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**LETTER**  
ON THE  
SUBJECT  
OF  
**THE CORN-LAWS;**  
ADDRESSED TO  
**THE HONOURABLE**  
**WILLIAM MAULE OF PANMURE, M. P.**  
PERPETUAL PRESIDENT  
OF  
THE EASTERN  
**Forfarshire Farming Association.**  
BY  
**A FORFARSHIRE FARMER.**

"Nunc ager Umbreni sub nomine, nuper offelli  
Dicitur, erit nulli proprius; sed cedet in usum  
Nunc mihi, nunc alii. Quo circa vivite fortes  
Fortia-que adversis opponite pectora rebus."  
*Hor. lib. 2. Sat. 2.*

"The farm, once mine, now bears Umbrenus' name,—  
The use alone not properly we claim:  
Then be not with your present lot deprest;  
But meet the future with undaunted breast."  
*Francis's Trans.*

DUNDEE.

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SIR,

THE question regarding the corn-laws has at various times agitated this country; and, like every other question of moment, has divided the community into two parties, each party having its subdivisions--from Moderates to Ultras. Meetings held throughout the kingdom have invariably been composed of the one or the other party exclusively; and thus, instead of being productive of deliberate discussion, they have only led to a struggle which party should adopt the resolutions most strongly expressive of determined opposition to their antagonist, and given rise to an opinion that the safest course which individuals of either party could follow, was to adopt and promulgate the sentiments most completely the obverse of those of his opponents. The two portions of the community have thus been throwing dust in each others' eyes; and, what the one eagerly asked, the other thought it indispensable strenuously to oppose.

The hasty nature and confined limits of a Letter, will not permit me to do more than touch a few of the leading points of the question; nor will it be expected that a "Forfarshire Farmer" should have any thing new to propose on a subject that has so frequently occupied the deliberations of the Legislature, and exercised the talents of many of the ablest men in the country. But should he, by means of the few paragraphs he is about to throw together, be able to remove one single prejudice from *either* party, or mollify in any degree the animosity with which the question has in many cases been discussed, he shall consider his time and labour as not mispent; and shall rely for his apology for addressing you on the subject, on the large space which the question at present occupies in the public mind of this county as well as of every other, and the intense degree of interest with which the public contemplates the approaching discussion in the Houses of Parliament.

In alluding to the present state of public opinion on this momentous subject, I cannot possibly refrain from saying, that a very great degree of excitement has been produced in the minds of the working classes in particular, by the frequent and inflammatory declamations of the periodical press,—a mode of forwarding the cause they have espoused, in all cases reprehensible, but in this particularly inexpedient, for many reasons; among others, because the class which may be called the *mobile vulgus* belongs entirely to that part of the com-

munity opposed to restrictions on the trade in corn—because that class has always been found most liable to tumultuary excitement on any subject connected with the cost of the necessaries of life—and because the working classes (partly from their conceiving themselves so deeply interested in this question) are peculiarly unfit for coming to any wholesome decision on the subject.

And let it not be supposed, Sir, that I have the slightest wish to treat the merchant, the manufacturer, or the operative, with any degree of disregard: On the contrary, the principal part of what I am about to commit to paper is intended for their consideration; and I am besides convinced, that the existence and prosperity of the two great classes of the community are indissolubly in mutual dependence on each other.

I shall perhaps, Sir, startle some readers when I assert that the operative has really little or no *direct* interest in this question. "What!" says the operative, "do you absolutely assert that cheap bread is not a blessing? Do you know how many of us are at this moment starving for want of bread to eat?" As to the operative who is in want of the necessaries of life, his sufferings may be, and undoubtedly are, a proper subject for the consideration of the more opulent and the charitable: But it must be evident to any reflecting mind, that his *immediate* relief cannot be effected by the legislator,—his sphere being confined to the adoption of measures which

may contribute to the recovery of the nation from its present state of depression, and to the prevention of the recurrence of such calamities. As to cheap bread, to a certain extent, it is certainly a blessing; but the effect which the labouring classes anticipate from a free trade in corn is, not that it shall give them cheap bread along with the concomitant changes which must ever accompany it, but that it shall give them cheap bread while other things remain as they are: And here the great delusion of the mechanic has its foundation. What he expects is, that he shall have cheap corn and high wages,---a state of things which cannot, unless under extraordinary circumstances, long continue in any country. This is a fact so generally admitted, that I am warranted in taking it for granted. What, then, is to be the situation of the mechanic after this chimerical abolition of corn-laws?---He is to have *cheap bread and low wages.* And here I consider that I am bound to state, that if the working classes of this country could be provided with food at a cheap rate, it would give an advantage to the manufacturer, and a stimulus to the manufactures of the country: But, considering the amazing quantity of work now done by machinery in this country, I conceive that this stimulus is much overrated by the manufacturer; but that stimulus, such as it is, by creating a somewhat greater demand for labour, I look on to be *the only advantage which the operative can derive from cheap corn.* The mechanic must also keep in mind, that as the

