CHAPTER II

THEORY OF PLEASURE AND PAIN

Pleasure and Pain as Quantities

Proceeding to consider how pleasure and pain can be estimated as magnitudes, we must undoubtedly accept what Bentham has laid down upon this subject. "To a person," he says,1 "considered by himself, the value of a pleasure or pain, considered by itself, will be greater or less according to the four following circumstances:—

(1) Its intensity.
(2) Its duration.
(3) Its certainty or uncertainty.
(4) Its propinquity or remoteness.

These are the circumstances which are to be considered in estimating a pleasure or a pain considered each of them by itself."

1 An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, 2nd ed., 1823, vol. i. p. 49. The earliest writer who, so far as I know, has treated Pleasure and Pain in a definitely quantitative manner, is Francis Hutcheson, in his Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, 1728, pp. 34-43, 126, etc.
Bentham\textsuperscript{1} goes on to consider three other circumstances which relate to the ultimate and complete result of any act or feeling; these are—

(5) \textit{Fecundity}, or the chance a feeling has of being followed by feelings of the same kind: that is, pleasures, if it be a pleasure; pains, if it be a pain.

(6) \textit{Purity}, or the chance it has of not being followed by feelings of an opposite kind. And

(7) \textit{Extent}, or the number of persons to whom it extends, and who are affected by it.

These three last circumstances are of high importance as regards the theory of morals; but they will not enter into the more simple and restricted problem which we attempt to solve in Economics.

A feeling, whether of pleasure or of pain, must be regarded as having two dimensions, or modes of varying in regard to quantity. Every feeling must last some time, and it may last a longer or shorter time; while it lasts, it may be more or less acute and intense. If in two cases the duration of feeling is the same, that case will produce the greater quantity which is the more intense; or we may say that, with the same duration, the quantity will be proportional to the intensity. On the other hand, if the intensity of a feeling were to remain constant, the quantity of feeling would increase with its duration. Two days of the same degree of happiness

\textsuperscript{1} Introduction, p. 50.