From the Author.
P. S. Moore

A

PETITION,

WITH

SEASONABLE ADVICE,

TO

THE MEMBERS

OF

THE NEW PARLIAMENT.

A

PETITION,

WITH

SEASONABLE ADVICE,

TO

THE MEMBERS

OF

THE NEW PARLIAMENT.

Das Moore

FROM

NATHANIEL BURTON,

OF

ST. MARY-AXE, GARRET-HOLDER.

LONDON:

JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.

MDCCCXXVII.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY T. BRETTELL, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.

This is to give Notice,

That although the following Petition is laid before the House of Commons merely by a little Printer's Devil, and has only one name affixed to it, and that one not over and above known, yet it contains the universal wishes of the whole Commercial world, of every Patriotic Operative, of here and there a Well-wisher to the Constitution, and of all those who wish otherwise.

It ought not therefore to be treated, like a common County Petition, with only the usual vote to lie upon the table, alias on the shelf; especially as to save the expense of printing to the nation, that is done already.

PETITION, &c.

Gentlemen of the House of Commons,

I SHALL first inform you who and what I am, and how I came to understand national affairs, so as to give you the soundest counsel. First, with regard to my birth and parentage, these I shall pass over, for why should I detain you on things quite insignificant? To come to the point: no sooner did I arrive at the proper age, than it was proposed to send me to Merchant Taylors' School, but that being rather expensive, I was put, in preference, to the nearest day-school instead. I was not detained loitering there very long, at a parcel of unprofitable studies; for, as soon as I had learnt to cut and drive a quill, and cast accounts, I was put to business, and fostered in and about the close and warm air of 'Change Alley, where I throve like a mushroom. In a short time I began to scrape together a little modicum of my own, which, by industry, multiplied; and I held it tight, amidst all the bulls and bears of the adjoining courts, and came to be

reckoned by them a keen hand. This character served me in good stead, and at length I was transferred to a place of trust in a minor banking house; there I stuck like a horse-leech, and sucked up a small fund; and became so useful, that, after a long clerkship, I was raised to the situation of a working partner. Then, having the prospect of a fortune, I gave fresh activity to the firm; and, by a liberal method of transacting bills, greatly increased the profits, and extended the credit, of the concern. In this flourishing course I became respected on 'Change, as a good man;—it was by no fault of mine, as I shall prove, that I am now considered otherwise. It happened that a large commercial house in Liverpool, with which we had extensive dealings, entered into some promising speculations, that, by ill luck, turned out badly; and we, not liking to submit to a heavy loss, agreed to assist them with some accommodation bills. These were obliged to be renewed again and again, but to no manner of purpose; for, by bad management, the crash came at last, and we, though innocent, were involved in the ruin. On making my appearance before the Commissioners, I was strictly cross-questioned, yet I betrayed no secrets, and bore up pretty well, experiencing bitterly what bankrupts feel. Our creditors, however, had, on the whole, little reason to complain, for they actually divided four shillings and sixpence in the pound; and if some bad debts

had been recovered (which was possible), there would have been an additional dividend. Notwithstanding which, after the inspection of the books (which were kept on an inextricable plan of my own), the prejudices against me were so strong, that I was obliged to withdraw, and live peaceably, for the time to come, on an annuity concealed by means of my broker. Thus, having tried to no purpose to gain wealth for myself, I studied, for some purpose, to raise wealth for the nation, and was enabled so to do by having been an original subscriber to the City Library in Moorfields. I was never a time-waster, so I carefully read every book I could find on this subject, and have hoarded up such a store of knowledge, that, were I young, and to begin the world again, I could with certainty realise a fortune as large as Farquhar's; for all the world are aware, that it is much easier for a man like me to work than to write. But the opportunity of scratching up being now past, I shall communicate the methods to you Members of Parliament, for the good of the country, which, next to one's own interest, should always be our chief concern.

It may be a matter of wonder to some, how a man not bred at any college should come to a thorough acquaintance with all those affairs; which never could have happened, but from the vast mental improvement that, from the spreading of Sunday papers, and other excellent periodicals, has burst upon us, and also upon traders, and

operatives of all descriptions. It is now impossible that we should any longer be imposed upon as we have been; all old prejudices are now doing away with; things can't be allowed to go on as they used to do; and a total new course is now pursuing, agreeable to the grand principles that have been discovered.

There are, indeed, a few cavillers, who pretend to doubt of the present age being a bit better than former times. They tauntingly ask, Which of the poets of the present day beats Milton or Shakspeare? What modern philosopher goes before Bacon and Newton? and, Who of our present speakers in Parliament could match with Pitt and Fox? We shall grant all this, and let them make the most on't. For no one can deny, that the rabble of former times were all brutally ignorant: whereas, at present, from the great number of cheap boarding academies, day schools, Sunday and parish schools, spouting clubs, and political lectures, the whole populace are now enlightened. And this is surely better, than that ignorance should prevail, as formerly, with only a few men of genius as a set-off.

Besides, the fact of the matter is, that, at different times, men's minds have been turned to different pursuits. Formerly, it's said, poetry, oratory, ethics, metaphysics, geometry, religion, and such things, were chiefly thought of; but now there is a science newly sprung up, far

superior, which is the present rage, and this, all the world knows, is called Political Economy.

I was at first puzzled to know the meaning of this term; for it is not in Johnson's Dictionary, but has been brought into use since his time. I at last found out that it is to France we are indebted for the discovery of this noble science, which was only hit upon about the middle of the last century; and I am amazed it was never thought of before. For with the French, Political Economy means all that was known, or ever will be known, about agriculture, commerce, manufactures, law, and government. So that, with the exception of divinity, physic, and chemistry, it includes almost all human learning. Now, in this country, law and government are very considerately left out of the question. Indeed, as I began to study late in life, it required all my pains to master completely the principles for the improvement of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures alone. But having done it, I can teach you them, and instruct you how to carry them to the utmost perfection, in this short Petition.

In the above paragraph, which was penned with great labour, I have candidly admitted, that the French were the undisputed discoverers of the science of Political Economy; but the British, according to their custom, are the improvers, and it's they who have carried it to the height it has now reached.

Nor was this the work of any one man, but has been effected by a crowd of eminent modern philosophers, who work by the sheet. These authors, being in search of a livelihood, don't write such stuff as will please only the high nobles, and a few great landed proprietors, but sterling truths, which will sell by catching the multitude. They push forward their rapid lucubrations into reviews, magazines, tracts, journals, encyclopædias, and every hackneyed path of literature. And I venture to affirm, that the grand and novel system is supported with a force of reason, conciseness, and perspicuity of style, elegance in phrase, propriety in diction, and with masterly strokes in political calculation. By these studies how am I altered! It's true, when a mere man of business, I could run up a long sum, and unravel an intricate account, with any clerk; but since I've become a man of science, nothing gravels me. I can account satisfactorily for every rise and fall of the British and foreign funds, and all the fluctuations in exchanges and discount; I can prove, to conviction, the amazing advantages of encouraging the exportation of our redundant manufactures, to be exchanged for an importation of the redundancies of foreign commodities. Nay, I can predict variations in the price of cotton, corn, and labour, and all the what-nots of Political Economy.

This shows what a wonderful science this is; yet it had rather a queer beginning. All the world

knows, that every body understands the business of others better, than they do themselves; so the Dutch and English practised trade, and a Frenchman found out the fundamental principles; and, moreover, that Frenchman was a Doctor. Quesnay (that was the original's name) grew tired of physic, like some others, which only forbids what people like, and orders what they hate; so he turned to politics, the pleasanter pursuit; and, being a good-natured man, he showed the mischief of hampering commerce in any way whatsoever. So far, he was in the right; but he had a silly preference for agriculture over commerce and manufactures, in which he was manifestly in the wrong. For he would have it that the labours of no class, except the agriculturists, were productive; and that merchants and manufacturers only modified or conveyed fabrics, but that their labours, in fact, were absolutely unproductive. This led him to recommend, that agriculture should be principally encouraged; yet his method of doing it was uncommon, for he proposed that all the taxes should be taken off trade, manufactures, and every thing else, and that one swinging tax, sufficient for the whole revenue, should be laid slap dash upon the land. This was a capital scheme; yet it's not clear to me that it would be any great encouragement to agriculture, or that it would make bread cheaper. The Doctor, however, took these notions into his noddle, and set all France agog. A multitude of writers soon

followed him, who were all for abolishing restrictions, prohibitions, privileges, charters, and taxes; with the exception of the land-tax, which was a general favourite.

