

16. When any given object is anxiously cared for by a legislature, and all its wisdom is put forth in devising measures for securing or extending it—it forms a pleasing discovery to find, that what may have hitherto been the laborious aim and effort of human policy, has already been provided for, with all perfection and entireness in the spontaneous workings of human nature; and that therefore, in this instance, the wisdom of the state has been anticipated by a higher wisdom—or the wisdom which presides over the ordinations of a human government, has been anticipated by the wisdom which ordained the laws of the human constitution. Of this there are manifold examples in political economy—as in the object of population, for the keeping up and increase of which, there was at one time a misplaced anxiety on the part of rulers; and the object of capital for the preservation and growth of which there is a like misplaced anxiety, and for the decay and disappearance of which there is an equally misplaced alarm. Both, in fact, are what may be termed self-regulating interests—or, in other words, interests which result with so much certainty from the checks and the principles that nature hath already instituted, as to supersede all public or patriotic regulation in regard to either of them. This has now been long understood on the subject of population; but it holds equally true on the subject of capital. There is, on the one hand, throughout society, enough of the appetite for enjoyment, to secure us against its needless excess; and, on the other, enough of the appetite for gain, to secure us against its hurtful