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AN ADDRESS, &c.

by Sir Thomas Fuston B^t

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AN ADDRESS
 TO THE
 GOOD SENSE AND CANDOUR
 OF THE
 PEOPLE,
 IN BEHALF OF
 THE DEALERS IN CORN:
 WITH
 SOME FEW OBSERVATIONS ON A LATE
 TRIAL FOR REGRATING.

By a Country Gentleman.

“ Clamour is not Reason—
 “ Assertion Fact—nor Accufation Guilt,”

LONDON:
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1800.

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AN ADDRESS

Addressed to the
 Members of the House of Commons

THE
 ADDRESS
 TO THE
 COMMONS
 IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED
 ON THE
 MOTION
 OF
 MR. HENRY BULLOCK
 CONCERNING
 THE
 SCARCITY OF CORN
 AND
 THE
 HIGH PRICE OF BREAD
 IN THE
 YEAR
 1795
 BY
 MR. HENRY BULLOCK
 MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
 FOR
 THE
 COUNTY OF
 WILTSHIRE
 LONDON:
 PRINTED BY
 J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD
 1795

AN ADDRESS, &c. &c.

THE senseless, but alarming out-cry, which has been echoed through the country within these last few months, against a certain description of persons; and the fatal consequences, which in my apprehension may arise from a continuance of the same unfounded clamour, have induced me to employ that portion of time I can ill spare, in an address to the common sense of the *public*, on a subject justly interesting to all, inasmuch as the Evil complained of, is more or less sensibly felt by every individual in the community.

The Scarcity of Corn, (and consequent high price of bread,) has, in every period of history, and in all countries, been the grand and successful rallying point for sedition and villainy; from those who look to a revolution in government, to those whose sole objects are plunder and devastation. Any thing which can add to the pretence of outrage, by furnishing an object on which to wreak their vengeance, provides a wonderful auxiliary to the profligate and designing. The aid too,

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which they receive from public sentiment, is prodigious. When that sentiment has once committed a body of men to the indignation of the people for the real or supposed offence of any individual in that body, the mob are considered as vindicating the cause of the injured *public*; and if these lawless outragers meet not the open support, they scarcely want the countenance, and witness the forbearance of those, who consider as meritorious, or at least as excusable acts, the breaking of the windows, the destruction of the residence, and the plundering of the property of those who are so unfortunate as to deal in an article, the price of which is from any cause (however independent of them) become dear. It is not till their excesses disgrace the most abandoned, and that their manifest object is plunder and riot, that the well-meaning desert their banners, and are ashamed of their cause; convinced by sad experience (yet frequently too late) of a truth, which never can be too forcibly impressed on the mind of man: "That the resort for political redress of any grievance, to the efforts of a mob, is the most certain way of increasing, instead of diminishing, the evil complained of."

If an axiom so self-evident had wanted support, in the events of the last week it would have found it, when the peace of the metropolis was for five nights disturbed by a mob, originally excited by the empty but dangerous clamours against the Dealers in Corn, and degenerating hourly into an
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unprincipled, though (in numbers) inconsiderable; hord of thieves and pickpockets, joyful to embrace every pretext which would allow them to commit openly those depredations on the property of their fellow creatures, which in secret is their nightly occupation.

The terror they occasioned, and the insults they inflicted on unoffending individuals, had nearly shut up for an instant the sources from whence flow the daily sustenance of the metropolis. The manufacturers of Bread-Corn, in the neighbourhood of London, alarmed for the safety of their persons and property, fled from the market and withheld their accustomed supply. Providentially however, the arrival of 10,000 barrels of flour from America relieved the dreadful chasm, which the folly and wickedness of the multitude had well nigh occasioned. No one can reflect without horror, on the consequence of even one day's interruption in the supply of bread for this immense city, and but for this circumstance, in all probability the case would have happened.

That a mob of this description should have been so long suffered to disturb the public tranquillity, and to hold out the alarming encouragement it did to other great cities, too ready, by report, to catch the signal of tumult, has excited considerable astonishment, and some degree of censure on the magistracy. The continued lenient conduct of the chief magistrate has been arraigned, and his con-

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duct has undergone that severe (and perhaps unfair) degree of scrutiny, from which no high situation in trying times is exempt. We must consider however, the delicate situation of the magistrate of a city like this in times of popular tumult, and how impossible it is by a conduct the most conscientiously correct to give universal satisfaction. However generally the opinion may have been, that with a mob so composed, no argument but force could be of avail, and that the employing of it would have restored, in a few hours, peace to the city; yet when we reflect on the active personal zeal and unremitting attention of the chief magistrate on this occasion, it is but justice to suppose, that he had ample and sufficient reason for adopting a different line of conduct, and for withholding the exercise of that power entrusted to him.

But the business of this address is not with mobs. Weak, indeed, must be the power of that government, which cannot protect its subjects against open violence; which is not powerful enough to restrain the brutal hand of lawless fury, when raised against the valuable, and useful members, by whose industry it is supported. The contributions which every man pays to the state, are the price of his protection. If you deny it him, you loosen one of the strongest ties, which unite him to you; he has a right to demand it, and you cannot reject his claim. But it is not only from
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open violence that the public have reason to be apprehensive, or that it has a right to ask the watchful eye, and if necessary, the interposing hand of government. The public peace may be endangered by public prejudice; the minds of the people may become seriously tainted by the dissemination of even unfounded (if uncontradicted) assertion. The passions of mankind are easily roused, on subjects, where their interest is concerned. The mere repetition of charges too unfeeling to deserve, and too contemptible to obtain a reply, make in time an impression, which pages of sound argument and cool discussion can hardly remove. The constant friction of a drop in time penetrates the hardest bodies. The repeated insinuations of the grossest ignorance and most apparent malice, if unnoticed, find their way to the public ear, and frequently affect its judgment; for nothing can be too absurd and malicious to listen to, if not to believe. We are not very apt to examine too nicely into the probability of the truth of a report. It is generally considered as amply sufficient to justify our belief, that the thing has been reported without contradiction.

If this were not almost universally the case, how are we to account for the senseless clamours which have resounded through every street of the metropolis, and through every market town of the kingdom, against the dealers in the Corn Trade? to whose wicked aim of distressing the
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the community, is attributed the high price of the article. Were we to believe the nonsense, which meets your ear on this subject, we must believe, that every warehouse which skirts the Thames, from Chelsea to Blackwall, is only one immense magazine of Grain hoarded up by the insatiable avarice of these Gigantic Monopolists, who not content with the exorbitant price of the day, have entered into a combination to prey still further on the public wants. If we are to give credit to all the absurd stories in circulation, of Merchants who destroy their Corn, of Mealmen, who sink their Flour, and of Farmers, who throw their Wheat into Rivers; all which they have hoarded up till it has become spoiled; whilst we must look with astonishment at their folly, we cannot but allow, that *if these things are so*, the public have good reason for complaint.

Ideas like these, propagated throughout the country, by wickedness or ignorance, or by both, must of themselves have the effect of furring the public mind, and of exasperating it against the persons so misrepresented; but when these opinions receive the public sanction of those to whom we are accustomed on all occasions to look up, as Polar Stars, to direct our judgment on points where prejudice may lead us astray—if the respectable guardians of the laws, to whose pure and able hands are committed the lives, the liberties and property of the people, encourage this dangerous
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prejudice, one can scarcely wonder at its wide-spreading influence, or its alarming increase. In the address of a counsel to a jury, I can allow of an appeal to their passions and prejudices. It is his duty to make the best of his cause for his client, and if it has no real ground of support, to prop up its tottering frame, by the best materials he can bring to its aid; the abuse of the individual, and of the class to which he belongs, is, in such a cause, no weak assistant. When the subject of address is that in which the lowest orders of the people are most interested, I can even allow to the declining popularity of a patriot counsel; the assistance he may derive in his address to the jury, from mixing the cause of the people with that of his client. Such tricks are too common, and too easily seen through, to excite more than a smile. The impression they make even on the contracted sphere within their influence, is just what they deserve; the morrow finds them forgotten by all, even by the counsel himself.

Far different is the awful and impressive address, which flows from the seat of judgment. The respect so justly due to the venerable sages of the law, who preside in the high courts of judicature, is no where more sincerely felt, than amongst those country gentlemen who fill the office of grand jurors. Every word that falls from the bench, is listened to with attention, and by many considered as irresistible. They are sensible that
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the charge is not the production of the moment, or an impression made on the mind of a judge by a superficial view of the subject; they know and feel that it is the result of an attentive consideration of those topics deemed most proper to engage the attention of his auditors, and under a consciousness that he is addressing men of enlarged minds, and of general information.

How careful then ought every man to be, who is placed in this high and most responsible situation: where every word that falls from him gives a direction to public sentiment, and influences the opinion and conduct, not only of those within his hearing, but of thousands to whom his opinions are communicated, and frequently without the strictest regard to truth, in a manner best suited to the views of the relator.—It is not the grand jury only who listen to the address—all the mixed classes of society, whom curiosity or business call to an assize town, are within the immediate vortex of its influence. To a great part of them, a subject discussed in the manner this has been, is sure to excite their attention, because it accords completely with their prejudices and passions. When the attention of the jury throughout a circuit is peculiarly directed against engrossers, forestallers, and regrators; when they are told that these men are, in a great measure, the cause of the high price of provisions; when they are encouraged to bring such offenders to speedy justice, as
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the certain means of relieving the poor from the pressure of the times; and information detailed (in a manner which might appear somewhat in the spirit of exultation) of the conviction of one monopolist in a distant county, as a proof of the wickedness of the times, and of the possibility of bringing these crimes to justice—When these and similar incitements are held out to popular resentment, what man can doubt the immediate effect produced by language flowing from authority so revered? Will there be a man who hears the address, from the grand juror in his box to the javelin man at the door, who does not in a greater or less degree imbibe a spirit of resentment against the supposed offenders; or an increase of that prejudice which his mind has already admitted? Will the majority carry less out of court than a thorough conviction, that the bread they eat, owes its high price to the iniquity of those hands through which it passes to them? Will not many of them, on a subject, where the discrimination of those characters and classes, who can, by possibility, be guilty of these crimes, requires that which prejudice never gives—reason and consideration—transfer that censure and those reproaches, which the Bench could not mean as generally applicable to any body of men, considered in the aggregate, to every class connected with that business, which supplies the wants of mankind, to almost every individual unfortunately concerned at this moment in the corn trade? Will they not de-

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part to their homes fully satisfied, that every dealer in corn, is an "Harpy, fattening on the life-blood of the people;" a merciless vulture preying on the half famished carcases of his fellow creatures; and that the whole trade is a system of extortion and rapine, founded on avarice the most insatiable, and leading to consequences the most fatal to the well-being and happiness of society?

I love and esteem the characters of those who fill with so much credit to themselves and advantage to the public, the important office of judges in this country. The talents they bring to the public stock, form the least part of their claim to public gratitude. The virtue which illumines their minds, the examples of probity and honour they hold out to mankind, the unwearied attention they give to the various duties of their high station, and the purity of the motives of all their conduct, apparent in their decisions and opinions, (even where we cannot subscribe to the opinions themselves) claim the grateful approbation of every man who wishes well to society. I should grieve indeed to be suspected of a wish to tarnish their well-earned laurels, or to diminish that reverence we must all feel for every individual member of that venerable body. Happy indeed is the country which entrusts to such pure and able hands the administration of its laws! I would not lessen but increase the respect I consider them so justly entitled to, if that were possible or necessary; yet I must be forgiven, if

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if whilst I bear testimony to the excellence of all their motives, I tremble for the effect (because I see the danger) of their opinions in matters where professional knowledge, or great talents are not absolute requisites. I trust they will pardon me, that I conceive it possible for prejudice to find its way even to their hallowed seats; to attack with success minds strong in wisdom, experience and goodness; and to divest them for a moment of the exercise of that reason and reflection, the usual prominent and most valuable features of all their decisions and opinions.

It has been said by a writer, who seems to have a thorough knowledge of the human heart, "that the wisest and best of men are occasionally under the influence of prejudice;" perhaps it is no less true, that prejudice is strengthened, and takes more hold on the mind, in proportion to the purity and benevolence of its motives. It has an honourable foundation to work upon, and it makes the most of it. Where the interests of individuals are alone concerned, whilst we may lament the error, we are not called upon to interfere; the partial evil is too limited for public notice. But when the peace and welfare of society is endangered by it; when prejudice has fixed its deadly fangs on a large and valuable portion of the community, when in this instance it holds them up to the public detestation and abhorrence of the country, (already too prone to think ill of them) and promiscuously

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brands every class of them in their turn, if not with the direct charge of monopoly, with insinuations equally severe, and more cruel, (and this because one man has been convicted of re-selling 30 quarters of oats, and another of buying 1000 pockets of hops) it is surely time to take this monster by the throat—to stop at least its further ravages; lest in time it devour the common sense, and with it destroy the peace and happiness of the country. It is time to lay aside, for an instant, the respect due to names and authorities, and to examine their opinions; to call on the sober judgments of those who have been led away by high authority or vulgar prejudice, to pause one moment before they re-join the popular cry; to be satisfied, before they disseminate the doctrines and opinions to which they have been converts, that if they cannot bring facts to their support, they can at least bring a considerable degree of probability.