money he has to spare after procuring the necessaries of life, must also be proportionally diminished on this lower scale of prices, and as the luxuries commonly aimed at by him---beer, tea, and sugar, for instance---are pretty steady in price, and likely to remain so, he will find himself a poorer man on the new system than he was during the period of high prices. Indeed, every taxed commodity,---such as shoes, candles, pieces of dress, &c.,---as it is not evident how taxes can be diminished, will be farther beyond his reach than before. To master-manufacturers, on the impossibility of their enjoying the advantages of this stimulus, I shall by and by have a word to say. In contemplating the state of the mechanic after the abolition of corn-laws, I must not omit to take into consideration the general distress produced among agriculturists (evils which the limits of a Letter will not permit me to enumerate in detail), that I may be enabled to state that a great portion of that class thereby thrown out of employment, must now contribute to the squalor of cities and the superabundance of mechanics (already so great), by his endeavours to gain a pittance in some department of manufacture. Here, then, we have the already low wages of the mechanic reduced still lower. To what quarter shall he now look for help? Shall he pray for corn still cheaper? Shall he petition Parliament to have the excess of population sent to the Colonies (though that, alas! were but tapping a dropsy, which, the oftener it is relieved by such unnatural

means, must the oftener require it)? Or shall he, as heretofore, divert his thoughts from the cravings of hunger by scheming Parliamentary reform and universal suffrage? Or shall he (which is most likely) turn on the legislator who made laws to his liking, and revile him for being led,

“Arbitrio popularis auræ?”

I must here, Sir, quote a maxim which, however unwelcome and unpalatable it must ever be to that portion of the community to which it applies, is nevertheless fully established, not by theoretical reasoning, but by experience. It is this,—*that the general mass of the operatives receiving wages disproportioned to the price of the necessaries of life, is found to be attended with advantage neither to themselves individually, nor to the community.* We ourselves have lately seen instances of this; and I appeal, with confidence, to those who have observed its effects on the operative, whether, if he prizes the happiness and respectability of that class, he can wish him the boon of again having wages disproportioned to the expense of the necessaries of life. Have we not seen the mason, the wright, and the heckler, receiving excessive wages; and what was the consequence? How many of these made an improper use of their repletion! How few made a prudent use of it! And what number of them, may I be allowed to ask, was better provided against one month of the depression which ensued, than they would have been had they been earning only a little more than enough?

Did we not see that the seeds of idleness and immorality were sown among those formerly industrious and honest? and had we not reason to fear that a continuance of such a state (were it morally possible for it to continue), must in all probability have relaxed the sinews of commerce and manufactures, by destroying the character of our operatives? Now, to produce these effects, it signifies little whether wages rise much above the present price of corn, or corn fall and wages remain stationary. Hume tells us, that though the operation of certain moral causes may vary on individuals, yet on large masses it is tolerably certain; and thus, the effect of comparative cheapness of the necessaries of life,\* is to cause excess of population by over-frequent marriages; which, joined to the influx from other quarters, which such cheapness may have produced, again begets repletion, and reduces wages to their minimum. This, then, seems the doom of the common labourer in all ages; and, in the happiest countries, that industry shall enable him to earn only a little more than is sufficient to procure for himself and family the necessaries of life: And whoever expects permanently to derange this order of things, will only furnish another instance to prove that the sentence is absolute.

Sudden rises in the price of corn produce the greatest hardship to the operative, whether a

\* As in Ireland; where potatoes, the cheapest of food, are almost exclusively used. It is also the coarsest; but that makes no difference.

rising from natural or artificial causes. But of this the operative may rest assured, that a permanently high price of corn, by adding to the cost of manufactured goods, *will affect his master before it can touch him*; and that, while trade and manufactures continue to flourish, he has no interest in permanently reducing the price of corn,—as the remunerating price of labour is ever regulated by the price of the necessaries of life.

In calling the attention of merchants and master-manufacturers to this question, I am certainly, Sir, entitled to calculate on having liberal and enlightened readers: But I shall in vain look for evidence of this superiority in their conduct on the question regarding the importation of foreign corn. It is they, and not the operatives, who have led the way in applying to all corn-laws the stigma of “odious monopolies,” “bread-taxes,” “starvation bills,” and such argumentative epithets. Neither, I am sorry to say, have I been able to observe, in their collective deliberations and resolutions, a greater degree of temperance and moderation on the part of the more enlightened portion of the mercantile community, than among those whom, on such subjects, they ought to be able to guide and instruct. This I must principally attribute to a feeling on their part, that the aristocracy and landowners of the country have availed themselves of their power in the Legislature, to burden the community with these restrictions exclusively for their own benefit. To