It may easily be imagined how the old courtiers relished these proposals; and, as for the priests, they trembled for their tithes, and were frightened out of their wits. So the French nation became keen for reforms; and when they take a thing into their heads, and try to get the upper hand, unless they are curbed by a stronger, they grow quite frantic. At that time a young King had just mounted the throne, who hated dragooning, and wished to humour the people; and some sly friends of the new doctrines, who had got the Queen's ear, advised trying them to see how they would answer. This suited the compliant disposition of the King; so he raised Turgot, a famous economist, to the place of Comptroller-General of the Finance. Now, this Turgot was a ripe scholar of Voltaire's, and properly crammed with philanthropic revolutionary principles; and, of course, making him a minister threw all France into an extasy. One would have thought that he had promised every mother's son a purse of gold; for, from one end of the country to the other, young and old were congratulating each other, dancing rigadoons, and cutting entre-chats; and nothing was heard but fiddling, giggling, and gabbling. The good-natured King was as much pleased as any of

them; for little did he think, that in a few short years these merry folks, as a reward for his pliancy, would conduct him, his wife, and sister, to the guillotine.

As to Turgot, he took at once the bull by the horns, and set about his reforms in a devil of a hurry. He first swept away a heap of court caterpillars, then pared the nails of the corrupt chiefs of departments, and turned an army of clerks to the right-about. Lastly, to spread plenty over all France, he aimed a death-blow at the corn laws, which were there ten times worse than here; and issued forth a royal edict, proclaiming almost entire freedom of trade in corn. Now would have been the triumph of Political Economy! now wheat would have been grown as cheap as nettles, and every beggar would have had his quartern loaf a day! But—but—my pen spatters, —there is a ragged split in't, for I now buy second-hand ones; besides, my knife wants grinding, and the ink's mothery. Yet I must tell the upshot, and make this bad writing legible if I can. You must know that, after the edict, there occurred, in pure spite, a train of untoward accidents, to contradict the infallible inferences of sound philosophy. First, and foremost, there was but a bad crop, which was no fault of Turgot's, though the vile aristocrats blamed him for that too. Then the confounded French merchants, not being, like us, used to liberty, did not know what to make of it;

so they exported where and when they should have imported; and the covetous corn-factors, a set of monopolizing rascals, hoarded up the grain in ill-roofed granaries, and damp cellars, where it rotted; instead of selling it, as they ought to have done, at a low rate. By all these villainies the bread rose to a monstrous price, and, in some places, there was none to be had for money. When this shocking news reached Turgot he displayed stoical firmness, and sent down sage admonitions to the people to endure, with patience, the temporary evils, which would be followed by permanent advantages. He gave the fullest assurances, that, if the next year's crop should be better, things would come round again. But there's an ugly French proverb that says, *a hungry belly has no ears*; whereas it ought to have four. For, if it won't hear reason, how can it expect victuals. Instead of listening to sound arguments, the rabble rose in a fury, and burst open the bakers' shops, plundered the granaries, and burnt the mills. As there was no bearing these proceedings, dragoons were sent amongst them, who massacred five hundred wretches, which quieted the rest.

This accidental mischance was taken a shameful advantage of by the priests and nobles, who, as they always do, secretly encouraged the rioters, and then mercilessly sabred them. It was they who raised up all the combustion, and then laid all the blame on the abolition of the corn laws. I would

only ask, how could the abolition make bread dear, when every one knows it is the only way to make it cheap. But, without all manner of doubt, the first occasion of the rise of the market was the hard-hearted merchants exporting the grain for their own profit; and the covetous corn-dealers hoarding it to enhance the price. And all the deep ones know that these are the real facts. But there's no convincing the poor ignorant rabble of the true state of the case, who never have the sense to put the saddle on the right horse; so they began bawling with all their might, without knowing why, "Down with Turgot! Down with Turgot." What could be foolisher than this? That the very same man, who had been adored when out of office, should be detested, after being only twenty months in.

And the mild King, who had taken him into favour, and who passed his laws, to content the nation, dismissed him, and rescinded them, from the self-same motive. Never was there a more ridiculous ending of a business.

It is natural, however, to ask, after this tergiversation, what has been the French policy respecting the corn laws since?

Strange to say, although a swarm of writers have demonstrated the wisdom of freedom of trade in corn, neither the courtiers of the Legitimates, nor the philosophers in the reigns of Republicanism or Terror, nor the great Napoleon himself, ever made a second trial of it. Their pitiful policy has

always been, never to suffer exportation of grain, except when there is a glut; nor an importation, except when there is a dearth. In short, their system is as bad as bad can be; even worse than ours. In spite of which, agriculture is flourishing in France; yet every economist has proved to demonstration, that it would have flourished fifty times more, if their ministers had boldly persevered in the grand measures of the great Turgot. I despise, as every Londoner does, all national reflections; yet it can't be denied, that our neighbours, the French, are reckoned rather frivolous. For which reason, their ministers, remembering Turgot's dismissal, meddle as little as possible with the corn laws. But in the year 1786, Calonne was their financial minister, who was enterprising enough, as was long afterwards felt. He had dipped into the writings of the economists, and had no objection to try their projects upon the manufacturers, who were but little considered in France. Pitt was then our minister, who was chokefull of the despicable old-fashioned notions he inherited from his father; that is as most folks think, but I have my doubts. For only look at Chatham's city-monument: there he stands leaning on a rudder, to show he favoured commerce; and there's a wheatsheaf lying at his feet—a sly cut at the corn laws. As to his Son, he was willing enough, it's true, to enter into commercial treaties with any nation whatever, but always

stipulated for what they called reciprocal advantages. Now the scientific men have proved, that all that caution is nonsense, as neither the French, nor any other people, can hurt us by their importations, however great. For they will not sell for nothing; consequently, notwithstanding all their prohibitions and restrictions, we shall always export to them, in spite of their teeth, goods of equal value, or gold and silver, which comes to the same thing.

Pitt had never the sense to see this; yet he was willing enough to open the trade between the two countries in his own narrow contracted way. So he agreed to admit French wine and oil, which we cannot grow, and a few trifling articles, such as jewellery and millinery, at a low duty: but continued strictly the prohibitions against their silks, gloves, glass, china, cambrics, and manufactured goods of every kind, which he foolishly fancied would interfere with our own manufactures. But Calonne, who was a bookish man, and a bit of an economist, had far more liberal views; so, without any difficulty, he consented to the entrance of our woollens, cottons, and cutlery, in short, of our principal manufactures, into France, on paying a very moderate duty—thus making a beginning of freedom of trade.

Although this commercial treaty did not go the length it ought, especially on our part, yet it was far better than the old, close, restrictive system;

for we bought wine and oil cheap, and got a capital market for our manufactures. And it's as plain as a pike staff, that it was equally beneficial to the French; for did not they get rid of their wine and oil, of which they had more than they could consume? and wer'n't they well furnished with as many British articles as they chose to buy, which were both better and cheaper than those made at home?