Let no one imagine that the danger of promulgating opinions of this nature, is merely visionary: look at the baneful effects which have been produced generally through the kingdom, since these opinions have made any progress: look to the alarming outrages inflicted on these objects of public vengeance; at the riots and tumults which have disgraced great part of the kingdom, and which have, in some instances, for a lengthened period set at defiance the civil power. No one who observed the conduct, or attended to the language of these
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persons, can doubt but they have sheltered their outrages on the persons and property of individuals, under the protection of the high authorities I have mentioned. They have considered these noble persons, as tolerating if not encouraging the ostensible motives of their violence, and *their* opinions have been the shield under which they have covered their wanton excesses; nor are these effects new; the same causes have invariably produced them. In every instance where the public mind has been directed by high authority to the consideration of any public grievance, supposed to be occasioned or increased by the misconduct of a particular body of men, the consequence has been always similar. The recollection of most men, and the reading of all, will furnish many instances.—Why should we expect a different effect in this case? Every man is interested in the price of the quarter loaf; but it is not every man who troubles himself about a particular system of religion, or a peculiar mode of recruiting.

The event has been consistent with reason and experience. The influence of judicial opinion on this subject has taken a most extensive range. It is to be found in the numerous advertisements which fill the daily papers—it is to be collected from the calls for subscriptions to prosecute misdemeanors of the nature I have alluded to—it is to be seen in the resolutions of corporate bodies—in the engagements of respectable but deluded individuals—it forms the
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conversation of all companies—it is to be met with in every street, and you run against it at every corner—even the uninhabited houses of the metropolis and its vicinity—the mutilated walls and rotten paling which surround the unfinished building—all proclaim the influence of this sentiment, in the pictures of miserable bakers and mealmen dishonorably suspended; and in the gross but pithy sentences with which they are crowded of “No hoarders—no grinders of the poor—Lord Kenyon, and down with the mealmen;” all indicative of the feelings of the lower classes towards those who deal in this necessary article of life, borrowed indeed from their betters, who all and each of them consider, and proclaim it as a principle not to be controverted, *that the practice of monopoly has arrived at an alarming height, and that to it, and its attendant crimes are to be attributed the high price of all the articles of life!* and all of them, by their language, exciting the public clamour against, and calling on the public purse to prosecute (I had nearly said persecute) these wealthy, unfeeling, avaricious monopolists.

Is there a man in the country who does not apprehend danger from this clamour, even if well-founded? and who does not blush for the injustice of his country, if unfounded? Are we all prepared to convict a numerous body of our fellow-creatures, without examining the grounds of their accusation, or the circumstances of their defence? Is every thing to be surrendered to prejudice, and

and nothing conceded to reason? Is the torrent to be left to exhaust itself? Is no opposition to be given it? Beware that it does not in its unrestrained progress break down the mounds which public peace has deemed necessary to construct for its security. If you do not now exert yourselves, in vain will you hereafter call to your aid the calm, and modest voice of reason; its cries will be drowned in the tumult of lawless outrage and unmeaning clamour. If Sedition has once raised her banners, in vain may you appeal to Reason—she will not be listened to.

I believe it to be the duty of every man who thinks as I do on this subject, to stand forward, unappalled by the consideration of the (deservedly) great weight with the public, of those whose opinions I am resisting. Let it be remembered that high character and station give no sanctity to prejudice. If in its effects, it is likely to become dangerous to the public safety; when supported by high name, or rank, it becomes more so; and consequently the duty of resisting it is increased. I trust that I shall be able to satisfy my readers, that the resistance I offer to these dangerous and unfounded opinions, has some reason and truth for its basis. If I can shew to the satisfaction of those who are willing to hear reason, that the proposition advanced from high authority, and so confidently maintained by others, *viz. that the scarcity of provision is chiefly owing to Monopoly*, is (at least as to one great and only necessary article of life) as unfounded

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founded in fact, as it is dangerous in dissemination, I trust no one will blame my presumption, or accuse me of indiscretion.

The limits of a pamphlet will not allow me to extend my enquiries through the different articles of provisions, the high price of which forms the subject of public complaint. I beg to be considered, however, as applying the same principle of reasoning to all, and to contend that *monopoly is not the cause of the high price.*

I shall confine my observations in this address to that great and important article, Bread Corn; which, as the staff of life, necessarily in times of scarcity alarms all ranks of people, and more than any other article stimulates the vengeance of the lower orders against those men, who are pointed out to them, as contributing by their conduct, to increase that scarcity. In such times, the hackneyed terms of monopolizers, forestallers, and regraters, are applied each in their turn, with equal meaning, as truth—to the man who rents a large farm—to him who buys the produce of it, be he the corn factor, the jobber, or the chandler—to the miller who grinds it—and even to the flour factor who disposes of the meal—and to the baker, who converts it into food. To them we may add in these times of immense importation, as persons equally endangered by such clamour, the merchant who imports, the lighterman who lands, and the warehousman who furnishes room for the commodity.

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Every one of these classes, indeed every man who is in the habit of dealing in corn, of any nature, or to any extent, are all and each of them at the moment in which I write, liable from the encouraged prejudice of the times, to become in their turn the objects of public vengeance. The severe and unfounded charges brought against the whole trade, however they may be separated by some, and in their application confined to particular branches of it, are not so distinguished by the bulk of the people. From that quarter where the danger is most to be apprehended, the distinction exists not. To deal in corn, is with them the conviction of guilt, and the gradations of it are not likely to be investigated or attended to, by those, who merely use the accusation, as a cloak to cover the depravity of their views, be they sedition or plunder.

Let us then examine dispassionately and coolly, whether these broad and serious charges can be affixed with any appearance of reason, and justice, to all, or any of the individuals, who are presented to us at this moment by popular prejudice, as delinquents. Let me call the attention of every man in the community, whatever may be his station, to go along with me in this examination, to exercise their reason and judgment, on a subject to which not only the common justice we owe accused persons claims our attention; but the interest we must all feel in the preservation of the public peace,

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and in the suppression of that alarming outcry, which, if not speedily stifled, may lead, under the much to be lamented encouragement it has received, not only to partial tumult and commotion, but even to civil war.

I am truly sensible how difficult is the task to prove a negative. I cannot promise that impossibility; my candid readers will not consider my defence as incomplete, because it needs this impossible requisite. All that they will expect from me, is that, I should oppose facts to assertion in all cases that admit of it; that where statements can be contradicted by authorities, I should adduce them; they will not give implicit credit to alleged misconduct, where the motives were evidently insufficient to produce it, and they will not violate probability, by admitting without examination, charges so general in their nature, and so imbecile in their proofs, as to ensure acquittal were the subject any other than it is.

If I am able to convince even a few honourable characters, who have been seduced by the prejudice of the day to join in the mistaken clamour against this injured class of people; if I shall excite their talents and industry in undeceiving those, who are led by their authority and influence, I shall consider myself as not wholly unsuccessful. But I hope to do more: I rely on the goodness of the cause I have engaged in—that of resisting unjust calumny—and I know the frank and generous

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nerous (though haughty) temper of my countrymen too well, to believe that they will shut their ears against common sense, whilst they willingly and freely lend them to interested, unfounded clamour, or to mistaken prejudice.

Before however, I attempt this, let me assure my readers, that I have no personal interest in this discussion. I have undertaken the cause of these persons, without either sollicitation or encouragement. In common with the rest of the public, I have viewed with serious regret, and have experienced considerable inconvenience, from the high and increasing price of every article of life. I have neither personal interest in, nor connection with any branch of the trade, whose cause I am pleading. I declare with the truest sincerity, that a principle of justice, a regard to truth, and a warm interest in the consistency and character of my countrymen, are my only motives.

In this enquiry, the first object which is presented to our notice is the

FARMER;

and one should scarcely have conceived it possible, at the close of the eighteenth century—in a country, amongst whose national characteristics a generous confidence by no means stands last; that a very large portion of the community can have nourished for an instant, a suspicion so unworthy themselves,

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themselves, and so misapplied towards any material part of this respectable body, as a *combination to keep up the price of Corn*. Perhaps, if there ever was an instance of a term grossly misapplied, it is this of combination. It requires a very short residence in the country, and very little observation of the manners and conduct of Farmers, to be satisfied, that there is no class of people so independent of each other, so unconnected in their dealings, or so little communicative to one another. If one requires proof of this, enquire amongst the Farmers of any one village, who have gone with their samples to market; and you will find, that scarce any one knows, what price his neighbour has got for his article, and when known, it will be found, that scarcely any two have obtained a similar price, even where the sample was equal in goodness. If this is true, there can be no combination.

“But,” say their accusers, “if there is no actual combination, there is a tacit assent to keep back their Corn from market, by which the public sustains an equal inconvenience; else why, after an harvest unusually productive, and generally well got in, this extreme scarcity, and consequential high price?”

Without disputing the premises (the discussion of which I shall decline for the present) I will concede, that the supply from the Farmer has been hitherto very scanty—from many there has been none. Can it be expected that it should be otherwise?

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wife? How can the Farmer, even at this time, (much less when the outcry first commenced against him) have any quantity of new wheat threshed? Recollect that this clamour, and the riots, in consequence of it, commenced in the northern parts of the kingdom, as far back as the 28th of August. What quantity of Corn could the Farmers have threshed out at that time for the supply of the markets? The harvest throughout England was scarcely half finished, in many places only commenced. Of new wheat, therefore, little could have been in the country.

If the farmer had saved any old wheat, with the monstrous price of 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ per quarter, and with every reason to suppose that the harvest would be well got in, and most productive, can any man seriously believe he would have kept it back from market? Could he have hoped at any future period to have got a better price? No one can say yes.—He would then have acted the part of a madman, to have kept back his old wheat, and of new he could have had no great quantity? How then was he to have supplied the markets?

But we are told, “That a few weeks earlier in the season, the Wheat had fallen considerably? How then (say they) on the near approach of harvest, with all the attendant favourable circumstances, could it rise to its former price, except by some unfair, improper means?”

I do not know that the Farmers ought to be called

called on at all times to account for the temporary fluctuation of markets; yet in this case, it will be no difficult matter to assign the probable cause of the rise. At the period alluded to, the extreme heat of the weather, the excellent appearance of the Wheats in general, throughout the kingdom, and the great prospect of an early harvest, induced those who had any old wheat by them (and who were very few in number) to carry it to market. There was no prospect of an higher price; and the period of harvest is that of general employment of the farmer's men and teams. The great importations of the spring and summer, (and much increased at that moment,) contributed to the depression. By these means, the market, before ill supplied, became in some degree loaded; and the prices of all Corn experienced a sudden, and most considerable fall. When on the contrary the prospect of an early harvest was clouded by unfavourable weather; when the Wheats were found in some parts blighted, and generally by no means answering the sanguine expectations which had been indulged of their quality and produce; when, in addition to this, the importations began to decrease, and the exportations of Corn, coast-ways, and to Scotland (which used to supply the London market, instead of being supplied from it) increased wonderfully; these combined causes effected a rise, as proportionably sudden, as the fall had been—an indisputable proof that the stock in
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hand of old wheat, whether English or foreign, was nearly exhausted, and that we were at the moment depending on the new supply, which itself depended, as to the effect on the price of the market, on its being later or earlier.

It may however be agreed, that at this time, (29th of September) there can be no reason why the market should not have been well supplied with wheat, it having been got in dry, and in a state for threshing, much superior to a later period in common years: partially perhaps it might be so; but the general state of the wheat harvest throughout the kingdom, has not been such as to warrant this conclusion. Concede, however, that it has; and what is the period we are talking of? the mob in Mark-lane assembled on the 15th of September; their avowed complaint was the high price of bread after an abundant harvest. Taking the word *after* literally, it was incorrect, for in many of the midland and northern counties the wheat was not got in. We will suppose it was; is there no time to be allowed the farmer to thresh out his corn? The high price of the article was so tempting, and the prospect of a decrease in it, after a few weeks, so certain, that he could want no other inducement to deviate from the common routine of his business. The price had generally this influence; the sound of the flail might be heard in many barns, where its wheat usually never met the floor till Christmas was turned.

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The operations of a regular, industrious farmer, whose capital and stock are equal to his farm, are conducted on as regular and mechanical a system, as that of any tradesman. The several processes of husbandry are performed at stated times and seasons. The autumn after he has housed his corn, is appropriated to landing up, and sowing his wheat fallows. The general opinion of a benefit from change of seed, together with an unwillingness to disturb his wheat-rick, or his mow, induce him to purchase his seed-corn. The generality of farmers, of any tolerable opulence, seldom begin threshing their wheat before the winter is set in. Exclusive of its interfering with other business, they think it yields better to the flail when it has had a little frost; and in the months of October and November they thresh out their spring corn, to supply fodder for the yard, and materials for the maltster. If however, a most tempting price induces the farmer to abandon, for the moment, his accustomed track, and to disturb the regular system of his farm, he does it with reluctance. The extra-price he may obtain, is not considered by him as an adequate compensation for being put out of his way, and for employing his men in the barn, or his teams on the road to market, by which he may be obliged to postpone his regular course of husbandry. Besides his observation founded on experience, tells him, that if wheat is dear in October, when necessity compels many to carry it to market,

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market, it will not be cheap in February and March, when these sources are drained, and severe weather may have checked importation; he knows and feels, that whatever he may have heard of monopoly being the cause; that the true and only definition of dearness, when applied to corn, is *scarcity*, and that it can have no other meaning. If however, he bites at the highly gilded bait, if apparently strong interest induces him to deviate from his prescribed line of conduct—if he avows that to be his only motive—his sole inducement—can we reasonably blame him? Is his trade the only one in which that sentiment is to be banished, or even not to be predominant? Is he alone to be actuated by a disinterested regard for the public interest, and under the pressure of severe taxes, high rates, dearness of labour, advanced price of every article he has to buy, and not unfrequently of borrowed capital, to consider solely the public good, and to utterly banish from his breast, the unfeeling, unnatural sentiment of self-interest?