this impression—than which nothing, I am convinced, can be wider from the truth—it must be attributed that many of the enlightened and even liberal classes have allowed themselves to be hurried away by their feelings, and have adopted the first and shallowest suggestions. The sentiments and public declarations of the merchants have been such, that they have left the agriculturist no room to doubt that their general desire is to effect an abolition of all corn-laws, and to have, in their stead, a free and unfettered commerce in grain; for, in the few cases where a modification of the law has been hinted at, the pith of the petition has lain in the ardent anticipation of the effects which may possibly ensue from a full review of these laws in Parliament. On this footing, then, that the merchant desires a total abolition of corn-laws, the agriculturist is entitled to argue the question with him; and he (the agriculturist) has here a right to state, that such a request comes with peculiar ungraciousness from this class; for it is beyond a doubt, that a considerable part of the extra expense of raising British corn, as compared with the expense of foreign corn, is caused to the farmer by the rivalry and proximity of the British merchant or manufacturer. I shall first mention the most evident instance of this. The farmer invariably finds that the price of agricultural labour is regulated, not by the demand of the farmer or the prosperity of agriculture, but by the demand of the merchant and manufacturer. The high

wages which the farmer has paid for labour for the last two or three years, and which had no cause, in the state of agriculture, are a proof of this; and the sudden and large diminution of those wages consequent on the depression in the mercantile world, attests its truth. But indeed it is evident that there must be a never-ceasing competition in the market of labour, between the farmer and manufacturer; and, from the circumstance that machinery is inapplicable to the production of corn, a rise in the price of labour falls with tenfold weight on the farmer.

But this is only a small item of the extra charges which the farmer must lay to the account of the manufacturer in his annual account. The farmer must of necessity use the same currency, and be equally affected by its changes of value as the merchant; and from this it follows, that every bank-note issued throughout the kingdom, for the accommodation of the merchant, by the effect which it has in depreciating the value of money, must aggravate the expenses of the farmer: But still he is expected to raise grain as cheap as the Poles or other nations of the Continent.

In the various disquisitions on the subject of the corn-laws which have been given to the public by the advocates of free trade in corn, it appears to me that many false grounds have been assumed. In the first place, it seems to be taken for granted that a general return to a low scale of prices is practicable in this country; and, secondly, that such change, being universal, would not be injurious to any

part of the community, or not more so to the farmer and landowner than to others. It is next asserted—by way, I presume, of dividing the enemy—that whatever interest landowners may have in this question, tenants have certainly none. These positions, which form the groundwork of most of the arguments of those who advocate the cause of free trade in corn, certainly appear to me to be untenable. As to a general return to low prices, I need assuredly only mention the incubus of the national debt to any visionary who dreams of such a consummation. We have the interest and expense of the national debt, which swallows up two thirds of the revenue of the country, as a fixed and immutable charge on the country; which, I do not hesitate to say it, must for ever stand as a bulwark against any approximation to low prices. I know it may be suggested, that the fundholder must follow the fate of the nation, and of the change in the value of the currency: But, to curtail him of his bond, is a step which in common times can never be ventured on, and which would be evidently iniquitous. The money he lent is still his property; and he, like other proprietors, having run the risk of depreciation, is entitled to such amelioration as may accrue; and his claim for interest seems equally unalterable. To merchants and manufacturers, a general return to a low grade of prices may be practicable, though certainly not without serious convulsions: But to the landowner and farmer, such a revulsion to the extent of approaching the prices of

the Continent, must be ruin and desolation. A great proportion of landlords have money to a considerable extent borrowed on their lands, and the nominal amount of such debts remaining unchanged, while the property is immensely deteriorated (measuring its value in money), the consequence to the proprietor is evident and inevitable. Of a similar nature is the case of many landlords whose property is burdened with provisions to widows and younger children. Landlords, in neither of these situations, have, at least, large sums expended on improving the fertility of their property, money which the circumstances of the country entitled him in prudence to lay out. Every road, every drain, and every dike, are investments of money which only a series of years can repay. The consequence to the majority of tenants would be similar. Their contracts differ from others in this respect, that they are perennial, enduring through a long series of years. The situation of one is, that he is expending money on the improvement of his farm, which he calculates on receiving back with increase during the future years of his lease; and with another, that future has arrived, and he is in the act of realizing his profits. Now, this hypothetical return to low prices interrupts the one in his pleasant task of gathering the fruits of former expenditure, and altogether blights the hopes of the other. Let it not, then, be said that the farmer has no interest in this question: Every tenant who has a valuable lease has in it an interest of the same nature as a landowner; and every tenant who has a lease yielding merely a

bare return for capital and labour, has the interest which arises from his being better as an independent man on a small pittance, than being dependent on the indulgence of a landlord, or, perhaps, altogether dispossessed. When the advocate for a return to low prices, then, can find a time when there is no money invested to be returned with interest at a future day, no contracts having specific obligations and a prospective endurance, no money lent nor owing, neither debtor nor creditor—let him seize the propitious moment and return to low prices;—till then, it is impracticable.

I am aware, Sir, that the political economist is prepared to prove, by reference to his Utopian Republic, that the amount of taxes which can be raised from a country enjoying prosperity, in conjunction with low prices, is greater than can be wrung from the same community when every commodity is high-priced. This assertion may very probably be true, when accompanied with this modification, that the philosopher means thereby, that the country can in the former case afford to give a *larger proportion* of its income in the shape of taxes. But, unfortunately for this country, the greater part of its expenditure (I mean the interest of debt) is fixed and unalterable in its amount, and that larger proportion of the diminished scale will be found inadequate to answer our purpose.