Yet, for all this, their manufacturers, the noisiest pack on earth, began to look sour, and bellow out that they were thrown out of employ, and all ruined. Though Mr. M'Culloch has demonstrated that that don't signify; for all they had to do was to quit their workshops, and plant vines and olives; and those who pass through France, during the vintage, confess, that planting, gathering, and pressing grapes and olives, is a much pleasanter employment than sitting at a loom, or broiling at a furnace. But the French weavers, cutlers, and cotton spinners, were too wilfully obstinate to change their trades, and to see the good policy of encouraging, by all means, the entrance of British manufactures into their country;—in fact, the French are but very so so reasoners. Indeed, one of their own countrymen, who knew them well, once observed, that they were a mongrel breed, endowed with the caprice of monkeys and the fury of tigers. So there was no wonder that they should grin and growl at poor Calonne, who was

glad to escape out of the reach of their paws. Then they turned their rage against the King and the Government; and, from that period, they were never pacified, till they had murdered the one and torn the other to pieces. This ending of Calonne's project, happening on the back of Turgot's, has hindered free trade from being fashionable in France. Still, I maintain, that both Turgot and Calonne were great men, and that their measures were scientifically grounded. As to the misgivings, these were naturally to be expected at the outset. But it's as sure as truth's truth, that if the French had only waited until the benefits resulting from an unlimited importation of British fabrics had been enjoyed, then, and not before, the wisdom of free trade would have been manifested.

So the whole scheme was frustrated by these shilly shally doings. But now that the English have taken the business in hand, they will hold on; and, like their own bull-dogs, happen what will, never loose their gripe. I must now crave the most serious attention of all you Members of the House of Commons to the matter in hand; and I beg of you not to be afraid of my leading you out of your depths, for I shall make the whole science intelligible to the meanest capacity.

Thus I begin:—

Is it not a maxim, with every frugal house-keeper, to get the provisions for his family, the

articles he wants, and the work he would have done, at a cheap, rather than at a dear rate? And is not that conduct which is prudent in a private man the same in a state?

Nobody, in his senses, can deny these profound positions, which were discovered by the Political Economists, and are fully proved in the philosophic works of Dr. Quesnay, Adam Smith, Mrs. Marcet, Mr. M'Culloch, and a swarm of others. Indeed, the above axiom, together with the happy illustration, were wisely stated by the City of London, in a celebrated Address to Parliament, and have crept into the speeches of those distinguished statesmen who cunningly invent plagiarisms.

These grand incontrovertible truths point out the duty of Parliament, which is, to strive to make commodities and labour as cheap as possible; and never, by granting advantages, to tempt any body of men to try any particular employment. But you will be very much surprised when I tell you, that you have almost constantly been doing the very reverse; and not only you, but all the legislatures of every government on earth. For have not you, and your ancestors before you, been voting taxes, impositions, restrictions, and prohibitions,—custom-house laws, excise laws, with dues, fees, and perquisites, which enhance the dearness of every article consumed or used by man? And have you not also granted exclusive privileges, franchises, monopolies, to corporations,

companies, cities, boroughs, and colleges?—all of which destroy competition, and also produce dearness. Besides which, by each of those grants, you presumed to control the free employment of capital; you forced it out of its natural course to such channels as pleased you, though you knew nothing about the matter. Here stand I on solid ground; nay, on absolute mathematical demonstration. For who can gainsay, that cheapness is right, and dearness wrong? and who will deny, that freemen should be uncontrolled in the use of their capital? Yet is it not amazing, that our Parliaments, after deliberating, devising, and debating, almost always finished by passing some law to enhance the price of something or other, or to force or cajole capitalists to employ their money in some unnatural way. Only examine your own journals, and you will soon convince yourselves that this is the exact verity of the matter.

What is now to be done? What is your bounden duty? What else, but to undo all that has been done? The items of the account are multifarious, and the principal ones will be examined hereafter; but undoing is, in fact, the sum total of this new doctrine of the science of Political Economy. Now, in setting about this grand reform, though every thing can't be done at once, yet no time should be lost. No shuffling excuses should be listened to from any, particularly from the highest class; but the rule of right should be

dispensed to the commercial, the manufacturing, and the landed interest, with impartiality. Therefore I shall take each class of the community in rotation, without respect of persons; indeed, since I was gazetted, none has been shewn me, and fair dealing is a jewel. And, as I have found out what should be done for each, I shall modestly propose the proper measures. For I have long passed my mornings, in a rusty thread-bare coat, reading in Moorfields; and my evenings are commonly spent with a pot of Meux's, in my solitary garret, ruminating on the state of the nation. For it is rare for me to be now asked to a chirping bottle by any of my former friends, who have served me as I once served others,—meaning thereby, that they have cut me, which is hard measure. Leaving my own, I revert to the public concerns; and shall shew the application of freedom, first, to commerce, which has been justly extolled as the chief support of the British Empire.

THE EFFECTS OF FREE TRADE ON MERCHANTS.

When sitting on a bench, under the pillars of the Royal Exchange, oft have I heard it boasted, "that the English merchants were by far the "most liberal minded in the whole world." Now, for my part, I never was out of England; notwith-

standing which, I still believe the above to be true, because nobody there contradicted it. And, in confirmation, it has struck me, when in mixed companies, that no persons of other vocations used to talk so warmly in praise of freedom of commerce, and so virulently against all manner of restrictions, as these same merchants. Sometimes they maintained prettily, that the ocean should be as free for ships as the air for birds; that every port should be open to receive the vessels of all nations, wafted thither by every wind that blows; and that all merchants should have free scope to exchange their merchandise, and purchase any freights they have a mind to, without let, hindrance, or molestation.

Whenever glorious sentiments of that sort are bellowed out at Guildhall, the traders, one and all, toss up their hats, and huzza till the roof rings. So it's no wonder that the promulgators of the new doctrines, as soon as they broached them, found plenty of proselytes in the mercantile line; some of whom even turned authors, proving what had been proved before, and prosing on the only subject they ever handled. Nay, the wives and daughters of the city sect of pale-blues crowded to the Economic lectures, and never yawned at the driest arguments, but looked knowingly; and, by smiling, nodding, and tittering, shewed they understood em. It is then plain, and I am weary of proving so plain a point, that freedom of com-

merce, which is ever in the mouths of merchants, springs from their hearts; and that they would exult, were you Members of the House of Commons to pass a Bill establishing it all over the British Empire. Can there be a greater proof of the enlightening of commercial men now-a-days, over the gross ignorance of our forefathers, than this total change of opinion. For sorry I am to own, what I could not believe till forced to it, that the abhorred system of restrictions, impositions, and prohibitions, were the contrivance of the merchants themselves for their own profit. Now, I never heard a word of this on Change. Yet, when I was prosperous, and before I looked sharply into these matters, I used sometimes to converse for a few minutes at Lloyd's, or saunter into a coffee-room for news; and, when dining at the Mansion House, chat with those sitting close to me; and, on these occasions, I have heard it repeated again and again, that every commercial abuse whatsomever, was trumpt up by the lords and country squires, to raise the value of their own estates. So I thought, what every one says must be true. But Adam Smith, the greatest friend the merchants ever had, and who has every Act of Parliament at his finger ends, tells the clean contrary: For he allows*, "that country gentlemen and farmers are, to their great honour, the

* The Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. page 191.

"least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly." And he afterwards truly confesses, that the merchants and manufacturers seem to have been the original inventors of commercial restraints, which secure to them the monopoly of the home market. Yet who can blame them, seeing they knew no better? for, as I said before, the knowledge of Political Economy had not then been found out. But now that they are scientific, they are more keen to destroy these mischievous schemes than formerly they were to urge them. Therefore, in the grand reform, which, in the new order of things, must take place, the merchants will shew a noble example of disinterestedness. And, since they first proposed monopolies, and those for their advantage, were the first that were passed, they will not only consent, but press, that these should be the first repealed.

This will make a fair beginning; after which, the reforms will proceed in the regular order that the abuses were enacted. I will defy any courtier among them to object to this equitable proposal.

In sifting this matter to the bottom, in order to know the beginning of the mischief, I got the help of a friend, an under-usher of the Blue-coat School, who is a better scholar than myself; and he tells me, that, on a strict search, he finds the restrictions about trade began almost as soon as trade itself began; and that, from the perpetual cravings of the merchants, the Acts of Parliament

granting to them exclusive monopolies have been multiplied without end. It is, therefore, quite impossible even to count the whole; but, passing over swarms of petty ones, I shall call your attention to a few of the more considerable.