But it fortunately happens, that whatever are his motives, the public interest is certain to be attended to: In any way in which (if he has common prudence) he *can* act, the public is benefited. If in the regular supply with which he feeds the market, at times, when others are exhausted, he preserves its equilibrium; he does no less so by withholding his grain when the markets are at a low price, and supplying them when the price is high. All his conduct

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tends to the public advantage: unintentionally he is the truest friend of the country; his interest and that of the people go hand in-hand; nothing can separate them, nothing but ignorance will believe it possible to divide them.

But a case may be put, say the clamorous, where the farmer has it in his power to raise the price on the public much beyond what the general scarcity warrants:—Suppose in a district where very large farms abound, in the time of the general greatest scarcity from spring to harvest, three or four farmers, of equal property, should combine together to keep their wheat from the market, when the supply from the less opulent farmer was exhausted, and the vicinage depended on their supply only; would not this combination raise the price of the article to an exorbitant height, and subject the neighbourhood to grievous injury?

This case I have heard put. I do not deny the possibility, I cannot prove the negative, but I must maintain that it is the extreme of possibility; I have before said, that combination amongst farmers, is a solecism in country language; but nevertheless the combination is possible. Men who have an innate jealousy of each other, may stifle it for their interest, may act together with that confidence and agreement, as to keep secret a plan, which if once whispered abroad, would draw down the indignation of the neighbourhood against them, and would make them tremble for their stacks and barns. They
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may keep back that corn, which the public distress loudly and imperiously calls for. The millers and other consumers in their neighbourhood, may be for a while distressed for the article, and the price will advance. I say they *may* do all this; but it is the utmost they *can* do. The evil will be momentary, the distress of short duration; the miller would go to another market, which this combination affected not, and he would find in the lesser price of the article a compensation for the extended carriage to his mill. If, however, wedded to his own market, he is compelled to give the price dictated to him, and that an exorbitant one, the evil will soon be remedied by the jobber or middle man, as he is called, who will find it worth his while to bring it from the lower to the higher market. It is true the neighbourhood will for a moment pay an higher price than they ought to do, even with this assistance; but that will be the extent of the evil, and will be only felt for an instant. The farmer will soon find it his interest to dissolve the combination, and to pour his corn into the market at a price lower than the jobber can afford to do, (and perhaps lower than the average price of the country) in order to drive these people from the market, before they have furnished such a supply as may render any addition unnecessary, with the near prospect of the public distress being relieved by the approaching harvest. And that very district which laboured under a temporary scarcity

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and dearness, may on the average of the year be supplied in consequence of this combination, with a greater abundance, and consequently at somewhat a less price than the country in general.

But whilst I acknowledge the possibility of this case, I do not allow the existence of it, much less can I be brought to believe, that which the reporters of it would have us, think, that this practice is general. I have never yet found one man amongst the hundreds I have heard join in the abuse of farmers, who pretended to say, that he could bring evidence to satisfy the minds of any twelve of the most credulous men that ever were impanelled, that such a combination existed; and so polluted has the public mind been, by the nonsense which has been vomited forth for some time on the subject, that if such proof could have been adduced, or the shadow of it, it would have been by this time on record. So fair an opportunity would not have been neglected; it would have served to feed the raging folly of the moment, and the actors in the shameful scene would have soon been consigned to public odium, and merited punishment.

Let me not however be thought to say, that there may not have been many individual farmers, who have kept up a few loads (and perhaps some their whole crop) beyond the usual time of their general sale of it. It may have been done from motives of interest, or possibly from caprice; his inducements may have been of the most weak or wicked nature; he

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he may have taken it into his head, that by keeping it a little longer, he could metamorphose it into gold itself, and he therefore keeps up the article in his granary, as he would the gold in his closet. But has he not a right so to do? Shall he be told, that whilst all his countrymen are protected in the unrestrained disposal of their property, at the time and in the manner most suited to their inclinations, he is to be fettered down by public prejudice, threatened in his person, and a price affixed on his property, for his non-compliance with the will of those who have no right to dictate to him, and who if they had the right, and exercised it in the manner they seem inclined to do, would defeat the very end they mean to promote. If I have an horse to sell, and I find the fair over-loaded with horses of the same description, am I compelled to take the price that is offered me, though from the numbers there, it may be considered by others as a good one? If I send my goods to a general auction, am I compelled to take the price the company may chuse to bid, and which from the many articles that may be put up at the same day, and even to a very crowded company, is considered as a fair one, and perhaps more than the article costs me? If as a merchant, I am in possession of a scarce and valuable article, for instance, salt-petre—I perceive the great demand for the article by government, and the pressing necessity they have for it—I soon learn that the quantity in my possession is, at the moment,

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moment, such as they will be put to great straits to do without; that in fact an expedition, on which the eyes of Europe are fixed, and in which the whole civilized world is interested, may be delayed by my means. I do not chuse to part with it, but at a most extravagant profit; I am not content with 50 per cent. nor with 100, I will have 200. Their wants compel them to give it me, they have exhausted every source, and they come to me from necessity; and every man who contributes to the taxes of the country, contributes his proportion to satisfy my avarice, or (if you please) my unfair advantage.

Yet who arraigns the conduct of either of these three parties? Who abuses their avarice, or who putting himself in their places, will say that they would not act the same; and yet horses are an absolutely necessary article; chairs and tables we cannot do without, and war cannot be carried on without saltpetre.

In vain will you say that these are not as necessary articles as bread; certainly they are not, none can be so much so, yet the principle of reasoning is the same; let us however bring forward one article, which in these times approaches very nearly, in point of necessity, to bread: I mean sugar; and here we need not argue hypothetically. Who at the close of the last year, said to the West-India merchant, whose sugars filled almost every warehouse used for such goods in the metropolis, and not only
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loaded (even in one instance to the destruction of several houses) the uninhabited buildings in every street of the metropolis, but thronged the very lanes and highways in the eastern extremity of the city, "You must sell your sugars at a fair price, such as the manifest abundance of them warrants; you must not keep the article locked up, in hopes of selling it better—you have no right to procure loans from the bank, and acts of parliament from the legislature, to enable you to maintain the present high price of that which is so essentially necessary to the public, who have no right to be thus preyed upon by your avarice—the profit is quite sufficient for you, and we will pull down your warehouses, if you do not bring it to market."

And yet all this might have been said, certainly with equal, and perhaps with greater reason; because in this case, the merchants themselves did not pretend scarcity—the rate of their speculations only could not afford a diminished price. But the public (though if ever they witnessed monopoly, it was in this instance, and that not concealed but avowed monopoly) interfered not.

They reasoned wisely; they considered as a fundamental principle of liberty, the right which every man has to dispose of his property as he chuses, and the sound wisdom of permitting him so to do; they knew that the exercise of the power to abuse that right, would be partial in its effects, and momentary

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tary in its duration—the interfering with that right productive of general and lasting evil.

And is not the same measure to be meted out to the farmer.—Is the mere circumstance of a greater necessity for his goods, to be considered, as justifying the violation of a principle, so wisely and justly considered as not to be departed from; and on which, in a great measure, has been founded the commercial greatness and prosperity of this immense empire? I cannot waste another argument on the injustice of the restraint.

But in this instance the folly is not less apparent. The very retention of the article is nine times out of ten a most important advantage to the country; for such a practice cannot be general. Smallness of capital—temptation as to price—regularity of system—injury from vermin, and natural waste from keeping—all unite to bring to market the produce of farmers at the usual time. Often indeed does the public sustain a material loss from the farmers, who want money for other purposes, bringing their corn to market, which has been threshed out, before it was sufficiently dry to yield either to the flail or the grindstone its full and mature product. No one can doubt this who looks at the straw that is threshed at the early part of the season, when the harvest has not been a dry one. The swarms of poultry, which instantly assemble, and make their meal from even the refuse that
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is scattered in getting the straw into the loft, proclaim loudly the injury which the public has sustained from the early and premature threshing out the corn.—I have no doubt (and I speak here from experiment) that there is scarcely a load of straw which comes to the London market before the month of February, out of which at the least half a peck of wheat might not be obtained, and from some a considerably larger quantity. The man, therefore, who keeps his corn back till the ear yields its full and mature product, who supplies you with wheat, when you cannot get it elsewhere, and who feeds the market when the stores of his neighbours are exhausted, whatever may be his motives, renders a most essential service to the country. You may call him a monopolist, but to the kind of monopoly he has been guilty of (the keeping his own property till he chuses to dispose of it) do you, perhaps, owe those retrenchments in consumption you have made, and by which you have averted the dreadful evils of famine. You know not your obligations to this man whom you are trying to injure by unjust insinuations, which if he is foolish enough to regard, you will inevitably be starved.

I have considered this charge of monopoly as intended to be applied solely to the great farmer; it is impossible to believe that it is meant to comprize the *little* farmer; who amongst the various classes into which it has pleased the Almighty to distribute

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his creatures, is perhaps the one most deserving of real commiseration from his fellow-creatures.—Perhaps there is none which can bring forwards an aggregate of more excessive industry, harmless inoffensive manners, and, sorry I am to say, of dire poverty, than the little farmer. With scanty provision and excessive toil he can vie with the labourer in industry, but not like him can he in the hour of distress apply for parish relief. Many a man who writes his name on the parish books a *pauper*, and to whose relief *he* is obliged to contribute, has less claim to parish assistance, and less need of it than he has. To procure the small pittance of his rent, he is compelled to thresh out the little produce of his harvest almost at the instant it is housed.—Got well or ill—yielding toughly or tenderly to the flail—it matters not to him, it must be threshed out. His rent day is approaching, and he must make up his little purse; he trots therefore to the market, and disposes instantly of his scanty treasure. If the price does not tempt him to part with it, his necessities do; and thus, like the great farmer, without consulting the interest of the public, he promotes it most successfully by a supply in those times when the more opulent do not deal it out.

I think my readers must by this time be satisfied that the farmers have had injustice done them; that the greater part cannot be guilty of the crime of monopoly, even in the limited sense imputed to them;

them; that of studying their own convenience and pleasure, in the disposal of their property; and that those who are so guilty, are the truest friends and the most valuable members of society.

But I will not insult the common sense of those who read this address, by adding one argument more in refutation of the charges brought against this most worthy class of the community. In former times in this, and at the present moment in every other country, to mention the name of an English farmer, is to mention every thing that is manly, just, honourable, and useful in society—every thing that is entitled to our regard and esteem.—Have we just found out that these terms have been misapplied?—that the character of the farmer is compounded of parsimony, cruelty, meanness, and avarice—that so as he fills but his coffers, the rich may be imposed on, and the poor starved—that with his principles he has lost his common sense, and to the title of rogue, adds that of idiot?

God forbid that such should be the general sentiment!—I should indeed despair of the commonwealth if it were thus vitiated at the core. The infection has already spread too far: it is time to stop it. The cure is in the common exertion of those faculties, which the Almighty has given us. We shall then see the folly and cruelty of the charge we have brought against the farmer—we

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shall quickly then replace him in that rank to which he is entitled, amongst the most industrious, most useful, and most honourable classes in society.

MILLER AND MEALMAN.

The next object of popular abuse and resentment is the miller, who to this trade necessarily unites that of mealman; or disposer of the flour, pollard, and bran which his mill grinds. Whilst only general rumour of monopoly and injustice is brought forward against the farmer, the miller is placed upon the highest record of this country, in the highest assembly of this nation, as (if we could descend on this occasion to use an old pun) an *errant rogue in grain*; and as if the wonted odium against this class were not sufficient, the public mind has been daily irritated, by discussions on the alarming discoveries made by the evidence brought forward in support of the bill for the incorporation of a flour, meal, and bread company. One has no occasion here to wander in the labyrinth of conjecture to find out the ground of the suspicions entertained against the millers; we have them in detail, gravely brought forward by high authority, and argued upon at much length. The result of this argument and examination has been summed up by a noble lord, more than

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than usually conversant in matters of trade, and is in substance as follows:

“That the millers (or mealmen) league together to defraud the public, and to oppress the poor—that they hoard up the grain, and sell it out when manufactured, as it suits their interest; that so ample are their stores, and so immense their magazines, that a certain gentleman, well known as a great importer of corn and flour, and a considerable dealer in those articles, could buy of the millers at one time 40,000 sacks of flour, without in any degree affecting the market, and that he could have bought as much more, without producing any material alteration; that so immense are their profits, and so unreasonable their expectations, that one of the most considerable of them in point of property had the assurance to avow, that he expected from 15 to 18 per cent. profit on his capital.”