Hume tells us, that “general maxims in politics ought to be established with great reserve;” and accordingly, when we are assailed



with the oft-repeated maxim, as applied to this question, that we ought always to buy at the cheapest market—we may admit it to be true that, *amongst foreign nations*, perhaps we should choose the cheapest market;—but we ought to examine whether the market of corn does not form an exception to this sweeping maxim. Grain seems to differ from most other articles of general commerce in this,—that every nation imperiously requires the greater part of its produce for its own consumption; and that, in case of a serious shortcoming, self-preservation must dictate to every community the necessity of preventing exportation by prohibitory laws; neither should it ever be forgotten, that it is a commodity a certain quantity of which *must* be procured. And what, I shall ask, is to become, in such a case, of the nation of philosophers, who, reposing in security on the wisdom of this general maxim, disdain to raise the whole or the greater part of their sustenance on their own territories? But it is not alone in a time of scarcity that a nation thus dependent for food on foreign states feels her thralldom. The seeds of dissension always exist in the soils of neighbouring nations, ready to germinate by the application of the slightest heat. It is true, we are assured, that a community will always be ready to part with its superfluities in exchange for the money or goods of its neighbours—which is another maxim ever in the mouths of free traders. But fortunately the history of *our own times* puts us sufficiently on our guard here.

During the first twenty-one years of the present century, from the nature of the corn-laws then in operation, the duty on foreign grain was merely nominal, being always admissible at the low duties of 2s. 6d. or 6d.; so that during that time the trade in corn may be said to have been free. Still it will be found that, in several of these years, notwithstanding the freedom to import and the temptation of enormous prices in this country, the political state of Europe prevented our receiving a sufficient supply from the Continent to reduce grain below a starvation price. Yet Mr Whitmore, in allusion to this period, remarks, with much *naiveté*, “When has agriculture flourished to a similar extent? Look at the wastes enclosed, the draining effected—consider the vast improvements which have taken place in husbandry, and calculate the prodigious augmentation of rents, and then say whether or not this was a period of great and general national prosperity.” Now, I do not know whether Mr Whitmore himself overlooked, or only intended the electors of Bridgwater to overlook the circumstance, that the period alluded to was one of almost incessant and of general warfare, when Government was borrowing from one portion of the community money which was expended in giving a factitious stimulus to the manufactures and occupations of others. He ought also, in fairness, to have pointed out that the “free and unshackled trade,” which is here held up for admiration, arose not from the absence of duties and limitations, but from the fact that the cost of corn in this country invariably exceeded the importa-

*tion price.* To such free trade far be it from agriculturists to object.

From the circumstance, however, of natural causes themselves having superseded the action of corn-laws during the fifty years previous to 1821, an inference valuable to the agriculturist may be drawn: It is—that the prodigious investment of capital made by him during that period in improving, inventing, draining, enclosing, and building, by which the country has attained so matchless a state of cultivation, was not caused by the operation of any artificial stimulus or exclusive monopoly; but was imperiously called for by the commercial and political state of the country, and by her growing wants and demands. It should also suggest to the advocates for the system of Nature in the corn-trade, that the immense accumulation of debt heaped upon us by these times of excessive expenditure and preternatural exertion, has entailed on us, in our internal economy, the evil attending a state of war. The taxes called War-Taxes may indeed have disappeared; but are not half of the taxes still, in reality, war-taxes? We have lost the impetus given to our manufacturer—the occupation afforded to our soldier and sailor; but the cost of war remains a heavy score against us; and we dare not add to our debt by lowering our scale of prices.

I shall here advert to a stratagem, which, in the course of the discussions on this question, has been frequently resorted to by *the enemy* (I use the term in perfect good-will) to divide or divert the forces of the landowners,—I mean

the frequent attempts to convince us that a free trade with the Continent would not cause that great reduction in the price of grain which we contemplate; and, to impress this view, Jacob's Report has been much lauded, and served up to the public in a variety of forms. I cannot help looking on this attempt as insidious. The fall of price consequent on a repeal of the corn-laws is the *de quo agitur*; and, were the merchant himself convinced of this fact, of which he so kindly informs us, he would give himself much less trouble about the matter; and the agriculturist may rest assured, that on this point the zeal of his preaching will always be proportionate to his disbelief of the doctrine. The same argument is much insisted on in the Eighty-eighth Number of the *Edinburgh Review*; but it must always be kept in mind, that we have yet to learn what might be the effect of a steady and extensive demand for foreign grain in our market, during a time of profound peace, in increasing the production of the nations on the Continent; and, even according to the most inflated account of the prices in foreign ports, they are such as the farmer in this country is altogether unable to compete with. The same article in the *Edinburgh Review*, if I remember rightly, enters into a calculation of the loss we annually sustain in raising our own corn, by estimating the number of extra hands thereby employed, and reckoning up the worth of their labour. In the mind of the economist, labour is wealth; and so it is, when applied productively. But, if I properly understand the