First and foremost, I find that our merchants have obtained the monopoly of the commerce between Great Britain and all our colonies and foreign possessions in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. This, it must be owned, is a spanking monopoly, and directly in the teeth of the two fundamental maxims of Political Economy formerly stated. It controverts the first maxim, by enabling the mercantile monopolists to raise exorbitantly the rate of freightage and the price of all our colonial and foreign productions; and the second maxim, by forcing much more capital into these trades than would naturally be placed there. It is certainly strange, that the darling maxims of every merchant should have been universally controverted by them in their own practice; this, assuredly, they were not aware of. But the utility of making their principles and practice correspond shall now be expounded. If you, Members of the House of Commons and the Peerage, would only pass a Bill, agreeably to the wishes of the merchants, to grant freedom of trade to all nations with our foreign possessions, the benefit that would accrue to the public would be prodigious; as, by the fair competition that would immediately arise, all the baneful effects of this

monopoly, which we now suffer, would soon cease. For the French, Dutch, Hamburghers, Danes, and Swedes, would all vie with each other, and, to gain the trade, would lower the freightage, and every other charge. Colonial produce of every sort would, consequently, be imported far cheaper; and the British capital would no longer be driven, by the laws, into this unnatural channel. Thus the two leading maxims of Political Economy would be observed. Then reflect, that to be able to have sugar, coffee, cotton, rum, rice, cocoa, indigo, furs, timber, and a multitude of other goods, at a cheap rate, would be very agreeable to the rich, and very comfortable to the poor.

It's plain, besides, that all our conquests abroad only extend this monopoly wider; for when an island in the West Indies is taken, or a Rajah's country subdued, who are the gainers except the merchants, who get by these conquests more customers? So the blood of our soldiers and sailors are expended for them, and the shopkeepers and agriculturists at home pay the pipers. It seems, truly, that this was the case formerly, as well as lately; for the Whigs in Queen Anne's reign used to maintain, that almost the only thing we got, worth while, by all Marlborough's victories, was the Assiento monopoly, granted to our merchants, of carrying slaves to South America. This they long enjoyed, together with that of furnishing our West India Islands, and North America (when

we had it), with the same black live stock. And a capital monopoly this was; for a trader on the coast of Guinea could barter a cask of rum for a stout negro, and afterwards sell him, mayhap, for 300 dollars. Women, in Africa, were valued no more than drugs; yet, when sturdy or good breeders, would fetch at Cuba a handful of gold. And as for the black sucking imps, they were cheaper than sucking pigs; yet brought a fair price at the flesh market of Panama.

Cruel usage, and the deleterious vapour of the mines, made this a most flourishing trade; so that many millions of slaves were transported from Africa by our active monopolists. But this lucrative traffic is now lost to Great Britain for ever. The African merchants may thank the spirit-moved Quakers, and pious Evangelical Saints, for wresting the last remnant of it from their grip! For they would have held it fast still, if they could; and though they would have joined the others in the cry for free trade in corn, most assuredly they would have held their tongues about free trade in slaves.

The next mercantile monopoly which I shall notice, is that of the fisheries. Our merchants, somehow or other, without being aware of it, have contrived, both by Acts of Parliament and by Treaties, to drive foreign fishing vessels from the shoals all round our own coasts, and to secure to themselves almost all the fish. And not satisfied

with this, they have even got large bounties to prevail upon fishermen to catch them. So the fish are paid for twice: first, by bounties raised by taxes; and, secondly, by the buyers. And, as the competition of foreigners is prevented, the merchants demand what prices they like. What is worse, this horrid monopoly reaches as far as Newfoundland and the Pacific Ocean; otherwise salt cod and spermaceti might be had very reasonable. And the restrictions respecting the Greenland and Hudson Bay fisheries shut out foreigners effectually from furnishing us with train oil, which they could do far cheaper than the British merchants.

Another mercantile monopoly is, what has been called the carrying trade. This is secured to the British by not allowing any foreign merchants to bring to us any goods except the produce of their own country. This is a crying abuse, as the British are the dearest carriers in Europe. Were the frugal Dutch (and others, who pay low wages to their seamen, and navigate their ships thriftily) allowed, they would bring us tea, wine, silks, and goods of every sort, at a much cheaper rate than the British. But what is still worse than all, our merchants have the monopoly of the British coasting trade. Were it not for this, provisions, clothing, and every necessary of life, would be transported from port to port, all round both Islands, on much lower terms

by foreigners. If that competition were allowed, the prices of every thing whatever would certainly fall. These huge monopolies may be considered the principal of those enjoyed by the merchants; yet I will slightly notice a few others of lesser magnitude, such as those of the Honourable Company of Merchants trading to India, who monopolize the Oriental commerce; and those of the Bank of England, who monopolize the importation of the precious metals, and the stamping of notes, which gives them some control over the cash and currency of the country. Besides which, there is an innumerable list of other mercantile monopolies, hardly known, but exceedingly profitable.

Now, when all these are considered, how high does the character of British merchants rise, by their shewing themselves ready, and even soliciting, to relinquish all for the public benefit. But this, more than Roman virtue, has not secured them from envy; for there are malicious libellers (no doubt hired courtiers) who have insinuated, that when the merchants cried out for free trade, they only meant that free trade in exporting and importing manufactured goods, grain, and every species of merchandise, should be granted to them; but, never meant that foreigners should be suffered to interfere with their monopolies, nor to infringe any prohibition by which they benefited. Was there ever a more atrocious calumny upon a class of generous and disinterested men than this,

to accuse the merchants of such a perversion of justice, and such a vile equivocation, which would disgrace petty-foggers? It is free trade they wish for, liberty of commerce universally, and the destruction of *all* restrictions and monopolies whatsoever. Any exception in favour of themselves they would spurn at, as beneath the consideration of a British merchant.

It must be expected, that grand forms of this kind will be objected to by cavillers; for example, some will say, that, by this indulgence to foreigners, the French, Dutch, Americans, and other trading nations, would soon seize upon three-fourths of our commerce, and a terrible crash would take place among our merchants. And why not? Has not the same thing happened to us bankers, and to manufacturers? "Temporary mischief is permanent good," as Levi, the old pawnbroker, used to say; and, in truth, some of our merchants are too rich, and a little check will do them no harm. Others may reprobate our reformation, lest it might occasion a decrease of British seamen, which would be some inconvenience in war-time. But this is quite a frivolous objection; for we have only to offer good wages and strong grog, and we shall find plenty of seamen, no matter of what country. Don't we get Hessians, Hanoverians, Corsicans, and Portuguese, for soldiers, when we want them to fight our battles? So we shall get Dutch, Danish, and Hanse sailors

in abundance, which will save the lives of our own people.

The last objection I will notice, is an apprehension that a diminution of wealth might endanger our being able to pay the Dividends. But the subject of the national debt shall be taken into consideration afterwards; and it will be shewn, that this is a motive for, and not an objection to, free trade. I know all that can be said on that subject. Cheapness is the overwhelming answer to all objections. It is absolutely certain, that free trade will bring down to a low price every necessary of life; and the system that does that, must be right. Now I proceed to the manufacturers.

THE BENEFITS OF FREE TRADE TO MANUFACTURERS.