From an unexperienced and unthinking young man, just emancipated from college discipline, making his maiden effort in the senate, and willing to supply by assertion the want of facts, catching at every momentary gleam of popularity, however unattainable but by the sacrifice of common sense, one should have not been surprized at an accusation so bold—at a string of charges so replete with absurdity. The object might have been fully answered by it. This would-be patriot might have seen his name echoed to the public in the papers

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of the day as the champion of a defrauded people— as the avenger of the poor man's wrongs.—This might have answered his purpose, and the truth or falsehood of the statement would have been immaterial to him.—But that grave and considerate men, who could have no such object, who, if they ever felt the love of popularity, are now too far advanced in life and too experienced, not to know the real value of it (and of course to care little about it) should have brought forward a charge of the serious nature, which the first of these presents, without some strong specific ground on which to rest it, is to me most extraordinary and unaccountable. For, on what does the whole of this severe imputation rely for its support? Why, to a sale by the millers to an agent of government on a particular emergency, of 40,000 sacks of flour.

Let us ask a few questions as to this sale. Was it of a society of millers acting together that this was bought? No.—Was it of two or three unconnected, opulent ones? No.—Was the purchase made this year? No.—Was it made in a time of any scarcity? No.—Was it all bought on the same day? No.—Was it all to be delivered at the same time? No.—Was the time of delivery within a short time? No.—What then is the truth of this transaction? Why it is simply this:

Mr. Claude Scott, an agent of government, who transacted a great part of its business in this line,

line, received an order to purchase for government the quantity of flour stated. The transaction took place *some years* since; it was at a period when the invasion of the country was threatened, and ministers wished to form a depot for the use of any troops who might be encamped for the protection of it. There was no scarcity of corn or flour at the time, nor any apprehended. The manner in which it was bought precluded any possibility of affecting the market, for it was bought at the corn market of *all* the different millers in the neighbourhood of town, and as near as possible in equal proportions from each. The delivery was to be made at the rate of 5000 quarters per week, and would take *two months* in completing. The engagement for the whole quantity was made (but of this I am not quite positive, nor is it material) not on the same day, but at different days.

After this correct statement of the transaction, what are we to suppose of the candour of the accusers? and of the inference drawn from this transaction of the immense hoards kept by the millers, which could allow of this sudden and immense supply. Having so fully rebutted every iota of charge that the nature of this contract could furnish against the millers, it is unnecessary to argue, which might be done with very great success, that in the time of scarcity, a supply of this nature, so arranged could be easily effected without

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without inconvenience to the public. Twenty millers providing 250 sacks each per week, would form the amount wanted; and what would this be to men who, merely to supply their customers, and to provide work for their mills, ought most of them to have by them from 500 to 1000 quarters of wheat.

Perhaps this very transaction, whilst from its nature it could not fasten any imputation of monopoly, is the best answer that can be given to the charge of combination. With such a buyer on the market, bidding for a quantity equal to a fortnight's consumption of the whole town, had they leaguéd together, knowing so well as they do the state of the markets, and the influence which such a demand must necessarily have had on them, they would have done in this case as they are supposed to do in all others; they would have held back their commodity, and advanced their price in proportion to the demand. If they had not done this, their combination would have been of no service to them, and would have been unlike all other combinations. That they did not do this, that instead of acting in concert together, to take advantage of the wants of an immense customer, and that customer government (whom people are not apt to be over-nice in their dealings with) to keep back their goods from him with a view of raising the price, they came liberally forward, and supplied his

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his wants on moderate terms: he himself tells you that the markets were not affected, and of course there could be no combination.

The next charge is that of immense exorbitant profit, and founded on the evidence of Mr. Pratt, who on being asked what profit he should expect on his capital, answered from 15 to 20 per cent.—Is there any want of conscience in this expectation?—Is there a merchant in the city of London who would think his capital well laid out, which produced him less? and have not the majority in this war made a great deal more?—Exclusive of the risk which the miller runs from the variation of the markets between the time of his buying wheat, and bringing it to market manufactured, and which, except on a rising market, is always against him, he risks not a little in these times from public odium. The absurd nonsense, so plentifully afloat at this time, affects his interest more materially than people are aware of. They are apprehensive of public commotion, and that they and their property will be amongst the first victims; whilst the outcry therefore is so strong against them, they merely keep their mills going, and no greater stock of wheat by them than is necessary for that purpose. Enquire since these outrages commenced throughout the kingdom, and you will find this to have been generally the case, and particularly in the neighbourhood of London. Under all these disadvantages, there-

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fore, can we consider it unreasonable, that in the best and most flourishing times, when every thing goes smoothly on, the miller should expect to make this profit with all the drawbacks upon it which he is liable to? If every man who embarks his property in trade, at least where a considerable capital is necessary, think himself not over fortunate, in making from 20 to 30 per cent. upon it, is the miller (whose business requires an assiduous attention and bodily exertion equal to any other, whose risks from various causes are as considerable, and the nature of whose employment is the most beneficial to the human race, and more necessary for its support than any other) to be told that he is unconscionable in expecting a profit less than the average of other trades? I am really at a loss to find what argument can be used to prove the unreasonableness of his expectations or the exorbitancy of his gains, if we regard his trade with a reference to that of others.

But let it be recollected (and it is not unworthy of remark) that at this period, when their profits have been supposed to be highest, the market having been more upon the rise than fall, (except in the instance before alluded to, where the fall was very sudden, and the millers sustained a great loss) the capital necessary for the mere purpose of carrying on the business, was necessarily very greatly extended. When wheat is at 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ per quarter, the man whose mill requires a stock of wheat of 1000
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quarters to keep it employed, and his customers regularly supplied, would require a capital for the sole purpose of buying that article of grain only, of 3000 $\frac{1}{2}$.—at present he would require from 6 to 7000 $\frac{1}{2}$ for the same purpose. His wealth must then be very considerable indeed, if with so unusual a draught upon his purse, he can afford to sink more money in speculations, independent of his usual trade. The public may be assured that such is not the case. They know as little of monopoly as they do of combination; both are quite out of their way.

One sensibly regrets therefore, that men of clear good sense, and great information, grown old in political science, and well versed in the true principles of commerce, should lend their ear to prejudice so unfounded as that which includes in its censure a respectable and numerous body, and which so generally applied, *could* not be just—that knowing, as they must, how prone the public is to listen to any accusation against this useful but disfavoured class, they should have furnished materials for increased and equally unfounded calumny. Are the characters of men to be thus sported with, to feed the gross appetite of the day—to encourage that prejudice already too dangerous for the public weal? Are they to be held up to public odium, on proofs no better than these? To say the least of it, such conduct is sadly indiscreet—such imputations unnecessarily harsh. It has not been by such treatment towards those who risk their property in its
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support, and who give their time to its service, that this country has risen to its present exalted and enviable commercial prosperity.

But if we give only a few moments more to the subject, we shall find that whilst these harsh charges cannot be true in their general application, it is hardly possible they can be true, with reference to individuals in the trade. Let us reflect on what we mean by monopoly.—There can be no doubt, that public opinion defines monopoly to be “the getting into your possession so considerable a quantity of any article, as to be enabled thereby, *in a great degree*, to command the price of it in the market.” This is the least favourable definition for me, that could be given; for I am certain that the general idea of monopoly goes much further, and includes the almost entire possession of the article. Let us try it however, on this limited scale, as to its injurious effects, and see whether even this degree of evil exists.

In the commencement of this enquiry, let me acknowledge the strong impression my mind has received from much consideration on the subject, that *there can be* no such thing as monopoly in articles of consumption so extensive as wheat and flour.

If we are to particularize spots, where this idea appears to me most just, and especially at this moment applicable, it is in the vicinity of the metropolis. The weekly consumption of London alone

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is upwards of 20,000 sacks; the value of which at the rate of 5*l.* per sack, would be 100,000*l.* That man must be credulous indeed, and must have a strange idea of the wealth of millers, who can suppose it possible, that any one, or any half dozen millers, if they could be brought to league together for the purpose, could spare from the accustomed demands upon their trade a sum so considerable. They must be strangely ignorant of the constant demands for ready money to carry on a manufactory even of this simple nature, who can believe that the largest miller in the vicinity of London, could spare in times like these, even a tenth of this sum for such a purpose, if his inclination prompted him so to do; I am by character acquainted with one amongst the many respectable men in this business, whose dealings are perhaps as extensive and considerable in this line as that of any other. I understand that the regular supply of wheat which he ought in common prudence to have by him merely for the supplying of his customers with flour, &c. is from 500 to 1000 quarters; let us take the medium 750 quarters, this at 6*l.* (the lowest price since the commencement of the harvest) amounts to 4500*l.* I believe him to be an opulent man, but I must have a strange idea of his wealth to imagine, that whilst he has so considerable a sum lying as it were dead in *one* article alone of the many he deals in, he could spare four times that sum, to speculate beyond his wants;

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wants ; no one will believe that he does so, or ever did when wheat was at the high price it is now.

But there must be some existing motive, some powerful inducement to make the miller even hoard up his flour at the late high prices—A very sensible writer, and acute observer of human nature* says “ Every human action must have its motive and the motive must be equal to the conduct, or it is no motive at all.” There can be only one motive which could influence the miller to hoard up his flour, and that is interest—Does he consult this in the present moment, when the price can leave him little hopes of profit from speculation ? Is wheat at 6% per quarter an object for a man to hazard his money upon ? Besides exclusive of the injury which these articles sustain by keeping, and the loss of wheat when remeasured, it has always been considered as the interest of the miller to turn his money as quick as possible, and it is only by so doing that he can possibly make the vast profits imputed to him ; for even those who talk of the immensity of his profits, account for it by the quick returns of his capital. We must also not forget that at the period when the clamour was loudest against them, there were two causes existing to check any spirit of enterprize or speculation ; the one was, the unavailing efforts they had been making to resist the bill for incorporating the London Flour and

* Beattie on Truth.

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Bread Company by which their spirits were broken, and their prospects clouded—and the other, the loss they had sustained from the sudden great fall in the price of Flour at the very same moment.—Whether it was occasioned by these combined circumstances, or not, yet true it is, (and I speak it from authority) that during the later part of the summer, the generality of the Millers had scarcely a week's supply in advance, and some not half that quantity ; and so completely were they run out towards the close of the harvest, that it was with great difficulty they could supply the wants of the Metropolis. This is surely a sufficient answer to the charge of Monopoly as practised by them at that time.

But the public have a security against monopoly at any time in these articles, from the dealers themselves. It is to be found in the very enlarged and very useful competition which every one knows exists in this trade, perhaps more so than in any other. When the public are informed that there are no less than 150 mills in the vicinity of the metropolis, which contribute to its supply, and that the owners are independent of and unconnected with each other, there can be no doubt that the competition is as great as it is useful: probably out of these mills one-third are the property of men of some capital, but the remaining two-thirds belong to those who cannot afford to have a shilling lying idle, who, at the present and late

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late high prices, buy just as much wheat as will supply their necessities, and the instant it is manufactured return it to the market; they have no money to speculate with—they can scarcely afford to run the risk between market and market. The public may be satisfied that there is no trade where the competition is more extensive, and the obstacles to monopoly so great as in this trade, so much the object of their suspicions. Where there are 150 competitors in one market, one can hardly admit the possibility of monopoly.

One argument more remains (if it were wanted) to satisfy the most incredulous how little reason there has been to suppose any thing like monopoly within these last six months. When we consider the regular supply which the metropolis has received in the last spring and summer from the millers, equal to all its wants and demands; when we know how scanty were the home as well as foreign supplies, how sparingly (and fortunately so) they were from necessity dealt out, how great was the unprecedented demand for the supply of the coast from the London market, we may be assured that if there had been any thing like a monopoly, or even the holding any considerable quantity back from the market, the inconvenience would have been instantly and severely felt, and the cause easily discovered. But it is in evidence that there never was a deficiency of supply, and to procure this must have required a more than common activity

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tivity from the trade, and a conduct very different from monopoly.

So connected with the millers and mealmen, and so immediately directed against them is the bill which has passed both Houses for incorporating this Flour and Bread Company, that it will not, perhaps, be amiss to discuss in this place a subject so extraordinary and important. It will require no little sophistry to reconcile this clamour against the monopoly of the millers and mealmen, with the grant to a chartered corporation of the largest monopoly of a *necessary* article ever conceded to any body. It reminds one of the remedy for a stain, by pouring on it a greater portion of the liquor that occasioned it.—What! shall we echo from country to country the idle nonsense of monopolists in the persons of unconnected millers and mealmen, and in the same breath give our sanction to the incorporation of peers, commoners and merchants, with an avowed capital of 150,000*l.* to commence their operations with?

If these millers have furnished London with a regular and ample supply, what occasion for more mills? if they have found a difficulty in procuring sufficient corn to work their mills, why increase the difficulty by erecting another immense one in their neighbourhood? What must an unbiassed dispassionate man think of the consistency of those who charge individuals with hoarding up grain, who accuse these large millers of monopoly and

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the ruin of fair competition, yet are exerting their eloquence, their talents, and their influence, to persuade the legislature to grant a chartered monopoly of 120,000 sacks of flour per annum, in amount no less than a *tenth* of the supply of the metropolis.