manufacturers' statement of grievances, superabundance of hands, is among the foremost; and, in spite of what the reviewer may say, I do not think that a hundred mechanics, having even now, only half work, are likely to receive with open arms a hundred *ci-devant* farmers coming to help them,—as they would have shrewdness enough to suspect that if they divided the work they would be expected to divide the wages. The same author assures us that it would be a “prodigious advantage” to the country to be able to procure a plentiful supply of wheat from abroad at 20s. or 30s. per quarter! But, let not the landowner be alarmed,—the antidote was kindly provided along with the poison. This is the same author who convinced us, some time ago, that absenteeism did no harm to a country. It may now be expected, that I should say something on the specific law by which agriculturists propose that the trade in corn should be regulated; and I may, I think, assure their opponents that they are not wedded to the present law. The law, however, has been the object of more abuse than it deserves; and agriculturists have been in a manner compelled by their opponents, to unite in its defence, because they could not fail to perceive that the object of those who pretended to attack the details of the present law was in reality the abolition of all law. The system of free trade has certainly the merit of simplicity; for it consists merely in burning the statute book. Had the landowners perceived, on the part of those op-

posed to them, any inclination to suggest a better and more efficient law, I may venture to say they would without much reluctance have relinquished the present, had it been merely to appease the clamour raised against it; but as they plainly saw that the object of its traducers was to get it abolished, and leave, in its stead—*nothing*—they were compelled to cling to it, with all its alleged imperfections. It appears to me, that the great difficulty of legislating on this subject consists in fixing what in this country is a fair and equitable remunerating price, and what is the price of production on the Continent. I do not consider myself qualified to speak on this head; but my ideas of what a remunerating price ought to be, are certainly moderate; for I wish it merely to be such as may be barely sufficient to enable the generality of tenants to fulfil their present engagements. This is surely as moderate as can well be wished for; as I have already stated, that the present state of agriculture was not the effect of any forced and exclusive system, but of the demand which the nation made on the exertions of the agriculturist; and, this being the case, I think the farmer is entitled to look to the Legislature for protection against any sudden and ruinous depreciation. Such remunerating price, and the price of production on the Continent, being once fixed, what remains appears to me to be simple and easy: The object of a law ought then to be, to preserve prices as nearly as possible at this remunerating price, except when the abundance produced in this country itself

enabled the farmer to sell cheaper. I shall here give an illustration of the arrangement I propose to effect this object, the striking of monthly averages being provided for.

Suppose the remunerating price of barley in this country to be 40s.

And the price at which foreign barley can be sold in our markets to be 25s.

Difference, 15s.

When barley is at or below the remunerating price, I propose a permanent duty amounting to the difference, 15s.

When barley is 1s. above the remunerating price, or 41s., I deduct 1s. from the duty, so that it is 14s.

When barley is 5s. above the remunerating price, or 45s., I deduct 5s. from the duty, so that it is 10s.

And when the rise is 10s., I would remove the duty altogether; and so with other grains, with the exception of 2s. 6d., which should always remain as a source of revenue.

It appears to me that the inducement to import held out by such a regulation as this, would always be proportionate to the demand, as indicated by the rise in our markets. The oftener the prices fell below the remunerating price, by the abundance of our own growth, the better for the farmer. The framing of a

law, however, is a matter of such difficulty and intricacy, that it is fortunate it should be left in much abler hands than this nook can boast of.

I think it proper to make a few remarks which the circumstances of this season naturally suggest to the agriculturist. The first is, that had our extent of land under cultivation been previously much reduced by the effects of a free trade in corn, we should probably have found the Continent unable to supply our wants, and general misery must have ensued. The other is, that an importation-price in all countries which are not invariably exporting countries, seems a necessary safeguard to the existence of the farmer--from this circumstance, that the farmer, in an unfavourable year, having a much smaller quantity to sell, must, were the country open to a plentiful supply from neighbouring states, which no physical impossibility prevents from having had abundant crops, be exposed to total ruin, from the combination of short crops and low prices. The visitation of a bad harvest is very properly called a "national calamity,"--by which the advocates of free trade mean to signify a season which ruins the farmer, but affords plenty and cheapness to the manufacturer. We are told, indeed, that if the farmer in such a season, has little to sell, he has proportionally little to pay for whatever he uses,--a remark which is equally pithy, and perhaps intended to be equally jocular with the common one that a publican who is addicted to the bottle is his own best customer. I therefore do not hesitate to assert, however paradoxical it may ap-

pear, that an importing price is necessary, particularly in years of scarcity at home, as by it alone the whole community can be made to share the hardships arising from a failure of our own crops. But this apparent paradox has its counterpart, that low prices, co-existent with an importation duty, are beneficial to the farmer; and, on this point, it were superfluous to explain, to the farmer at least, why 1000ℓ. received for 800 bolls of grain is better for him than the same sum paid for 400 bolls.