Our manufacturers, being of late years capitally educated, have applied their newly-furbished heads to the science of Political Economy; not so much because it concerns themselves as because it is the easiest for beginners. And their organs of causality, jutting from their foreheads (according to another new science), being properly empty, readily imbibed the genuine, neat-as-imported, truths of the modern French school; so all became converts, and called out vociferously for universal freedom of trade. It's true that, from a false alarm, some

begin to have doubts about the matter; but the following arguments will soon do them away. The monopolies accumulated by the manufacturers are not quite so many as those by the merchants; yet are not few, neither. For the manufacturers, in times past, being ignorant of what they now know, lost no opportunity to get them; and, unfortunately, often succeeded in obtaining what was injurious to all but themselves. Accordingly, like the merchants, they have acquired the exclusive market of all our Colonies, and of India, for their manufactures; and they have got numerous Acts of Parliament passed, with restrictions, heavy duties, and prohibitions laid on foreign fabrics, to hinder their importation into this country; which is giving them, in fact, the monopoly in a multitude of articles of Great Britain, and Ireland likewise. Then, in order to secure it effectually, every port, nay, the whole coast, is guarded by custom-house and excise officers; yachts and men-of-war are continually cruising, and a host of preventive seamen are watching night and day, to hinder the entrance of foreign manufactures, or to extract a monstrous duty for them. What a cumbrous and expensive apparatus is all this? and to do what? Only mischief; for this stoppage of the importation of foreign goods is a vile interruption of the freedom of commerce.

It was long before Parliament could be made sensible of their error; but our theorists opened

their eyes at last. The Opposition caught the first glimpse of the true doctrines; they inculcated them artfully, and convinced the Ministry; then both unanimously agreed to take off commercial shackles. Had they proceeded in regular order, they would have begun with the mercantile monopolies; but, from some inadvertence, they gave the preference to the manufacturing interest. So one of the first measures of the new system was to grant leave to export all manufacturing machines of every sort. Before that, we guarded our spinning-jennies and steam engines from the French, in time of peace, just as carefully as our gunpowder and cannon in war. We are now above such mean behaviour, so the French, Germans, and Americans, have got all our manufacturing engines and machines, and have engaged English workmen to teach their use for fabricating every kind of goods. There are some short-sighted animals who fear, that when foreigners can, by these means, profit by our inventions, and make for themselves, they will discontinue buying our goods; and some suspect that this has happened already. But our theorists have proved that this is all stuff; for it only sharpens our fellows' wits to make further improvements. And as the English are by far the cleverest people, they are sure to improve fastest, and beat the others out and out.

The next grand scheme adopted by Parliament was to destroy the British monopoly of silks, gloves,

and a crowd of other prohibited articles, and to admit those fabricated in Italy and France. The design was, to open our ports at a very low duty; but the Spitalfields weavers raising a disturbance, although the prohibition was taken off, yet, to pacify them, a duty of 30 per cent. was imposed on these foreign articles. This was a contemptible compromise of scientific principles, to please a parcel of low weavers and glovers, and quite unworthy of a great nation. But the duty, of course, will be taken off by-and-bye; and then we shall enjoy the full benefit of freedom of trade, so far as these things go.

The advantages that have already accrued from this cunning measure, though still restricted, must convince the most incredulous of the greater benefits that would ensue were the whole 30 per cent. taken off; for, already, the prices of silks, gloves, and all the other articles, are greatly reduced. And you may recollect, that *to produce cheapness* is the grand aim of the Political Economists, who have decided, that whatever effects this is perfect wisdom. Besides, this admission of these foreign articles has begun to remedy another bad effect of the monopoly; already it has transferred a great deal of capital from this failing concern, agreeably to the second incontrovertible maxim, formerly demonstrated—never to force capital out of its natural channel. Whenever great public advantages, like the above, can be procured, lesser considerations are to be disregarded, and not even

mentioned. So we shall pass over the starvation of the weavers in Spitalfields and Macclesfield; and the moral preachings about the virtue of the glover girls in Worcester and other places—they'll find a livelihood some how, I warrant. Therefore, instead of you Members of Parliament troubling yourselves about them, as you perceive that the importation of French silks, gloves, &c., has made these things cheap, I advise you to bring in Bills, without delay, to admit, freely, cambrics, velvets, carpets, lace, china, glass, jewellery, wine, oil, and, in short, every thing foreign, all of which will become cheap too.

In fact, the more foreign fabrics are imported the better; let the foreigners, if they please, glut the market: this will compel them to sell every thing at half price. Whatever produces cheapness is a saving to the buyers, and these are the whole nation. A poor fellow will then be able to get a suit of clothes very reasonable, and to dress his wife and daughters in silk and velvet, for as little money as linsey-woolsey formerly: and, when the mercantile monopolies are destroyed, good tea, with white sugar, will be as cheap as water gruel. It's quite silly to pretend, that our manufacturers will be sufferers by this; for they must be gainers, as well as the rest, for this plain reason: each manufacturer sells but one thing, and has to buy a hundred; so, when every thing falls equally in price, he must gain 99 per cent. on the whole.

Nothing can be clearer than that. Now I come to another article:—our old politicians had a shallow conceit, that the importation of foreign commodities would drain us of our capital, unless there were exportations of our manufactures and colonial produce, of equivalent value; and these were bargained for, strictly, in every commercial treaty. Foreigners are still so ignorant as to act upon this plausible notion. But Mr. M'Culloch has proved that this is all foolishness; for, let the foreigners shut and guard their ports against our commodities as close as they can, if we make trade free on our side, commerce is sure to find out an entrance into their's, in spite of all their precautions. Our exports must, and always will, be equal to our imports, for this plain reason; the foreigners sell their goods, and don't give us them for nothing. Then it's quite certain, that they'll have an equivalent of some kind; and, if they won't take our manufactures, because they are prohibited in their country, they'll take gold and silver, which is prohibited nowhere. And what is gold and silver but merchandise, which we procure by exchanging for it other goods sent from home? By which circulation our goods are, in fact, exported, and all set to rights.

But should these precious metals become scarce, as is most likely, we shall then buy the less of the foreign manufactures; and, should we be drained of all, we can then buy none. This shows, that pro-

hibition is quite needless; for every trade naturally has its proper limits, and the importation of foreign fabrics is sure to cease of itself—when our money is all gone, or nearly so; and then our manufacturers can resume as before. All, then, that they have to do is to submit to the temporary grievance of having little or no work for a few years; every thing, in the mean time, will be dog-cheap, and capitalists will be at liberty to employ their money, if any remains, where and how it best suits them.

Should the temporary state of idleness be rather irksome to the operatives, they have another resource, a never-failing one, which was pointed out by Adam Smith, and is repeated, like parrots, by all his scholars, namely, when a manufacturer can't live by the business he has been brought up to, he has only to take to another.

One word more, and I have done with the manufacturers.

I have heard that, at some late meetings, the operatives have narrowed their views, and came to resolutions repugnant to our grand principles; for, instead of declaring, as formerly, for free trade, they have shown a sneaking wish to keep every monopoly they still hold, and also to get back those they have lost, while, at the same time, they petitioned Parliament to restrict free trade to corn. Free trade restricted! This is worse than free trade with 30 per cent. duty. I can't see myself how our traders can have the face to expect to

keep all their monopolies, which are spread over the whole globe; and to go to extort from the agriculturists their single alledged one. No, no, that can't be; if Parliament yielded to petitions of that sort, philosophy and religion too would both go to pot.

You scientific operatives must not become brawling apostates. If you approve of free trade, let trade be free in your concerns as well as in others. Destroy all monopolies or none. But, since you've manfully determined on their destruction, assail the oldest first; and, like Cockney sportsmen on Enfield Chace, drive them from their coverts, open the cry, set every barking hound on the true scent, and hunt them to the death.

OF THE BENEFITS OF FREE TRADE TO THE AGRICULTURISTS.

It's now the turn of the agriculturists to be shown up to you, The Honourable House of Commons; and, I own, I expected easily to find out their monopolies, as every trader growls at them from night to morning. And, to be sure, as the landholders, when they've a mind, rule your House, and over-rule t'other, who could doubt their taking good care of themselves? To learn, however, the reality of the facts, and to detect the precise time when they first began their

tricks. I applied again to my old friend, the Blue-coat Usher. But his intelligence so astounded me, that I would not believe one syllable on't, until he showed me the whole in black and white, in the Parliamentary History and other authentic books.