The benevolent motives which have actuated many of the subscribers to, and promoters of this chartered company, no one can dispute—when we read their names it would be injustice to refuse to many the tribute of our respect for the benevolence and purity of their motives. But it would be requiring too much to expect our belief, that a sole regard for the public good, unmixed with any private interest, has actuated the conduct of every subscriber; much more unreasonable would it be to require our assent to the propriety of the remedy which the legislature has suggested to cure the evil of monopoly.—Is there a man of plain sense in the country who does not see the gross inconsistency of such conduct and the absurdity of the reasoning which has been brought forwards in its support?

I have before stated, that the regular supply of London comes from 150 mills in its vicinity, the capitals of which are some very considerable and others very trifling. I think one might without fear of contradiction hazard an assertion, that if a third of the most opulent of these millers, were to league together (as they have been accused) to hoard

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hoard up the grain and to distress the public, the capital they could raise to speculate with, the injury they could do the market would be very inferior to that we have reason to apprehend from the wealth and power of this great company. No one will suppose that immense as is the ostensible capital, there are no means of increasing it beyond legislative permission. The open capital we know, but are there any bounds to the secret capital which may hereafter be employed?

If the legislature has pronounced the danger to be great, from the wealth and supposed good understanding of the millers and mealmen, of whose capital and means of monopoly they can know nothing, how can it with any consistency attempt to persuade you, that from this great corporation, whose immense capital they have functioned, and to whose means of secretly extending it they cannot be blind, no danger is to be apprehended. Will you allow them to say to you in answer to this, ‘ The character of these men is your security; the pledge of their good conduct is to be found in their rank and station. These are a band of patriots who have risen up to avenge the cause of the poor, to stand between the defrauded public and these avaricious blood-suckers, the millers and bakers—no interest but the public good animates them; and to read their names is to do justice to their views.’

Such, indeed, has been the language which you have

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have heard from the highest authorities ; such have been the means used to engage the public support without doors to the measure that was passing within.—The supporters of it, if they have not acted with the utmost candour, have used the extremest policy. With a thorough knowledge of those they had to deal with, they took advantage of the moment when the public mind was soured by the high price of bread, and inclined to believe any thing, however absurd, to direct their resentment against that body to whom the common people are always hostile. To them and to their artifices they impute a present want, and a danger of greater. The resentment already excited against the miller and baker is not sufficient for their purposes, the public have not had dust enough thrown into their eyes, and they come forward to increase the quantity and to thoroughly blind them.

When they have thus paved the way for their grand panaceum, they collect together the gaping and hungry crowd, and thus address them :

‘ My good friends, we the voluntary guardians
 ‘ of the public weal, the disinterested band of self-
 ‘ elected patriots, have viewed with a philanthropic
 ‘ concern the distresses which you are all now ex-
 ‘ perienicing from the cruel avarice of the miller
 ‘ and mealman, and from the roguery of the
 ‘ baker—we are sensible of the claims you have to
 ‘ legislative interference to protect you against these
 ‘ tyrants whose slaves you are.—Entitled to redress
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‘ we will procure it for you—we will protect you
 ‘ against these powerful and rich monopolists, these
 ‘ hoarders of grain, whose design is to starve you
 ‘ —they shall no longer have the power to prey
 ‘ upon your wants—through us shall they pierce
 ‘ in future before they can wound you—in us
 ‘ will you find an impenetrable phalanx, that will
 ‘ effectually screen you against their merciless
 ‘ depredations. After these professions, doubt not
 ‘ our motives or our services, if in the remedies
 ‘ we suggest, there should appear some trifling
 ‘ inconsistency. Desperate diseases you know
 ‘ require desperate remedies; you may not quite
 ‘ comprehend the nature of the means we shall
 ‘ suggest for your deliverance—you may not en-
 ‘ tirely be able to reconcile it to common sense, or
 ‘ to your common experience; but it is, neverthe-
 ‘ less, such as is suited to your present circumstances
 ‘ —such as your necessities call for, and such as will
 ‘ heal the wounds under which you at present
 ‘ groan. But we will keep you no longer in suf-
 ‘ pence. Our plan is this: the Millers and Meal-
 ‘ men hoard up the Corn and Flour, and deal it
 ‘ out to you, as it suits their interest or pleasure.
 ‘ We mean to apply to Parliament to allow us to
 ‘ be the great hoarders—but we will deal the Flour
 ‘ out to you, liberally and without consulting our
 ‘ interest. They have entered into a secret com-
 ‘ bination to raise the price of the markets, in or-
 ‘ der to distress you—We mean to enter into an
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' open one to relieve you—Though it is not in our
 ' power to prove, that “any thing like a criminal
 ' or an illegal combination” exists among them, yet
 ' there is “no doubt they have that kind of under-
 ' standing one with another, *which prevents* the
 ' advantages of fair competition,” and this their
 ' immense capitals furnish them with the means of
 ' doing. — *We* mean to have an understanding
 ' amongst ourselves; we mean to act together;
 ' but then it is solely for your advantage.—We
 ' are sensible of this principle, that “where there is
 ' no equality, there can be no competition.” That
 ' the mouse cannot compete with the elephant, or
 ' the sparrow with the eagle; but we mean not to
 ' take advantage of our strength, we intend to
 ' open the market to fair and free competition,
 ' *by driving these rich, unconscionable millers and*
 ' *mealmen out of it.* No danger can be appre-
 ' hended from *our* capital, for though it is true
 ' 150,000*l.* sounds a great deal, yet it only sounds
 ' so to those, who like you, are unaccustomed to
 ' such sounds—in *our* hands no danger is to be
 ' apprehended from it, though a twentieth part in
 ' theirs would be truly alarming.

' These millers have no restriction on their com-
 ' merce, they may buy or sell corn to any extent,
 ' and if from hoarding up it should become unfit for
 ' use, they can sell it out, free from restraint, for
 ' others to poison the public with. We, on the
 ' contrary, are restricted as to the quantity of
 corn

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' corn we can either buy, sell, or manufacture;
 ' our dealings must be *limited to a tenth* part of the
 ' consumption of the metropolis, and we can
 ' only dispose of 52,000 quarters of corn in the
 ' year, even if it should become musty on our
 ' hands, and our hoards be ever so considerable.
 ' You have heard of the alarming profits of their
 ' trade! No wonder, when their expectations of
 ' 15 to 18 per cent. is openly avowed by one of
 ' their principal dealers. *We* are content with
 ' only 10 per cent. profit. It is true they devote
 ' all their time and attention; their skill and
 ' experience; embark all their capital, and run
 ' every risk for this profit. We, to be sure, (at
 ' least the greatest part of us,) mean to sit at
 ' home, and take no share in the trouble; we
 ' shall carry no skill or experience to the concern,
 ' because we have it not; we shall embark none
 ' of us more than 1000*l.* and can run no risk
 ' beyond it; but even with all this difference you
 ' must perceive the enormity of *their* profits, and
 ' the moderation of *ours.*

' To sum up all in a few words, we mean to
 ' destroy monopoly, by erecting one of our own
 ' —we propose to root out combination by com-
 ' bining together ourselves—we will protect you
 ' against the effects of capital, by creating a
 ' monstrous one of our own; and we intend to
 ' open competition by means of a purse so weighty
 ' as to drive away every competitor.

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‘ Do not, we entreat you, doubt the benefit you
 ‘ will derive from these benevolent efforts on our
 ‘ part; do not distrust us merely because you do not
 ‘ quite understand the drift of our arguments, or
 ‘ as yet perceive the reason of them. When you
 ‘ know of whom we are composed, all apprehensions
 ‘ of our capacity to serve you, or of the purity of
 ‘ our motives, will instantly vanish. We are
 ‘ compounded of the most genuine patriots selected
 ‘ from the members of both legislatures, and of the
 ‘ most eminent in spirit, and wealthy in purse
 ‘ amongst the merchants and bankers of London. We
 ‘ need not, surely, add more to induce you to
 ‘ give us your support.’

Did ever impudent *Charlatan*, puffing off his
 nauseous drugs, more completely gull a senseless
 mob, than these persons have the credulous and
 inconsistent public? Wonderful as it may appear,
 when reason has cooled the prejudices with which
 the public mind is tainted, yet upon such and no
 better foundation, on argument not one whit more
 solid, however rendered more specious by the
 decorative charms of eloquence, has this immense
 project received the sanction of the legislature
 amidst the consenting voice of the people—of those
 who for months past had been ringing all the
 changes upon monopolists and great millers. Take
 from the arguments in support of this measure the
 extrinsic ornament with which they have been
 clothed, and they amount in substance to the address

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I have put into the mouths of the projectors.
 Read what passed at the time, and you will find
 that if I have “nothing extenuated,” I have not
 “set down ought in malice.”

And is it in support of such a project, and on
 such grounds, that this highly useful body of men,
 engaged in the most necessary and extensive trade
 in the world, against whose honour and fair dealing
 not the slightest imputation could be extorted
 from witnesses brought in support of the measure—
 who on the contrary were proved by their testimony
 in a time of unexampled scarcity, when the
 commodity was difficult of procurance for manu-
 facture, to have regularly, and amply supplied the
 wants of the metropolis, and *with a considerably less
 profit, than by law they were entitled to*, are to be held
 up to the public notice as men requiring strong
 legislative controul—and this not by provisions to
 restrain their abuses if any existed, but by erecting
 an almost unbounded monopoly at their gates.

The millers may truly say, they were not on
 that occasion dealt fairly by. It is impossible
 to say (as has been said) that no imputation
 was meant towards them—but that the only view
 of the legislature was by increasing the competi-
 tion, to lower the price for the interest of the
 people. If we read the preamble to the bill—if
 we recollect the language used in all places, where
 this subject was discussed, we cannot hesitate to
 pronounce, that the basis of the application to par-
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liament, was the alledged misconduct of the trade.

Let it not be thought that I have any interest in the cause of the millers—I know none of them, except by character—but I do not believe insinuations that are improbable, and charges that are impossible to be true, let them come from what quarter they will.

Had not a principle of justice raised my pen in their support, the gratitude which in common with the public, I feel for their conduct, under the unjust obloquy with which they have been loaded, would have induced me to stand forward. I dread to think what would have been the consequence, if those men, yielding to the natural impulse of resentment, which such conduct towards any men must excite, had withdrawn their assistance from the public even for one week. Any man who walks into a baker's shop, and learns the quantity of flour he has by him, will easily appreciate the danger. Who then are the men most entitled to the term of patriots—those who, whilst they are holding up to public odium, as dangerous monopolists, and covetous hoarders, a large portion of their fellow creatures, are obtaining an unheard-of monopoly themselves, or those who, threatened and even insulted in their persons, and endangered in their property, from the real combination forming against them, oppose only to unfounded calumny, silent contempt; and instead
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of retorting on the heads of their accusers, and of a public deluded by their misrepresentations, that deadly vengeance with which they might repay the harsh treatment they have received, continue to give their usual aid to that public by whom they have been injured (not indeed with all their former energy and activity, for under such usage, how can it be expected) relying on their innocence for acquittal at the bar of the public, when prejudice shall be done away, and sober reason shall have resumed her seat.

In spite of every thing which has been lately said of that great man, and profound politician, Dr. Adam Smith, however obsolete his opinions on the causes of national wealth and prosperity may be considered; however he may have been charged with borrowing his doctrines on the freedom of trade from the French economists of that day—my poor judgment cannot refuse to give its unqualified assent to the soundness of those principles, which he has so ably and impressively laid down on the subject of the freedom of trade—Every tittle which he has uttered on charters, incorporations and exclusive privileges, I most fully subscribe to. The absolute and unqualified freedom of trade, unfettered by legislative restrictions on the one hand, or supported by partial immunities on the other, form the only real foundation of commercial greatness. They are essential to its prosperity; at least to that utmost prosperous state

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it is capable of—interfere with its progress in any shape—attempt to restrain it, or pretend to assist it, the injury you do it is almost certain, you check its natural and vigorous shoots, and you impede, instead of hasten its progress to maturity.

I am aware, that modern opinion and modern conduct smile at these doctrines, and think them only applicable to times that have been long since past, when commerce was in its infancy, and not suited to the present advanced state of it. I, on the contrary, think them appropriate to every period, and such as no commercial country can depart from, except in those strong cases of necessity which justify a temporary departure from any principle, however universal.

With these opinions, it cannot then be wondered at that I am an enemy to all legal monopolies; the principle of them all is at enmity with commerce. Yet there are some of that nature from which I apprehend no serious injury, because even the omnipotence of parliament, though in appearance it may give it, cannot in reality.

Were the legislature to give to any society, however numerous and wealthy, those corporate advantages, those immunities and exclusive privileges, which would generally establish the most entire monopoly possible; if these were given to men embarking in a concern, where a great and necessary article of life was concerned, I should not be

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be apprehensive of the danger of monopoly from them.