Great fluctuations in the price of grain, which have generally been laid to the charge of corn-laws, seem inseparable from commerce in this commodity; and Mr Whitmore or Mr Jacob I forget (which partly explains the cause, when he informs us that a small supply beyond what is required has a very powerful effect in depressing the price; and it follows, as a counterpart to this proposition, that a small deficiency is sufficient to raise it very high;—both which facts are explained by the circumstance that puts grain out of the common order of commerce, — that a certain quantity of it every community will have (if money can buy it) and that beyond a certain quantity it is almost valueless.

I do not expect that the mere operative shall take a cool view of this question, — even though a member of a Mechanics' Institution; but from his master we have a right to look for more liberal views. In calling in question the necessity of agriculture to our prosperity, he invites us to examine how far extensive foreign

trade is indispensable; and he will find that Hume, with no intention of arraying the two bodies against each other, asserts that foreign trade is not essential to the prosperity of a country which has attained a certain degree of refinement, as the manifold wants and luxuries of the community furnish ample occupation for all classes. I do not wish, however, to depreciate foreign trade; but the merchant should begin to perceive what Bonaparte foretold ten years ago, that the day is gone, never to return, when the nations on the Continent of Europe, which the merchant wishes so much to favour at the expense of those more nearly allied to him, shall be supplied with the principal part of their manufactures by us. But the British merchant will look elsewhere for a market, and he shall find it; and, independently of interested motives, I have enough of that noblest of prejudices called patriotism, to excite a wish that the British merchant may ever continue to outstrip his rivals in all parts of the world.

As Ministers themselves, and other thinking parts of the community, really perceive the distinction between a trade in corn and a trade in other commodities, I have no wish to touch on the doctrines of free trade. If they are prejudicial, we may safely leave it to merchants to be the first to complain.

In contemplating the approaching discussion in Parliament, the landowner should preserve his temper and calmness, by considering that if the clamour is all against him, the power is on

his side; and this should suggest to the merchant and mechanic that it is by argument and persuasion alone that he can forward his cause.

Mr Henry Stephens of Balmadies has lately given to the public, in a manly and spirited manner, such information and advice on the subject as he had to offer. I must apologize for mentioning to you an anonymous answer to Mr Stephens's Letter, written in a style unbecoming such a discussion. As the sole object of this writer is to defeat an individual opponent, I, of course, have nothing to say to him. Mr Stephens may have some opinions peculiar to himself, as who has not? and, if his combatant be a victor in his own fancy, long may he enjoy his imaginary laurels. Every writer who is *deliberately* scurrilous must wish that his scurrillity may have its effect. It is not, however, in my power to afford this person a gratification so congenial to his mind as that of knowing that he has over-  
yered his foe with shame, or even excited his anger. I rather believe that Mr Stephens smiles with complacency at his attacks, and repeats with Horace,

*Mihi parva tura  
Parca non mendax dedit, et malignum  
Spernere vulgus.*

Mr Stephens's Letter has elicited another answer, purporting to be from a Committee of Dundee Mechanics. If these persons are among those who are at present suffering

\* Fate, not unkind, hath bestowed on me a snug estate, and a thorough contempt for the malignant vulgar.

from the unfortunate state of the country, they are certainly entitled to our deepest sympathy; but they are evidently not in a temper which fits them either to impress or receive conviction.

I have now, Sir, taken a hasty and cursory view of this highly-important question. I have not troubled you with any detail of facts, as they are already sufficiently before the public. The time when this question is about to be agitated is unfortunate, as manufacturers are at present subjected to great distress, and farmers are themselves suffering much privation. I think I can assure the manufacturing class that there is no unwillingness on the part of landowners and farmers to have their claims on the laws of the country subjected to full discussion; their interests *must* be in unison, and *the point where they unite* is alone wanted to reconcile, I trust, all parties. The farmer is the manufacturer's best customer,--or rather, they are the best customers to one another. This, I may be told, is a trite maxim;--true, it is; but the most common are often the best; and besides, "*nunquam nimis dicitur, quod nunquam satis dicitur*;" by which I mean---*We* can never repeat too often what *They* can never sufficiently keep in mind. We are told, too, by David Hume, that "where so considerable a number of the labouring poor as the peasants, and farmers, are in very low circumstances, all the rest must partake of their poverty." Let the artisans look to it, then. If we fall, we fall not alone. They cannot continue prosperous in

the midst of desolation, and England must be something more than a stance for spinning-mills.

I might add many arguments to those I have already stated on this question; but I have no desire to make a case. I have stated nothing of which I am not myself fully convinced, and nothing, I trust, which can give offence to those differing from me in opinion. The case is arduous; and I eagerly avail myself of the aid of superior intelligence, by adding as an Appendix, a Letter which ought at present to be in every ones hands. It is a letter from Mr Huskisson, President of the Board of Trade, to one of his constituents at Manchester, dated in 1814. I would recommend the perusal of this Letter to all, not excepting Mr Huskisson himself, as I think that few unbiassed minds can withstand being convinced by it.

