken a milder view than in his own day, when he bluntly ranked all artificial restraints under vice (Append. 5th ed., 1817, p. 393). Whatever the ethics of the position, it is the desire of maintaining or raising the standard of living which is, at present, the broad general motive for the restriction of births. In Australia the motive is to raise the standard higher and higher and to keep labour well rewarded, under conditions of competition and private property. Socialism might lessen the felt need for restriction only too well (Budge, 218). Writing in 1912, Dr. Budge sees a political danger in the situation. He thinks it is the tragedy of the problem of population that, if population grows up to the full resources, the masses are poor; if it stops very far short of them, there is a standing temptation given to a more crowded race to strike in, overrun, and subdue (217, 220). He is less sanguine than either Malthus or his admirer John Stuart Mill.

Mr. Carr-Saunders is not among the admirers, though he makes full acknowledgment of the great influence of the *Essay* (ch. ix. 197 *seq.*). He thinks that Malthus confined himself too much to the problem of the relative increase of population and food, neglecting the productiveness of industry. He even says this last is "an idea which finds no place" in the *Essay* (198). Readers of the later chapters of its Third Book (viii. to xiv.) will hardly believe the charge. It is true that Malthus does not lay the emphasis where Mr. Saunders would place it. Mr. Saunders would look at the whole matter from the point of view of Professor Cannan's *optimum*, the number of people which, under given conditions of time, place, and habits, would

be just enough to secure the *maximum* production. When population is below that number, increase is desirable; when over it, we have over-population (200, 201, cf. 213). We come back to Malthus, however, when we are told that this notion of the *optimum* involves the notion of a standard of living (224), and indeed we find our author dealing with this part of the subject quite in the manner of Malthus. On his own peculiar ground he renders valuable service to the Malthusian theory. As a review of the "positive" checks and how they work out a decrease of numbers, over the whole range of human life on this planet, historical and prehistorical, there is probably no book of its kind so comprehensive. The early part has a worthy sequel in the impressive chapters, xix. to xxi., written after the manner of Bagehot's *Physics and Politics*. If there is more Anthropology here than Economics,<sup>1</sup> at least the economist will be glad to have it. The problem of population is discussed, not as it is for man merely, but for the remote ancestors of man and "species in a state of nature" (37). The different forms of reproduction are considered (39 *seq.*) and the effect of the appearance of mind and intelligence in the higher animals (51). Unlike Weismann and Schallmayer, our author, dealing with differences of quality between species, admits the possibility of a "mutation" or permanent change in the germinal constitution as distinguished from mere "modification" (68). In man this germinal change has been influenced both in direction and intensity by mental evolution, and especially by tradition and communication of ideas (81, 82), in addition to environment. "Tradition comes to be of more importance than germinal change among the underlying causes of history. But tradition is profoundly influenced by the quantity of population, among other factors; and therefore, to the extent to which this is so, the determining factor in human history is still bound up with the population problem" (322). The conclusions are summed up in the last chapter (xxii. 475 *seq.*). In the earliest periods, ascertainable human achievement depends on germinal change; but, from the latest prehistoric times and throughout the historical, the controlling cause is the influence of environment on tradition; finally, in our own times progress is to be explained not by a change in quality, but by a growth in quantity of the population, breaking down the segmentary grouping of society (or grouping by descent, 430, 431) and giving rise to the organic

<sup>1</sup> As in Schallmayer's *Inheritance and Selection*, which was reviewed in this Journal, 1905, pp. 239-245.

grouping (by occupation and profession). "This is the paradox of the population problem. Change among species in a state of nature is based on germinal change alone; change among our prehuman ancestors was equally a matter of change in the quality of population; but the explanation of the most outstanding fact in recent history, broadly viewed, is to be sought in a change in quantity rather than in quality of population" (481).

If Mr. Carr-Saunders' paradox is less imposing than Dr. Budge's tragedy, it is because the facts of the latter lie at our feet and we tread on them daily with our clouded shoon.

J. BONAR

- (1) *Premières Notions d'Économie Politique*. By CHARLES GIDE. (Paris : Albin Michel. Pp. 185.)
- (2) *Précis d'Économie Politique*. By MAURICE JOURNÉ. (Paris : Librairie Félix Alcan. Pp. 490.)
- (3) *A Text-book of Economics*. By M. BRIGGS, M.A. Camb., B.Sc. (Econ.) Lond. (London : University Tutorial Press, 1921. Pp. xvi + 527. Price 8s. 6d.)
- (4) *Industrial and Commercial Geography*. By ARTHUR RADFORD, B.Sc. (Econ.). (London : Collins' Clear Type Press. 1922. Pp. 295.)
- (5) *Principles of Political Science*. By R. N. GILCHRIST, M.A., Principal and Professor of Political Economy and Political Philosophy, Krishnagar College, Bengal. (Bengal, London, etc. : Longmans, Green & Co. 1921. Pp. 799 + li. Price 18s.)
- (6) *Physical Economics : An Essay on Fundamental Principles*. By L. SOUTHERNS, M.A., B.Sc., Wh. Sch. (London : The Labour Publishing Company. 1921. Pp. 67. Price 2s. 6d.)

SOME knowledge of economic theory and machinery is a necessary equipment of the modern citizen, who is a very variable being; and the subject needs constant fresh presentment to meet the needs of students approaching it from quite different angles. These two assumptions doubtless underlie the recent outburst of books and booklets on the outlines or fundamentals of economic theory. Whether the fresh presentation or selection of fact and theory cannot be left to the teacher or to the independent student is open to question. Assuming, however, that a different statement of the subject is required—in print—for different audiences,