He made it out to me, that trade in corn was only free when we were absolute savages; for there were restrictions put upon this trade as far back as when the old Kings, called Normans, were reigning; the pretence for which was, that the merchants used to export such a quantity of corn out of the country, that the poor people were sometimes famished. For I'd have you to know, that England was then miserably poor, in comparison with France and Flanders; so that merchants naturally carried the grist to the best mill. With regard to importation, there was no occasion to hinder that in those days; for what trader would bring corn here then, when there was no money?

Who could have believed, that the barbarous Norman barons, who had most of the land in their own hands, should have thus consented to stop exportation, which was clearly against their interest? And that they should do this, only to prevent their vassals from starving, is hardly to be believed. But our modern Economists have proved, that all this over-generosity of theirs was excessive bad policy; and that self-interest is the only wise

rule to follow. The Barons ought to have allowed free trade, and permitted the merchants to export all the corn they could gather up; and then the people would have either exported themselves after the grain, or taken care not to breed more children than they could feed. But these reasons were too deep for illiterate men. Indeed, the great landholders, in days of yore, were so negligent of their fair profits, that they also prohibited the exportation of wool and iron at the solicitations of the clothiers and ironmongers, although far higher prices could be got for both from the Flemings; next, sheep and wood were not suffered to be carried out of the island; and, at last, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, an Act was passed, making it downright felony to export tallow, leather, and hides.

When I heard all this from my Friend, it seemed to me very queer, that the landholders should have allowed themselves to be so bamboozled; and when the merchants and burghers were petitioning, and obtaining monopolies upon monopolies, that the Lords of Parliament should have imposed laws upon themselves to prohibit the transport of their own goods to the best market, and to curtail their own profits. For who ever heard of merchants and manufacturers consenting to give up a better foreign market for their wares, in order to keep down the prices, and to give a full supply to their countrymen at home?

That thought never fell in their way; yet it is

proved by the Statute-book, that this was actually done by our old Parliaments, which were almost entirely composed of landholders. What possessed them it's hard to say. That they should have acted so preposterously, merely for the good of the country, is what no trader can believe; yet, hang me! if I can find another reason for their folly.

I made my Friend the Usher search thoroughly the old dusty Acts of Parliament; and he found out, in Henry the Sixth's reign, when the merchants and traders were getting immunities and monopolies passed by the dozen, that the landed proprietors began to think a little of their own interest*. And they got an Act passed, to permit them to export their grain, when wheat fell below six shillings and eight-pence, and barley below three and four-pence, the quarter; for such extreme cheapness was a certain proof, that there was more wheat and barley in the country than the people could consume. Now this was relieving the landed interest a little, and but a very little; for they were squeamishly afraid of a scarcity, which could hardly happen, as the importation of corn was then quite free.

But, in Edward the Fourth's reign, the first† Act was passed to restrain the importation of grain; which was only to operate whenever it sunk beneath the price at which exportation stopped.

* A.D. 1436. † A.D. 1463.

This alteration was made because tillage was getting on; so that, in good harvests, there was not only grain enough grown for the existing population, but some overplus to send abroad. So it seemed reasonable to these unphilosophic Parliaments to put some check to an excess of importation, and to encourage our own farmers to plough, sow, and reap fresh parcels of land.

Without such laws, it's true, England would never have looked like England; but who cares how it looked, or where the grain came from, provided we had it? The old stupid prejudices were so strong, that it was thought wise to tempt the farmers to enclose commons, drain marshes and fens, and till even bad land for poor crops; when we could have got plenty of grain from abroad with less expense. Much capital was wasted on these improvements, as they are called; and things went on in that style until after the discovery of America, when gold and silver began to pour into Europe, and to raise the price of all commodities, and corn among the rest. On which account, an alteration of the law was judged to be requisite by a Parliament in Queen Bess's reign; and the exportation of grain was allowed whenever the price of wheat was at ten shillings the quarter, and of barley, when at six and eight-pence. But this indulgence was not yielded to, or assumed by the landholders, without a tax being imposed of two shillings the quarter on the

exported wheat, and of one and four-pence on other grain.

In James the First's reign there was a still further encroachment; for the exportation of wheat was sanctioned when at thirty-two shillings, and of barley, when at sixteen. Now this, it must be owned, was but a trifling favour to the landed interest, in comparison with those heaped upon the trading classes; but the sagacious Camden observed, "it gave new life and vigour to agriculture." And this proves, that, if exportation had been made quite free, there would have been still more life and vigour given. But it cannot be denied that the agriculturists were never greedy, and therefore claimed no such favour; lest, by too great an exportation, a dearth should ensue, or bread at least rise too high. And they were far from having any thing like a monopoly conferred upon them, for the importation of wheat had then become unrestricted. In subsequent times, the progressive changes in the state of the country prompted the Parliaments to adapt the Corn Laws to these changes, in order to ensure plenty. This was acting according to their narrow notions; and they knew not the wise and universal scheme of free trade, which suits equally well all times, harvests, and circumstances whatsoever; and is like the famous universal medicine (not yet found out), which cures all diseases.

At the Restoration of Charles the Second, in

1660, the chopping and changing plans were persisted in; and, on the pretence of improving the corn laws, a fresh statute was passed, which was amended three years afterwards, so as to obtain the applause of Adam Smith. By this, the former duties on importation were taken off, and an *ad valorem* duty of nine per cent. put on instead. And exportation was allowed, when the price of wheat fell as low as forty-eight shillings per quarter, but chargeable with a duty of five shillings and four-pence. The regulations for other grain were in the same proportion.

Some additional regulations were made towards the close of this King's reign; as our Parliaments were always striving to make their laws perfect, but never succeeding. And, whenever there was a real scarcity, they suspended temporarily all restrictions on importation, which was very wise; but prohibited those on exportation, which was very foolish. For our ancestors, from the time of the Conquest, would never consent to the experiment of making the exportation of corn after a bad harvest quite free; from absurdly conceiving, that the people might, by this means, be reduced to starvation; for they did not know, that all such accidents at last right themselves. The above is a sort of summary of the principal corn laws from the Conquest down to the Revolution; and, certainly, they are very unaccountable. For, in these aristocratic times, when the land-

holders ruled the roast, instead of passing laws to increase their rents, they usually did the clean contrary; and seemed most preposterously more bent on improving commerce and manufactures than their own estates. This made Adam Smith, who, on every occasion in his power, favoured the merchants and manufacturers, confess, as was quoted before*, "that country gentlemen and "farmers are, to their great honour, of all people "the least subject to the wretched spirit of "monopoly." And in another part of his book, he states†, "that the cruellest of our revenue laws, "I will venture to affirm, are mild and gentle, in "comparison of some of those which the clamour "of our merchants and manufacturers has extorted "from the Legislature, for the support of their "own absurd and oppressive monopolies: like the "laws of Draco, these laws may be said to be all "written in blood." This bitter charge against the trading part of the community cannot be denied, yet it was exceedingly wrong in a friend to set it down in print; for some country gentleman may catch hold of it, and come out with it against them. I therefore most sincerely wish, that so obnoxious a passage was expunged out of the book, and never hinted at again.

We have, at last, reached the period of the

* The Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. p. 191.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 494.

glorious Revolution, and are now to observe how the corn question was treated by that independent and philosophic Parliament, which framed our Bill of Rights, and fixed the British Constitution on the solid basis of civil liberty. That was something, to be sure; but our best modern politicians are of opinion, that it should have done a great deal more.

As to the corn laws, they were also deliberated upon by that famous parliament; but the members being unenlightened, in comparison with what we are now, they fell short of the true system, both in the settlement of the nation, and in that of wheat, barley, and oats. These honest men (unquestionably they were so) entertained the false notion, that different circumstances require different regulations; and the state of England then was very different from what it is now. At that time, the population was moderate, the national debt trifling, and the public burdens light; so corn could then be grown a good deal cheaper than at present, when the reverse is the case. So, when the inquiry was made, it was proved, by facts and calculations, that, in good seasons, more grain was raised than the men and horses then living could devour in a year; and that, if encouragement were given, the farmers could raise a vast additional quantity for foreign markets.