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Most respectfully,  
Your very obedient servant,  
A FORFARSHIRE FARMER.

and I might add many arguments to those I have already stated on this question; but I have no desire to make a case. I have stated nothing of which I am not myself fully convinced, and nothing, I trust, which can give offence to those differing from me in opinion. The case is arduous; and I eagerly avail myself of the aid of superior intelligence, by adding as an Appendix, a Letter which ought at present to be in every ones hands. It is a letter from Mr Huskisson, President of the Board of Trade, to one of his constituents at Manchester, dated in 1814. I would recommend the perusal of this Letter to all, not excepting Mr Huskisson himself, as I think that few unbiassed minds can withstand being convinced by it.

APPENDIX.

My dear Sir, A report has reached me from various quarters, that the Bill which I have taken in the House of Commons on the corn laws, has given offence to some of my constituents. I have heard this report with great concern; but, considering the misrepresentations which are industriously circulated throughout the country, without much surprise.

In opposing, as I did, the scheme of Sir Henry Parnell for laying a prohibitory duty on the importation of foreign wheat up to 84s. per quarter, and that of Mr Foster, for prohibiting it altogether up to 100s., I have incurred the displeasure of many, who think that the British grower will not be sufficiently protected by the much milder system which I have substituted. On the other hand, there are many others who think that the scale by which I have proposed to regulate the import is too high. I will not pretend to say that the circumstance of some condemning my suggestion, as not doing enough, and others, as doing too much, is any proof (though I think it affords some presumption) that the middle course, which I have steered between the supposed opposite interests of the grower and consumer, is fair to both. But of this I am sure, that the far stronger measures which were proposed in the House would not have been rejected, if an attempt had been made simply to negative them, without substituting some other measure in their stead. It is unnecessary for me to trouble you with my reasons for opposing the stronger measures of Sir H. Parnell and Mr

Foster; because I apprehend that whatever objections are  
felt at Chichester against my plan, they are founded on  
the supposition, not that it does not go far enough, but too  
far for the protection of the British growers, and that the ef-  
fect of it will be to press hard upon the consumer, and the  
poor.

If I were not fully convinced that the consumer in general,  
but more especially that class of consumers whose subsist-  
ence depends on the raw material, would be benefited by  
the proposed alteration, it would not have had my support.  
My sole object is to prevent (as far as human means can  
prevent) bread-corn from ever again reaching the late ex-  
travagant prices. Can any man have witnessed the scarcity  
and consequent privations of the people during six or seven  
different seasons of the last twenty years, without feeling  
anxious to guard the country against the return of such se-  
vere distress? But if we wish to cure an evil of this alarm-  
ing magnitude, we must first trace it to its source. What  
is that source? Obvious by this, that, until now, we did  
not even in our good years, grow corn enough for our own  
consumption. Habitually depending on foreign supply, that  
supply was interrupted by war, or by bad seasons abroad. The  
present war is a striking instance of an evil, but peace is, by  
all things, to be preferred, not to induce us to guard against  
the repetition of similar calamities, when ever hostilities may  
be renewed. But, when in peace, the habitual dependence  
on foreign supply is dangerous. We place the subsistence  
of our own population not only on the mercy of foreign  
powers, but also on their being able to spare as much corn  
as we want to buy. Suppose, as it frequently happens, they  
have not the same year to be short one, not only in this  
country, but in the foreign countries from which we are fed.  
—What follows? If the habitually exporting country (France)  
for instance, stops the export of its corn, and feeds its people  
without any great pressure. If the habitually importing  
country (England) which even in a good season has hitherto  
to depend on the aid of foreign corn, deprived of that aid  
in a year of scarcity, is driven to distress bordering upon  
famine. There is therefore, no effectual security, either in  
peace or war, against the frequent return of scarcity, and  
prolonged starvation, such as of late years we have so  
frequently experienced, but in our maintaining ourselves  
habitually independent of foreign supply. Let the bread  
we eat be the produce of our own growth, and  
for one, I care not how cheap it is; the cheaper the better.  
It is cheap now, and I rejoice at it, because it is altogether

owing to a sufficiency of corn of our own growth. But, in  
order to insure a continuance of that cheapness, and that  
sufficiency, we must insure to our own growers that pro-  
tection against foreign import which has produced these  
blessings, and by which alone they can be permanently main-  
tained.