On this principle, however extensive the power of this vast company may be, however large their allowed capital, and however capable of concealed increase, yet I have no apprehensions of injury to the public from their monopoly, if they were to attempt it. The articles they deal in, admit not of it. Most certainly in a market very scantily supplied, their purchases would in some degree affect it; but their demand would be soon known, and the supply would regulate itself accordingly. The perishableness of the commodities, the great loss on the smallest diminution of their price, the serious expence of their warehouse-room, and loss of interest on the money sunk—the immense sums which in times of scarcity (the only times when monopoly *can* be dangerous) are necessary to be taken out of their trade for the purpose of speculation—the almost certain combination which they would run the danger of exciting against them, from the whole trade, who would watch their proceedings with a jealous eye—and lastly, that fear of public resentment, and the effects of it which they naturally would feel—all combine as ample securities to the public, against any danger of monopoly from this institution.

Nor let the trade itself entertain any serious apprehensions of the injury *they* will sustain from them. I have strongly my doubts whether the
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company will take advantage of the legislative permission to establish themselves; if they consult their interest, they will not: allow however that it is established on the vast system proposed, yet there is no occasion for alarm.—Whilst the company retains it's original supporters, like all new institutions, it may go on at first with spirit and energy—it may for a time abridge the miller of some little of his profits—it may even deprive him of a few of his customers.—But these will be very few, for they are all of course labouring under the same opprobrium as the millers; with them they make a common cause, and it is not probable they will be allured by an inconsiderable advantage to desert their old friends.

The company will have in a great measure to force their market; they will not easily effect it: people are generally more inclined to deal with individuals than with large bodies. They are apt to consider the latter as assuming a greater consequence, an higher rank and a proud superiority; from whatever cause it proceeds, they do not feel on a par with them.

If however matters go smoothly on at first, if the unexpected restrictions which the upper House of Parliament have thought proper to impose on their trade, and the scrutiny it has subjected them to, should not have disgusted the original projectors of the scheme, and induced them to withdraw their names already, yet it is very improbable, that a
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perfect and cordial union should long exist. Projects founded on philanthropy alone are rarely permanent. A motive so honourable at first readily attracts innumerable friends; the feeling mind presses forwards to participate in schemes where the prominent feature is benevolence; but schemes founded in passion, and supported by enthusiasm, from their nature cannot be lasting. Those who embark on this principle alone soon grow cool, a thousand fears of ill success, arising from ignorance of the nature of the project, a thousand apprehensions lest in *their* turn they should become the objects of public hatred and indignation—numberless suspicions, lest the spirit of benevolence and public good, which has actuated them should not be generally extended through the concern, but that they have been made the dupe of designing projectors—in fine a thousand unaccountable (and perhaps wholly unfounded) ideas, praying incessantly on their minds, drive the most timid, but perhaps not the least respectable, from their body, or occasion them to watch the conduct of their colleagues with a distrust and jealousy, that will damp all spirit, and depress the energy and unanimity, so necessary to carry on with effect an extensive and important concern. That this will be the case sooner or later I have not the smallest doubt; the company will then dwindle by degrees into insignificance as a public concern. The character and names which support it, if withdrawn, will shake the project at its base:

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in proportion as they withdraw themselves, the public support will cease, it will only be considered as the largest mill in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and as the most prominent object in time of scarcity, for the public prejudice to vent its ill humour, if not its vengeance on. All the evils imputed generally to the millers will find here an object to fasten upon. The largeness of their capital, the immensity of their dealings, and the ample stock they will be obliged to keep by them, exaggerated as these circumstances always are, will excite a resentment, which may have the effect of screening the millers, by furnishing a larger (and of consequence a better) object for prejudice. The project in that case if it is fortunate enough to escape the fate of a former similar one (similar at least in principle, if not in extent) will become too unwieldy for the management of a few, and too little advantageous to induce a continuance; it will gradually die away, if it suffers not a premature death; and those who have retained their shares, will have to divide their losses.

In predicting this termination of a scheme so gigantic, one hazards little of the credit of prophecy. Is there any instance of an immense trade, in which a great variety of persons (and in this concern it must be remembered that there *may* be 6000 persons, there *must* be 150) of different rank in life, of different pursuits, all new to the business itself, and the greater part to any business but that
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of pleasure, embarked and associated together, have succeeded to any thing like the extent of their object. Who ever heard of the wealth, which the Albion Company were gaining, at the time that the dreadful catastrophe happened to their mill? What has been the success of the Birmingham Bread Company, that has done such wonders on a capital of 6000*l.* in supplying its proprietors with bad bread; cheaper than the neighbourhood eat their good? Where is the instance of a company in any degree so numerous as this, that continued to act together, on the principles and plans, with which they set out? I never heard of one; and I believe this to be less likely to do so than any other.

I cannot say I should much regret their ill success; an institution which owes its origin to unfounded calumny and unjust aspersions, cannot carry with it the wishes and hopes of liberal men.

In my defence of the millers and mealman I have gone (without intending it) into considerable length. They are more the objects of public indignation than any other branch of the trade, and of course a longer examination of their charges becomes necessary; but long as I have already been, I cannot dismiss this subject altogether, without taking notice of a more than ordinary prejudice against a particular description of persons concerned in the same branch. I allude to the Quakers. From whatever cause it arises, the common people (and
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indeed some of their superiors) entertain strange suspicions of this sect. If we are to credit what is said, they are composed of roguery and falsehood, versed in every species of low cunning, and restrained by their principles from the assistance of oaths, fill up the chasm, by the aid of the most barefaced untruths; such and much worse are the allegations against them.

It seems to be the nature of man, where his mind has not been expanded by liberal education, to believe that whatever is mysterious, is wicked, and that nothing can be honest, which we do not comprehend—and that no description of men can have good intentions, who differ from the generality in points so essential as their *dress* and their *habits*—who usurp the privilege of a peculiar simplicity of manners—and who have the assurance in a country where there is an established church, to follow a peculiar form of worship of their own.

It is more than probable that many of the suspicions we entertain against this class, owe their rise to the broad brims of their hats, the square cut of their coats, or the general use of the second person in their conversation. I declare seriously that I could never account in a manner more honourable to their accusers, for the so generally raised prejudice against them, than from their singularity of manners and dress; I have never heard a better reason assigned; nor (to the honour of the sect be it spoken) do I believe they *can* produce a better; except

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except we can draw any thing from the common observation intended in their disfavour “that a man must be sharp indeed, who can be too sharp for a quaker;” (I give the observation in substance though I drop the grossness of the terms):

What imputation, supposing this charge to be just, is fixed on the Quaker by the proof of it. It means nothing more than that the quaker has his wits about him—why should he not? I know nothing in this for which he needs blush. Is it strange that men, who from the principles they profess, are of necessity precluded from participating in the common amusements of life; who are debarred from those enjoyments, which we all think innocent, (and which perhaps are so) should devote their attention to that line of life they have chosen, or which has been selected for them by their friends, with an attention, a keenness and solicitude, resulting from a mind, directed to that only pursuit; and undiverted by those engagements, which, forbidden to them, occupy no small portion of our time and thoughts. Is it wonderful, that men thus abstracted from pleasure, should fly to business as a resource against ennui; and that flying to it, they should be more thoroughly masters of it—more correct and expert in their manner of transacting it, than those who mix with their business pleasure; and suffer it too frequently to take the lead.

And is it for this enviable skill, this happy adroitness in, and punctual attention to, business, that

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we so liberally deal out our charges against their sharpness, and our insinuations against their honesty and sincerity?—Where are the proofs? Does guilt in all cases follow accusation?

I have no acquaintance, but I have had dealings with quakers in trade, as most others must have had: in these instances, I have perceived no particular sharpness or inclination to take unfair advantage of me, though I have witnessed a punctuality and precision which we must all like, and which it would be well if many tradesmen imitated. In the intercourse I have had with them, I have found in them an honest openness and suavity of manners which I can ill reconcile to deceit or injustice. With principles peculiar to themselves, and with a line of separation which divides them from their fellow-creatures, I have witnessed a philanthropy which excluded the idea of sect—a feeling for public misery that recognised no religious distinction of sect or persuasion. Inoffensive in their manners, placid in their temper, and exemplary in the discharge of the relative and social duties of life; I have always considered them as honourable and peaceable subjects—as objects of envy, not of reproach—as demanding our respect and esteem, not deserving our suspicions and reproaches; much less that personal insult, and, even injury, with which an unresisting individual of the sect was treated, to the disgrace of the country, of

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by a savage mob in his way to the regular discharge of his duty.

But there is a testimony of their general worth—of the purity of their conduct, the honesty of their dealings, and the high claim they have to the title of good citizens, which prejudice cannot resist, and which must raise them, as a body, very high in public estimation. Who sees in the calendars of crimes and misdemeanors, which every county sends forth, or in the processes of those civil courts, with which this kingdom abounds, the name of a quaker?—Amenable with the rest of his fellow-creatures to justice, who sees him at its bar?—Liable to civil process, for injustice in his dealings, who can find his name as plaintiff or defendant? If it is seen, it is so rare, as almost to be a phenomenon in the courts of law; and yet we may be well assured that so little is the public mind disposed to favor them—so narrowly is their conduct watched—so prone are men to take advantage of any slip, which inadvertency even might occasion, that detection would tread quickly on the heels of guilt, and the appeal to justice would follow with equal steps; it would be a triumph that malice could not afford to lose, and which prejudice would greedily lay hold of.

One need not add more in defence of the quakers: this fact speaks louder in their vindication than a thousand arguments.

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After so long a discussion of this branch of trade, I have only to add, that I hope that the millers and mealmen will not be consigned to obloquy, merely because the clamour is loudest against them. We are too much inclined to join in the cry, without enquiring or caring what it is about.

FLOUR FACTORS.

A thorough misunderstanding of the nature of their business could alone have subjected this class to any suspicion of being accessory to the public wants. The same cry which has been raised against the millers *of combining together to raise the markets*, has been with equal justice and truth applied also to them. A simple statement of the nature of their employ is all that I can think necessary to remove such suspicions.

Besides the miller, who, in and near town, supplies the bakers of the metropolis and its vicinity, there is this middle man the Flour Factor, who is the agent of the country millers that supply the town much more considerably than the millers near town.

It is true that if occasionally (and of late this has been unfortunately much the case) the country millers do not furnish them with a supply equal to the demand of their constant customers, or they have reason to suppose that will not be the case,
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to prevent the inconvenience that their customers will sustain, and in order to keep them together, they will buy on their own account; of course such purchases sometimes succeed, and sometimes not; but it is notorious that the latter is more frequently the case. But to believe that they monopolize any quantity on speculation, is totally void of foundation; the fact is, that in the article of flour there is no speculation. The factors never buy any themselves except in the case I have stated, and they then do it with unwillingness, and with no prospect of pecuniary advantage. In times of great abundance of the article, when there is a larger supply than demand, the flour is landed, and waits the purchase of the bakers: it has been formerly to a very large amount; sometimes there have been on the wharfs of London as large a quantity as 20 or 30,000 sacks, but alas! these times are passed, and the scrutinizing eye of want would for the last six months have wearied itself in the search of even 100 sacks of flour lying on the wharfs after it had been landed twenty-four hours; in truth, the orders are almost always now beyond the supply, and on the arrival of the flour it instantly goes to the baker.

But if it were true that they purchased more freely for themselves than they are stated to do, how is the public interest affected by it? In dealing on their own account they may make a good bargain, but what matters it to the people? It is
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not in their power to affix the price at which they will sell it. The price (as in a great and necessary article *always* is the case) depends on the real scarcity of the article, not of that which is in their hands, but in that of the trade in general. If they were all to combine together to raise the price, the millers near town (their natural enemies) would of course combine against them; but independent of the money they must command to do, what in these times of short supply is to become of their customers? Are the bakers to shut up their shops? One need not waste a moment in shewing the absurdity of this supposition—they could not, they would not dare to do it; in truth, they never have; it is not their interest to do. Perhaps the little good understanding which subsists between the factors (both the corn and flour factors) is a circumstance more to be lamented, and the effects to be dreaded more, than that of combination. It is well known that the jealousy which the factors entertain of each other (so little of any thing like combination is there) makes them all anxious to do the best for their employers, and of course the public may by this means have occasionally the price somewhat greater than it otherwise would be. How groundless then is the charge of combination applied to them—how improbable and how contrary to the real truth! and yet the factor is supposed to be closely allied in iniquity to the miller; and

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and to be interested in occasioning a scarcity from which he can derive no benefit, but must sustain injury.—The lower the price the less the economy, and consequently the greater the demand and the more increased his profits. It requires very little reflection (but prejudice allows no time for that) to perceive how intimately his interest and that of the people are united—he cannot be his own friend and their enemy.

In regular gradation comes next

THE BAKER.