A number of books had also been written, in a grave, solid style, all proving the same thing. Now,

the ministers of King William and Mary were able statesmen and staunch Whigs, and the majority of the Parliament was of the same cast; so we ought not to condemn them as severely for their blunders as we would the Tories. Yet, in truth, they were but straight-forward men, and quite ignorant of the new science, which had not then been broached; so it is no wonder that, in order to raise plenty of corn, both for home consumption and for exportation, they should give some encouragement to agriculture. For they erroneously conceited that, by that means, they would both make bread cheap at home, and bring wealth from abroad.

With these strange notions, they framed a Bill that, whenever the price of wheat sunk as low as forty-eight shillings the quarter, a bounty of five shillings should be granted on every quarter exported. The agriculturists could not, however, avail themselves much of this bounty until the taxes on exportation were taken off, which being observed by these inconsiderate Whigs, in the twelfth year of King William's reign, they positively repealed those duties, and the whole bounty was paid clear to the merchants.

Now, there are two ways of judging of a public measure: the first is, to observe the consequences that follow; this is that used by the superficial.

The second is, to consider whether a measure is

consistent or not with the established theory; which is that of the profound. And it unfortunately happens, that sometimes, as in the present instance, the conclusions drawn by these two ways are diametrically opposite.

The bounty on exported corn (say the superficial) was a wise measure; because, after it was granted, agriculture rapidly improved; and corn was raised in such abundance, that its price, and that of bread, fell greatly, for above half a century; and the money obtained from foreign countries, for the exported grain, far exceeded the amount of the bounties.

However plausible this may seem, our deep theoretic writers, who candidly admit all the above facts, philosophically deny the inference drawn from them. Thus Adam Smith, their leader, writes:* "Though the period of the greatest prosperity and improvement of Great Britain has been posterior to that system of laws which is connected with the bounty, we must not, upon that account, impute it to those laws." This refusal to admit inferences from effects is more fully stated, when treating expressly on bounties; his words are these:† "The average price of corn, it has been said, has fallen considerably since the establishment of the bounty. That the average

* The Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. p. 320.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 264.

price of corn began to fall somewhat towards the end of the last century, and has continued to do so during the course of the sixty-four first years of the present, I have already endeavoured to show. But this event, supposing it to be real, as I believe it to be, *must have happened in spite of the bounty, and cannot possibly have happened in consequence of it.*"

This stout assertion, of the impossibility of a bounty occasioning a fall of price, is a capital argument, and ought to have settled the dispute for ever.

Yet I find that Mr. M'Culloch, one of our firmest friends, not only thinks the impossibility possible, but accounts for it; which is paying little respect to his old master. His words are these:—"It has, however, been contended, that although the first effect of the bounty is to raise prices, yet, by attracting an unusually great capital to land, it ultimately causes a glut of the market and a fall of price. That this statement may, to a certain extent, be consistent with fact, and that a glut of the market, sufficient to cause a temporary depression of prices, may be produced by a bounty, we do not deny; but such depression cannot last for any length of time, unless the real price of corn, that is to say, unless the labour necessary for its production, has also been diminished." The above certainly contains a flat contradiction to Adam Smith's impossibility; yet there is a puzzling

perplexity in the phraseology, which requires sifting. In the above paragraph Mr. M'Culloch allows, that it may be consistent with facts, that the first effect of a bounty is to raise the price of grain; secondly, that it may ultimately cause a glut of the market, and a temporary lowering of price; and, thirdly, as this depression cannot last for any length of time, unless corn should be raised with diminished labour, it follows that the price must again rise. I suspect that Adam Smith would not have considered these triple, contradictory, supposed effects, all proceeding from the same cause as a satisfactory confutation of his supposed impossibility: besides, the temporary depression, and the subsequent rise of the price of grain, both proceeding from an ultimate glut of the market, are events so oddly twisted together, that I can't unravel them. To comprehend the above argument, it was also requisite to ascertain how long a period *temporary* meant; and on examining Adam Smith, and the Government Tables published by Mr. M'Culloch, I find it's agreed, that the temporary depression which followed the Bounty Bill continued during the four last years of King William's reign, the whole of that of Queen Anne, of George the First, George the Second, and for a few years of George the Third; in all about sixty-four years, which is rather more than the word *temporary* commonly means.

It must be confessed, that King William's

Bounty Bill is a stumbling-block to our friends; by not making corn dear and ruining the nation, as it ought to have done. But, on the contrary, the country flourished in spite of reason, and bread became provokingly cheap for the temporary period of sixty-four years. These horrid consequences roused all Adam Smith's ingenuity to search for their cause. And he fetched it from Mexico and Peru, whence gold and silver flowed into England; and he should have added Anglesea, the chief source of copper money. And this might have had a face, if it could have been shewn that more gold, silver, and copper ore had been dug from the mines during the operation of the Bounty Bill, than before or since. But this was slipped over; so I remain as much non-plussed as ever. And, to tell the truth, Adam Smith seems somewhat in the same predicament. For he plainly admits, in one place*, that the bounty, by encouraging tillage and increasing the quantity of corn, might be supposed to have done something to lower the price of corn in one way, as well as to raise it the other. This supposed lowering and raising, coupled with the afore-mentioned impossibility, form a jumble unlike other parts of his work. So I turned to Mr. M'Culloch†, to see what he made of it;

* Wealth of Nations, vol. i. page 305. Read the whole argument, which is too long to insert.

† Supplement to Encyclop. Britan.—Corn Laws and Trade, p. 349.

and I found that he held fast to the South American mines as one of the causes of the fall of bread in England; but, not deeming that quite satisfactory, instead of adding, as was more natural, the Anglesea mines, he has popped out for a cause a Bill which had been passed at the Restoration of Charles the Second, for prohibiting the exportation of wool!

When I read this, I was at my wit's end. How could Mr. M'Culloch allow, that any prohibitory Bill should occasion the fall of bread and the prosperity of the country? He forgot, when he wrote that unhappy cause, that this, and all other prohibitory Bills, are condemned by him, and by every sound Political Economist. Why, this prohibitory Wool Bill was almost as bad as the Bounty Bill; and, instead of correcting the evil, should, by rights, have plunged us in ruin beyond redemption. In fact, these causes are no way reconcileable; for Adam Smith's, by both raising and lowering the price of grain, looks two ways at once; and, Mr. M'Culloch's additional cause, though it looks but one way, yet that's the wrong one. In truth, it stands to reason, that those who write voluminously, and talk volubly, may make a slip of the pen or the tongue, and should, like merchants, always put at the end of their accounts—errors excepted.

Then the most provoking part of the affair is this—that the aristocrats, with their smooth principles, explain the whole quite currently. They

assert that it was not amiss to prohibit the exportation of wool, when our own clothiers could weave all our own fleeces; and they even claim a merit for that law, which benefited the manufacturers at the expense of the landed interest, and was enacted by the Tory Parliament, at the restoration of the Stuarts. Then they also defend the Bounty Bill, which, on the contrary, encouraged exportation; because, as the people could not eat all the grain the farmers raised, it's pretended that there was little harm done by exporting the overplus. And therefore they won't allow any abuse to be cast on the Whig Parliament in King William's reign, for encouraging moderately the landholders, since no mischief, but good, ensued to the others. Moreover, they add, that this encouragement to agriculture occasioned the ploughing up a vast quantity of waste land; whence plenty flowed in, and bread fell in price. Now, although they refer to parliamentary documents, and authentic histories, as bearing them out in these inferences, yet I am determined never to be convinced by any arguments they can bring; and for this plain reason:—it is absolutely certain, that both the Bills were theoretically bad, and consequently must have done mischief, however hidden and difficult to be found out that mischief was.