The history of the country for the last hundred and seven-  
ty years, clearly proves, on the one hand, that cheapness  
produced by foreign import is the sure forerunner of scarcity,  
and on the other hand, that a steady home supply is the  
only safe foundation of steady prices. During upwards of  
one hundred years, up to the year 1765, the import of foreign  
corn was restrained by very high duties. What was the  
state of the country during those one hundred years? In  
ordinary seasons our own growth supplied a stock of corn  
fully ample for our own consumption, and in abundant  
seasons we had some to spare, which we exported. In  
in bad seasons we felt no want, and were under no appre-  
hension, that the price of corn seldom varied more than a  
few shillings per quarter, that we had no years of inordi-  
nate gain to the farmer, and of starvation to the consumer.  
—That prices, instead of rising from year to year, were  
gradually diminishing, so that at the end of this long period of  
a century, during which we never imported foreign corn, they  
were actually one fifth lower than at the beginning of it.  
Would to God that we had continued in this salutary system  
but in 1765 it was most unfortunately abandoned. What  
has been the result? Precisely the reverse of the former  
system. Instead of a steady supply, afforded at steady and  
moderate prices, I have witnessed frequent and alarming  
scarcities. In every year our dependence on foreign supply  
was increasing, till the war came; and, by interrupting  
that supply, greatly aggravated all our evils; for a country  
which depends on enemies or rivals for the food of its people  
is never safe in war. In the first eighteen years of this war,  
we were forced to pay sixty millions of money (to nations,  
every one of whom has, in the course of it, been our enemy) for  
an scanty and inadequate supply of foreign corn, and  
when for this purpose we had parted with all our gold, and  
even our silver currency, to combine Europe, shut its ports  
against us, and America cooperating, first laid an embargo  
and then went to war. This combination was formed with  
the vain hope to break our spirit with starving our bodies.  
We struggled hard both at home and abroad, but by the  
struggle we have gained much. Abroad we have subdued  
our enemies—at home we come out of the war with



our agriculture so extended and improved as to make us at this moment independent of foreign supply. We are so at this moment; and shall I, who to the entire conviction of my own judgment, have traced the long sufferings of the people to a contrary state of things, be deterred from using my honest endeavours in Parliament to prevent the recurrence of such sufferings? For that purpose we must go back to the principles of our forefathers; and, by reverting as much as possible to their system, we shall secure to ourselves and our posterity all the benefits which they derived from it.

I admit that if unlimited foreign import, which the war had suspended, were now again allowed, bread might be a little, though a very little, cheaper than it now is, for a year or two. But what would follow? The small farmer would be ruined; improvements would everywhere stand still; inferior lands, now producing corn, would be given up, and return to a state of waste. The home consumption and brisk demand for all the various articles of the retail trade, which has so much contributed, even during the pressure of the war, to the prosperity of our towns, and especially of those which are not connected with manufactures or foreign commerce, would rapidly decline; the farms, the servants, and all the trades that depend on agriculture, for employment, would be thrown out of work; and the necessary result of the want of work would be, that wages would fall even more rapidly than the price of bread. Then comes some interruption of the foreign import, coinciding with the decay of agriculture at home, and corn is suddenly forced up again to a famine price. Such a course would be the inevitable consequence of admitting ourselves in a state of habitual and increasing dependence on foreign supply. Who, upon the long run, would profit by such a state of things? namely, the overgrown farmers with large capitals. They will be enabled, for two or three years, to bear up against the foreign import; and when ever the import is interrupted, the extravagant prices they will then be enabled to command will more than repay the temporary losses which their poorer but not less industrious neighbours had not the means to withstand. Every acre thus forced out of cultivation will insure to them an ultimate increase of profit; and in proportion to that profit will inflict an increased pressure on the consumer. To protect the small farmer, therefore, at this moment, is ultimately to protect the people. This is my sole object, whatever may be the fate of the bill now in the House of

Commons, I can most conscientiously declare, is, in my opinion, the sole tendency of the plan which that bill is calculated to carry into effect. I have troubled you already at great length; but the subject is far too extensive to be properly discussed in any hasty communication, which my avocations here will afford me leisure to hold with any of my constituents. For years it has occupied my attention; and for years, I can truly say, I have foreseen the necessity of adopting the principles on which the House of Commons is now acting.

If my constituents, upon mature consideration, should differ from those principles, I shall deeply regret that I cannot concur in their opinions. To them I owe every respect, and to their wishes it must be my first wish to show every possible deference; but, on an occasion in which, after the most anxious reflection, in my own conscientious judgment, is satisfied that the course which I have pursued is calculated to promote the best interests of the country, and to place the subsistence of the people upon a footing more stable and secure, more conducive to regular industry, and individual comfort, I should hold myself unworthy of the trust which has been confided to me, and should indeed feel that I had betrayed it, if I were to put even the risk of losing the good will of part of my constituents (a momentary loss I should trust) in competition with the discharge of a sacred duty. They know and value their own independence; but, in proportion as it is dear to them, they ought to respect mine. I must frankly say, I cannot be their infettered representative; I cannot, to any useful purpose, represent them at all. To their service, which is that of the public, my time and attention in Parliament are steadily and cheerfully devoted. The only reward I look for is the kindness and confidence of those who have sent me there; but that reward, however valued, I can neither consent to purchase at the expense of truth, nor to retain by flattering the people to their ruin. If, unfortunately, this be the price which a member for Chichester is expected to pay for that seat, which I deem it the proudest honour to owe to their free choice, it is a price which neither duty nor honour will permit me to pay; for I should then hold that seat by a tenure not less injurious to their interests, than degrading to the character of their representative. These feelings you are at liberty to make known; in any quarter you may think proper. I have thought that the occasion called for them; I have stated them without reserve; but, with an undiminished sense of gratitude for the many fa-

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vours and friendly offices for which I am indebted personally to you, and many others, and generally to all my constituents,

Believe me,

MY DEAR SIR,

Very faithfully yours,

WILLIAM HUSKISSON.