And most certainly if there is a man in this favoured isle, who has just ground of complaint of the severity of the laws and the partiality of its operations in his disfavour, it is this man.—Whilst all his brethren in trade are left to the free and unrestrained disposal of their property at prices fixed by themselves, whilst they have free liberty to consult their own convenience, pleasure, and interest in what they part with to the public, the legislature has (whether wisely or not) cramped his trade with restrictions, and fettered him with obligations which leave him a mere passive instrument of legal direction. Every morsel of flour he buys, and every shilling he pays for it, he is compelled to return upon oath to a fixed jurisdiction, who then affix the price at which the manufactured commodity is to be sold by him to the public.—That boasted privilege which Englishmen so
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highly and justly value, the sacredness of their dwelling, attaches not to him. Authority *may* exercise towards him its wantonness at will, and under pretence of adulterated flour or bread, may ransack his trough or shelves, or analyse every batch of bread he brings from the oven.—I do not say that this is the harsh treatment he often experiences, but it *may* be so; he has no protection against it, save in the liberality and forbearance of those who administer the laws. With all these checks and restraints on his dealings, with these marks set upon him to distinguish him from his brethren in trade, one should have expected that the impossibility of his injuring the public would have been his protection against their resentment: no such thing; there is no man more the object of popular vengeance than himself.—The moment a scarcity of corn and a consequent dearness of bread is felt by the public, his shop is the first resort of those who intend to make that dearness the pretence for civil commotion. It is not peculiar to this, but it is the same in every country upon a similar occasion. It was the case at Paris in 1789, and it is the case here in 1800, and it will ever be so. You receive your supply of daily sustenance from him, and *therefore* if there is any scantiness in the supply or dearness in the price, it must be his fault. The cry goes quickly round ‘The baker wants to starve you; he has plenty of flour by him, but he will not bake
‘ it;

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‘ it; he has abundance of bread, but he will not
‘ sell it under this unconscionable price—let us go
‘ and sell it for him on our own terms.’ The contents of his shelves and counters are instantly dealt out at their sovereign will and pleasure, and the villainy and cruelty of their conduct are attempted to be palliated by a payment of the article at a price fixed by themselves. Happy is he if he gets off thus well: but not unfrequently, after plundering his property, they insult his person and threaten his life.

In God’s name what has this man done? what are the crimes of which by possibility he can have been guilty to draw down your indignation against him? If for the public good it has been thought adviseable to take from him his free agency, is it fair to load him with responsibility? If his bread is dear, ask the Lord Mayor why he has raised it. Believe not, that the baker is less interested than you, that his bread should be good, cheap, and abundant. By the first he will retain and increase his customers; by the second he will have more to sell; and by the third his little capital will go the farther;—and by all three he will keep his natural enemies, the common people, in good humour, and the mob without any excuse for outrage.

But little as the pretence can be to load this man with insults and reproaches, who is the mere instrument to consummate for you that provision he receives in its rude state, and in a manner and at a
L 2 price

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price which others (not himself) have prescribed; too true it is that such is the conduct of the people towards him. Within these last few weeks the destruction or plunder of mills and the facking of baker's shops (or at least the taking into their own hands the affize and sale of his bread) have been stated by the wicked, and believed by the ignorant, to be resources against scarcity, and the grand specific to restore plenty.

I will allow, as some little palliation for the brutality of the common people towards them, that instances are frequently on record of bakers who sell bread short of its affized weight. The crime itself, in the abstract, is most severe and unjustifiable.—The poor man that cannot have his pennyworth for his penny in these hard times, has a claim on your interference which humanity will not refuse him. But let it not be imagined that every man who is charged with this offence, and proved to be guilty of it, has had an intention of cheating his customers. Where there is a large deficiency of weight he deserves the rigour of the law and the indignation of his fellow-creatures—no man will attempt to defend him; but it is possible to convict him on a very slight deficiency of weight; such a deficiency as he has received no advantage from. When we consider how much every trade of this nature must be in the hands of servants, for whose misconduct, and even error, every master is by the laws of his country rendered liable; we may safely pro-

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pronounce no baker to have passed a month in business, without being liable to suffer the penalties of the act for short weight in some of the thousand loaves he has sold in that period, and that without the smallest intention of defrauding his customers, and who, if they have been constantly served by him, have, on the whole, had more than justice done them in the weight they have received. In the very small sized loaves this is peculiarly liable to be the case. In the serving by a very conscientious baker, of a great number of loaves of a pound weight, I have experienced the truth of this remark—a loaf here and there was deficient in weight, but twenty put into the scale at once invariably weighed to the full as much as was required.

Nor is this peculiar to the baker's situation. Do we not witness in the article of hay the selfsame liability to error, and consequently to penalty.—Every truss must by law weigh 56lb.—Did any man ever buy hay for any length of time, and for his satisfaction weigh every truss, who has found them the precise weight required? If he found one weighing 54lb. only, and three others next in the scale 57lb. each, would he feel justified in laying an information against the seller for deficiency in the one truss, when he was a gainer upon the four? and yet he would be entitled to do so.—With such measure of strict justice, and gross injustice, every gen-

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gentleman or farmer might be held up to public reproach as the defrauder of his fellow-creatures.

I am well aware that in an article like bread, and especially in these times, the interest of the poor requires that a watchful eye should be kept over those who supply them with their daily nourishment; and how strictly exact every baker ought to be in the division of his materials according to legal prescription. I only apply this mode of reasoning to shew, that something even less blameable than negligence, may exhibit men to the public in a light they do not deserve; and that in the sentence of a conviction, rendered necessary by the imperious call of public interest, you do not always read that to which a man of liberal feeling would affix *guilt*, in which, *intention* is a necessary ingredient.

Nor let us listen altogether to the ideas circulated of their immense profits. On this there can be no doubt, because it is reduced to a certainty, and with which every man may acquaint himself.—It is an handsome, steady profit, not more than commensurate to the risk he runs from bad debts, and bad usage; nor more than his trading neighbours think themselves entitled to. If it were not what it is, who would undertake it? Those trades wherein many articles are sold, all unlimited in their price, may be carried on with little or no profit as to some, because the vast profit on others may amply supply the deficiency. If the common tradesman finds to-day cloudy, to-

morrow

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morrow may be sunshine—he loses on one article—he gains greatly on another; but with the Baker it is not so; his trade is all dull November weather; he jogs on in an even course, and all his hopes are, that by the strictest watchfulness, he may preserve his customers, and his character, and in these times of dearness of every article of life, may keep his head above water, and in these times of prejudice, preserve himself safe from the lamp-iron.

I verily believe that this is the truth as to 19 out of 20 of the trade. I feel satisfied that I am exaggerating, rather than diminishing the wealth of this class, when I give it as my opinion, (the result of enquiries too long to detail) that if the property of all this trade could be got at, it would not average more than 500%. each individual—I question if as much. If this is the fact, what must we think of their excessive profits!

But it has not been only out of doors that the clamour has been raised against the Bakers.—Whilst they have been hanging him in effigy without doors, they have been preparing the rack for him within. This band of patriots, whom I have before alluded to— who are to screen the country from the rapacity of the Millers—are to save the public from the dreadful effects produced by the obstinacy of the Bakers.—“Can it be tolerated, (say they) that in these times of necessary economy, when every great man finds it necessary to regulate

regulate the very appetites of his household—to apportion their very hunger to the times—when not only the quantity, but the quality of food is an object of just consideration—that these men, so liberally and nobly treated as they have been by the public—who have it now in their power effectually to manifest their gratitude, should still obstinately and wickedly refuse to *bake household bread.*”

In vain have the Bakers replied to this heavy charge: “We should like much to bake brown bread, if you will in the first place allow us as good a profit on it, as on white; and in the second, when we have baked it, will only persuade the people to eat it.”

In vain has *one Baker flated on oath, that the majority of his customers will not eat it—that the making of it is not as profitable—that the people who in the country are said to like brown bread, change their taste with the climate—and “forth become dainty when they arrive in London”—that the †Commiffary’s Flour (as produced before the Committee) might make Bread that soldiers on their march *could* eat, who could get no other; but that even soldiers would not purchase it in London at *any* price. In vain has ‡another Baker assured these projectors, that his customers

* Mr. Loveland, of Alderfgate Street.

† Mr. Brook Watfon.

‡ Mr. Johnfton, of the Strand.

have

have a foolish idea of not being able to work, with brown bread, as well as with white; and that having by mistake once mixed not quite half the quantity of standard wheaten Flour with his seconds, his customers would not have his Bread, though he tempted them with an abatement in price, of one-penny per quartern loaf.—And in vain has an eminent *phyfician given his opinion, that though brown bread may be as wholefome, yet it is not as nutritive as white; and that to do their ufual work, the people must have a greater quantity of it. All this has this been said to them, and much more—the impreflion is nothing—they will not believe it—they answer, “It is all, all prejudice. Brown bread is more nutritive, more palatable, more fuited to the constitution of Englifhmen, (who require a little acidity to correct their phlegm) and more profitable for the Bakers, than white. The people only fancy they don’t like it—we know that they do—they fhall have it, and if you cannot make them eat it, we can;—we know that you have fuch a diflike to making it, that if you were allowed an equal profit, you would play fome tricks with it to difgult the public, and therefore we will erect an oven and bake it ourfelves.”

To language fo dictatorial, and backed by Parliamentary fanction, what can the Bakers oppofe?—

* Dr. Lettfom.

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they have brought forward facts—they cannot be expected to find faith for their opponents. In the progress of the bill, however, through the Upper House, it occurred to some who exercised their reason and candour, how grossly harsh it must appear to considerate and unbiassed men, that whilst the bill held out encouragement to a vast body to send out it's thousands of loaves, at any price they chose to fix on them, without laying them under any restrictions of returns or affize, the Baker should not be permitted, at a moderate profit, to offer the same article to his customers. This consideration has produced a clause, to allow the Baker the same liberty of selling household bread, at an affize *regulated by the magistrate*. To be sure the boon is not the most liberal, and the distinction made between the parties not imperceptible; all is left to the patriotism of one, but the other they will not trust even in this article.

What I have before said as to the little danger to be apprehended by the millers from this vast company, is applicable to the Bakers. They have no occasion to fear this Colossal Brown Bread Oven—they have no reason to be alarmed;—if they go on with their project, the Bakers will effectually be benefited. This experiment to cram down the throats of the public a mixture they don't like, will not, in my opinion, succeed. They will have to encounter the public prejudice in their trial; and if they are successful, it will be time enough for

for the Bakers to begin; if not, they are saved the discredit, as well as the expence of the attempt. If the bread comes into general use, the public will give the preference to the Baker, if the commodity is equally good; and it is much more likely that the small quantity they make will preserve it's uniform good quality, than the immense batch necessary for the Company's oven. It is probable that in the outset, the proprietors will strain every nerve to extend the sale of their article.—For a time the Bakers may have cause for alarm; the novelty of the thing will attract attention, and induce trial. The public spirit of these speculators—the services they are rendering the community—the excellent quality of their bread, will be perhaps the theme of general discourse, and may reverberate through the circles of this great city. But the novelty will soon cease, and with it the effect. One or two batches of indifferent bread (and such they must expect now and then) will turn the current of public sentiment into a direction unfavourable to them. The public praise will grow luke-warm—in time it will produce indifference, if not disgust. The instant this becomes the case, their oven will scarcely find employment to pay for the fuel of it; they will not find it worth while to continue it, and the Bakers will hear no more of this Brown Bread scheme, than if it had never existed to torment and alarm them, except they hear of it, in an application to

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Parliament for indemnity for the damages the Company have sustained from musty corn, and mouldy bread, thrown upon their hands, in consequence of their patriotic and disinterested exertions to serve the Public.

One word more before I take leave of the Bakers; not in their defence, for they need it not. The King has not more peaceable industrious subjects, nor the people more valuable friends. The provision in the Bill given as a douceur to the Bakers, appears to me exceedingly absurd, and in its present state impracticable. The principle of giving to individuals (however respectable) a power to regulate the affize of the article, without some fixed rule to direct their judgment, is most dangerous. Little inclined as I am to favor any affize of Bread, if we are to have one, let it be a fixed one, depending on the price of the article you manufacture it from, not at the will of the magistrate. I am not afraid that the magistrate will be influenced by improper motives, but he is very liable to act from wrong information, or interested misrepresentation. The effect will be, that if he exercises his judgment at all, and does not invariably follow the conduct of some other magistrate, who gives the example to his brethren, there will be different prices of the same loaf in districts immediately adjoining each other.—If the affize set by the Lord Mayor of London, is to be the guide for all the neighbouring counties (and most

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most likely it would be) the weight of responsibility thrown upon him is immense—and you subject him to imputations and occasionally to an odium, which can scarcely be wished.

Under these circumstances, I think there will be much difficulty in giving this intended boon to the bakers. What objection would there have been after the evidence that has been given upon oath, of the lesser profit, on baking a sack of standard wheaten flower into bread, than of seconds, to ascertain the difference with some precision, and to permit the affize on the brown bread to be somewhat raised. If there was no other reason, why it should be higher, the difficulty of forcing its way to the public, and the loss that may be occasionally sustained in its progress to it, is surely a sufficient one.

I have now done with the dealers, in the home produce of this article.—Let us give a few pages to those who deal principally in the foreign supply, as the merchant importer, the corn factor, and the dealer or jobber in corn.—

And first of the
MERCHANT IMPORTER.

I shall not risk much in asserting that amongst all the respectable class of merchants, which this opulent nation has the honour to boast of, and

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to whom the country is in a great measure indebted, for the proud rank she holds amongst nations, there is not one to whom, at this instant of time, the public gratitude is more due than to the importer of foreign wheat. To his spirited and laudable efforts, do we owe for these last six months, the public tranquility; but for him those clamours raised against the high price of bread, would have been lifted up with reason against the actual want of it; but for him for many weeks, with all the œconomy we have practised, and all the retrenchments we have made, *there would have been none to eat.* Look at the Custom-House books, and you will be satisfied of the truth of this statement. In spite of the ill treatment they had received on a former occasion—notwithstanding the losses, which they have sustained from the fall of corn in 1796, after they had liberated the country by their unparalleled exertions, from the dangers of famine—though their application for indemnity on that occasion was neglected; yet the instant they were assured from the report of the Committee of the House of Commons respecting Corn, &c. made in February, “that government would abstain from all interference, in the purchases of corn, in the foreign markets”—as soon as they felt satisfied that the heavy purse of government would not be brought into the market to rival their speculations; they lost no time, in again flying to the public assistance, to relieve their necessities.