I therefore entreat you Members of Parliament to be on your guard, and not to suffer yourselves to be persuaded that the Tories, in Charles

the Second's reign, did right in encouraging the clothiers; or the Whigs, in King William's time, in doing the same thing to the landholders: for I pledge my word for it, though the word of a bankrupt, that both were shamefully in the wrong in passing these obnoxious Bills. And, besides that, all the subsequent Parliaments, in four successive reigns, who continued these unphilosophic laws, acted most scandalously and wickedly.

Now, when grown a little cool, I shall inform you, that, soon after the middle of the last century, the exportation of corn began to decline, and the agriculturists lost the greatest advantage they ever got. For as men and horses multiplied fast, the importation of grain crept on to overbalance the exportation. Indeed, our augmenting national debt, and accumulating taxes, raised the price of all commodities above that of the Continent; so the exportation, of course, came to an end, and the agriculturists were all thrown on their backs.

Many efforts and various changes, too tedious to mention, were made to relieve them. At length, in 1815, the subject of the corn laws most seriously engaged the attention of Parliament. A Committee of the House of Commons, composed of the best heads (such heads!) took the business into consideration. But not one man in the House, not even Waithman, Burdett, or Hume, the best of the bunch, ever hinted at free trade, the true and only plan.

But although there was not sense enough in the late Parliament to find this out, who, indeed, expected it of 'em? Yet the light of truth has shone, as it always does, upon the Livery of the City of London, in Guildhall assembled, whose thundering eloquence has oft compelled the Government to yield obedience to their very humble petitions; yet their best argument was stolen from the resolutions of a mechanic club, on which it had been stamped by the hard head of a mere operative, and contained more sound logic than ever issued from the mouth of the Chancellor. "Buy corn from foreigners, and they will buy our manufactures!"—this excellent phrase should be carved and gilt in capitals: an alderman caught it up, and blew it through Guildhall with his brazen trump.

The answer made to this, by the Tories, is so poor, that it's hardly worth reading; yet I'll set it down to show my impartiality. Their advice is rather, "Buy corn from your countrymen, and they will purchase, with the price, your manufactures with far more certainty than the foreigners; for, if you buy your grain from the serfs of Poland, the Cossacks in the Ukraine, or the Sclavonians on the Black Sea, where it's cheapest, these impoverished people can take but few of your manufactures in return, as they are clad with skins, rugs, or coarse stuffs of their own, and need none of your fine fabrics. Should you have recourse to the Americans, they are a wily race, who encourage

their own manufactures in preference, and lay restrictions on yours. How much better is it, then, to encourage agriculture in Great Britain, and to buy your grain from Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen, though it may cost a little more, since every farthing expended on their grain will be returned to our own merchants and manufacturers. They will bury none of the cash, but give it you all back: from them your returns will be quick and sure: whatever is spent abroad in corn, being, in fact, abstracted from our own agriculturists, must infallibly injure the home market for manufactures in a much greater proportion than it can benefit the foreign.

"Consider, besides, that the experiment of converting a large portion of the arable lands of Great Britain and Ireland into commons and pastures, could hardly answer a good end to any class of the people. This would certainly cast some millions of ploughmen and farming labourers out of employ; and as, in that case, they could neither buy clothing nor utensils, this would lessen considerably the demand for manufactured goods. And how the ruined people could be employed, or subsisted, no Political Economist has been able to tell. Suppose another thing (for there is no end to their suppositions), that, after having reduced, in so great a degree, the culture of British corn, and rendered ourselves dependent for our subsistence on foreign supplies, a war should break out with the Northern

Powers, or with America, we should then have to apprehend, not only an excessive rise in the price of corn, but even the destruction of a portion of our crowded population by famine."

These are the answers and the alarming prophecies of the clod-hoppers; as if a great national improvement could be effected without some trifling inconvenience to a few individuals. When a grand principle is set to work, minor consequences are sternly to be neglected.

But the aforesaid Committee of the House of Commons were not up to bold decisions: they framed a set of compromising resolutions, in order to obtain foreign grain if wanted; and to protect the landholders, when there was abundance at home.

Whenever the average price of wheat should rise to eighty shillings, of barley to forty shillings, and of oats to twenty-six shillings a quarter, the ports were to be thrown open, for the free entrance of grain, from all quarters of the globe. And a free importation was permitted from Canada and Nova Scotia, when the prices were much lower.

This is the substance of the famous Corn Law of 1815, approved of by Parliament, but so much disapproved of by the operatives, that their clamour has forced the Government to recede, and to admit bonded corn and imported grain, contrary to the resolutions of the Committee of Parliament, whenever the mob resolved it should be done.

So, after all, it must be confessed, that the

landholders neither have, nor ever had a single monopoly since the Conquest—eight hundred years ago; although the merchants and manufacturers have a multitude of them. Now, I'm quite sure that no honourable merchant, nor honest manufacturer, can desire to keep their own numerous monopolies, and insist, at the same time, on depriving the landholders of the small advantage the corn law gives them. The manufacturers of many cities, in their petitions against the corn laws, have already expressed their willingness to relinquish every monopoly or prohibitory privilege they enjoy,—not aware, perhaps, of what they were offering; but this magnanimous example ought to be followed by the whole trading classes. For my part, I hate lords and 'squires worse than ratsbane; yet I'd give them fair play notwithstanding. Political Economy is just, and serves all alike; therefore, all that you Members of the new Parliament have to do, is simply this:—

Repeal, in the exact order in which they were originally passed, all the monopolies, bounties, drawbacks, protecting duties, and charters, which have been granted for the profit and advantage of the merchants and manufacturers; and grant free trade, in every branch of commerce, to all foreign nations, with the British Empire. Then complete the business, by repealing the corn laws also.

Thus we shall act impartially to all classes of subjects, and give a glorious and unheard-of example to the world.

But pray don't let it go out of your heads, that you are only our representatives; and, since I've shown you the bottom of the matter, frame quickly, and pass these pithy Bills. Cheapness you will then be sure of: cheapness! which, according to the sagacious assertion of the Citizens of London, in their peppery Petition to Parliament, ought to be the grand purpose both of the State and of thrifty housekeepers. For, by the competition to be liberally granted to foreigners, the prices of all articles, and of labour, must fall prodigiously; nay, from the declension of the revenue, the three per cents. themselves will tumble down to 50, 30, 10, and 0—then we shall get rid of the horrid taxes that wring the hearts of the poor. As soon as four-fifths of our trade are carried on by foreigners, who work for small profits, our purse-proud merchants, and saucy master manufacturers, will no longer lord it over their poor clerks, brokers, and journeymen, as they now do. For it's very hard, that they, who are as good men as themselves, should do all the drudgery; while their masters secure all the gains. And what do they do for them? Next to nothing: only direct, find fault, and give themselves airs; and then strut off to feast on turtle, drink iced Champagne, and wash their greasy paws in rose water.

Land, likewise, will fall in value; for I must also give a lick at the Lords. When corn, fruits, wool, hides, timber, and every kind of farming

produce, are freely admitted from abroad, their rents will be brought down with a vengeance; and those enormous estates of a hundred thousand a year will hardly yield as many shillings, and enough too.

It's true, that, by the falling off of incomes, multitudes, nay, millions of the working class will be thrown out of employ. What then? Won't that make labour cheap, which is all that's wanted? And mechanics, servants, and operatives of all descriptions, instead of toiling all day long, and all the week through, will have time to think; and many a one, within the sound of Bow bell, will be as glad of a job as, they say, the Lazaroni of Naples are. One might then get a ticket porter to carry a heavy load on his knot, from Tower Wharf to Temple Bar, for a groat; and an errand boy to run with a letter, from Fish Street Hill to the Post Office, for a brass farthing.

Were living cheap as it should be, the rich humbled as they ought to be, and Lords brought to a dead level, London would be another thing. Then that equality, which the French aimed at and missed, we should hit off to a nicety; for which inestimable blessing your Petitioner will ever pray.

NATHANIEL BURTON.

FINIS.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY T. BRETTELL, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.