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The vast importation, unprecedented in the same period of time, manifests the great and active exertions they must have made.

Yet these are objects peculiarly selected for public obloquy—these are the people to whom the voice of prejudice has imputed the cruel attempt to raise the price of wheat, by keeping it back from the public. “The hoards they have locked up, (say the ignorant and deluded public) are excessive; scarcely a warehouse, that borders upon the Thames, but is filled with their wheat; so determined are they to keep it back from the people, that though their warehouses are groaning under the vast weight of it, they are not content with this monopoly within doors, but the vessels which arrive are kept unloaded for the same wicked purpose. Our eyes are daily insulted, with the crowds of labourers they employ, for the sole purpose of turning the corn, which is in danger of spoiling from their avarice; nay, rather than permit us to have it at a reasonable price, they have suffered a great part, absolutely to spoil on their hands, and they have been obliged to throw it away.”

Such, and far more absurd, have been the charges made, and the stories in circulation, against this respectable body of men, in the course of the spring and summer—stories so absurd, but yet so dangerous in their consequences, that it is impossible to treat them as they deserve. What, because you call those men monopolists, do you think them
fools?

fools? Can you seriously imagine, that men, however wicked, will so far forget their interest, as to suffer a commodity to perish on their hands, when the price is so extensive as to afford them an handsome profit—much more will you think them such idiots, as to destroy a commodity for which they can obtain any price? Is this consistent with a charge of avarice? Is this probable with men whom you accuse of an avidity for gain?

But how are these charges supported by facts—we will examine them with that attention which they really deserve, from the importance which their being established or confuted, is, to the future peace and welfare of society. And I will set out with conceding, that there have been in the course of the last spring and summer frequently considerable quantities of foreign wheat, warehoused by the merchants, not frequently from 50 to 80,000 quarters, and this at a time when the price of wheat was as high as 6*l.* per quarter—that they have kept it up in the warehouses, and dealt it out with a most sparing, and apparently parsimonious hand to the public—that there has been a great quantity in the lighterman's barges, which may have met the public eye in the act of turning—and a very considerable, and highly to be lamented quantity, so spoiled as to be utterly unfit for the use of man. All this I will allow—the statement in substance (except that of throwing any quantity, even a grain away) I am afraid is too true; the
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inference that is drawn from the premises no less false. Let us attempt to find the causes by examining this branch of the subject with a little attention.

From the north of Europe this country derives those supplies of grain, which in a greater or less degree she has for many years stood in need of. The chief importations are from Poland, Prussia, Russia and Denmark; the most considerable part from the two former. A small quantity of wheat is sent from Canada (about three years since there was a considerable importation from thence which turned out very bad) and some little from America; but the Americans chiefly export it in the state of flour, both from the advantage which the country receives in manufacturing its own wheat into flour, as well as from the freight being less, and the article in this shape (being sent over in barrels) keeping better in so long a voyage. It may be considered however, that the chief dependence of this country for her importation of corn, in times of scarcity, is from the northern powers. It is very well known that the harvest of 1799, throughout the north of Europe, was even worse than in this country—in quantity far from abundant—in quality most wretched. This was particularly the case in Polish Prussia, in all those provinces bordering on the Baltick; the harvest there was uncommonly late and long, and the continued autumnal rains after the corn was cut, sent it into
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the barns cold and chilly. Its state was little better when it came out from thence, nor was it improved by the long detention in port of the vessels on board of which it was shipped for this country, either by the severity of the season, or from want of convoy. On its voyage too, it encountered adverse winds—In many instances, the vessels were three times the usual length of time on their passage. All these causes, united with the original unfound state of it, rendered a great part of the grain on its arrival totally unfit for use. Many vessels which arrived in the months of April and May, had the whole of their cargoes in a state, not only unfit for immediate use, but very unlikely ever to become useable. Those cargoes which arrived in a state fit for sale, were immediately disposed of in the ship, either to the millers or to those factors who had orders for the coast. Those which were in a damaged state were instantly landed, and the importer obliged to be at the expence, and certain loss, of kiln-drying a part, which when mixed with the remainder rendered the whole in about a week or fortnight, fit for use. It was then immediately taken to market, and the millers by mixing it with English wheat, were enabled to make very tolerable flour of it. A great part however was too far gone to be restored, and this has remained an heavy burden and loss to the importer.

Every man who knows any thing of the nature of wheat will readily conceive in how wretched a state it

it was probable that wheat would arrive, which when shipped was soft and cold, and unfit for the grind stone, after lying three months in the hold of ship, in quantity sometimes to the amount of 2500 quarters—and how improbable it must be that on its arrival it could have been used by the trade.—Greatly exaggerated as the quantity has been, it is a subject for regret that there has even been so much warehoused as there has been. I have considered it so important to ascertain the quality and quantity of the corn so warehoused, from its having formed the general topic of conversation, that I have neglected no pains to obtain it. The result of the information I have received from sources, which justify my stating it with confidence, is, that according to the nearest estimate, which the nature of the thing will admit of, the quantity warehoused at the moment of the disturbances in London, did not exceed from 60 to 70,000 quarters; that two thirds alone of it, was in a state either for present or future use, and that the remaining third could only be brought into use, for fattening of cattle or hogs; and that the merchants have sustained very considerable losses from being obliged to warehouse their corn, so much so, as to make it probable, they will upon the whole be losers by their speculation.

If this statement is not contradicted (and I am well assured it cannot) what must we think of the idle charges of monopoly applied so confidently to the

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merchants; and what of the immense hoards, which their avarice has kept back from the people. The quantity thus warehoused that can be used for flour if it were as found as it is the contrary, would when manufactured into flour, furnish a supply equal to three weeks consumption of the metropolis alone. Now I will leave it to the judgment of my readers, whether it is not rather a circumstance of satisfaction, than disgust—rather demanding our gratitude, than our reproaches towards the importers; that they have reserved even this small pittance for you, when the home markets have so scanty a supply? Have not the inhabitants of the metropolis and its neighbourhood, much cause of consolation, in a circumstance, which has excited the resentment of many of them? If the importers keep back (as is supposed) this quantity from consumption, or deal it out with a sparing and even niggardly hand, to feed their avarice, instead of feeding the people, the public interest (however unintentionally on their part) would be promoted by it; instead of supplying the scantiness of a few markets, it would contribute to make good the deficiency of many; withheld when the supply was tolerable in quantity, it would furnish a resource in actual want. The advantage of such a conduct (whatever might be their motives) is incalculable; so true is it, that this monopoly of which we all complain—which forms the basis of public clamour, which alike constitutes the

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the substance of the grave addresses of Judges, and the intemperate harangues of counsel, to juries—as well as of inconsiderate appeals to the passions of the people, by their betters, in the resolutions and statements of the day—would, if true, be our best protection against the dreadful horrors of famine. Instead of lamenting the circumstance, would to God these hoards had been increased ten fold! We should then never have seen wheat at 7*l.* the load, or the quarter loaf at 1*s.* 6*d.*

Do not imagine that in confining my defence of the merchants to the monopoly of foreign wheats, I am ignorant of the strong idea which the people have entertained, that the warehouses, so loaded as before stated, have had in them a considerable quantity of English wheat, bought upon speculation—hoarded up for a better price—kept till mouldy and unfit for use—and then thrown (like the foreign wheat) into the Thames.

I shall not repeat my observations on the absurdity of this idea, but I shall answer it with this broad fact, *that English corn is not warehoused, but on its arrival, sold to the miller for immediate manufacture.* I am informed by a gentleman, on whose veracity and honour I can safely rely, and for which I would pledge myself to the public, (and who has besides the means of information) that in the whole of the last eight months, he has neither known from his own experience, nor has been able to find from enquiry an instance of a single quarter of English wheat warehoused.

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I do not say that the information of any one man on a subject in its operation so extensive, is sufficient to satisfy the public, that in no instance English wheat has been warehoused; but it is conclusive, *that such is not the practice*—and that is a sufficient answer to the charge.

The accusation therefore of Monopoly in its application to the conduct of the merchants for the last eight months has I trust been completely refuted. There never has been sufficient in the warehouses during that period, to constitute what in the present day, and under the present consumption can be termed monopoly; and that which has been so withheld, has been from necessity, not choice—to the certain injury—not to the possible advantage, of those who have so withheld it.

But satisfactory as I trust will be this answer to the majority of my readers, there may be some few (and those with no bad intentions, but deeply rooted in prejudice) so wedded to their opinions, and so misinformed, as to take advantage of the concession of the charge of warehousing the corn, and not satisfied with the mode of accounting for it, may imagine, that the damaged state was the consequence, not the cause, of warehousing it.

Though I am assured by those, through whose hands a *very* considerable part of it has passed from the vessels to the warehouses, and from those in whose custody it has been placed, that its quality was as I have stated—after having opposed the assertion of those who *must* know, to that of those
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whose information has been derived from men, who *may* not know the truth: it is only left for me to appeal to the reason of the thing and the probability on which side the truth is.

It has been before observed by me, that every man may be supposed to have a motive for his conduct. It will be, I doubt not, acknowledged that the only sufficient motive in this case must be interest—that it can be no other. Let us then try it by this test.

As soon as a merchant has a cargo of wheat come into the river, if he finds it fit for sale, he has nothing to do, but to take a sample to his factors, and it is instantly sold. The expence to him after its arrival is in this case trifling. If on the contrary (suppose it from any cause you will) he lands it, the expences are 1s. per quarter for lighterage, meterage and portorage, in conveying it from the vessel to the warehouse, and the expence of warehouse room 4s. 6d. per week, for every 100 quarters. This is not the only loss; for some additional arises from the natural waste, occasioned by the two removals, and some from re-measuring. This is the least expence he will or can sustain—If however, either from the state of the article when landed, or from its natural inclination to must, from length of keeping, when in any large quantity, it requires to be kiln-dried, a further charge arises of 2s. per quarter incurred by this operation. I have calculated with some degree of nicety from
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the information I have been able to attain, the average loss to the merchant, from this process, to which so much of the foreign wheat has been subjected, and I believe myself to be rather within the mark when I state it not to be less than from 7 to 8 per cent.—A severe drawback on profit!

If however his cargo arrives in a state not quite fit for immediate sale, and yet with no necessity for either warehousing or kiln-drying it; he then takes a middling course, and shifts it from the vessel, which has brought it, into the lighterman's craft, without landing it: he then musters all the hands he can procure, to dry it, by keeping it constantly turned. These are the labourers, who are to be seen daily and hourly on the Thames, occupied in this process which has so alarmed the public, and who whilst they were preparing that corn for instant sale, which had not entered the ports 48 hours, were supposed to have been attempting the recovery of wheat, which, for the want of room that avarice had pre-engaged, was entirely, or in a great degree spoiled.

But though this is a considerable saving of expence, it is attended with some. The merchant saves by this half landing, 1s. per quarter, provided it is sold and taken from the barges in a week. If however his judgment should have failed him in the first instance, or many circumstances beyond his controul should have prevented the success of his attempts to render it fit for sale, within the time

time limited, his charges will advance so considerably for every subsequent week that it remains there, that it would have been more for his interest to have landed it at first; and every day that he keeps it from the public must be a day of sorrow and loss to him. Thus, under no circumstances but of immediate sale, can the merchant avoid a serious and unthought of expence.

Is it then to be credited, that any man under the accumulated expences I have stated, who could avoid them all by bringing his corn instantly to market, would not do it? Is it in the least probable, that at a time when wheat is 6l. per quarter, the merchant should so little consult his apparent interest, as to land and warehouse his corn under the expences already stated? (not forgetting the very serious additional one from the loss of interest on his capital) on a speculation so absurd as an higher price, when the article is already so extravagantly dear? We must have an unaccountable portion of credulity to give our belief to such an idea. The supposition is itself improbable, if the fact was not directly the reverse.

Believe me, it is not so, my countrymen.—These men, whom you have injured by suspicion as unfounded as mischievous, have served you with an active and liberal spirit, which deserves your gratitude, not your reproaches. To them you are indebted for the bread you are at this moment eating—but for them, instead of complaining (and

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justly) of its price, you would be vainly searching for the article—instead of declaiming against even its quality (which by the bye has been rendered as good as it is by their active exertions) you would feel the sad deficiency in quantity. They cannot help the state in which it arrives. The injury to them from this circumstance is excessive—it has robbed them of their profits and subjected them to severe loss.—Increase not then the severity by your unworthy suspicions.

Think not that they cannot bring forward proofs of the zeal with which they have adventured in your cause. Look at the following statement of the imports of corn from January to September; and you will be satisfied of the extent of their services to you.

An account of the quantity of foreign grain, meal, and flour, imported into England between the 5th of January 1800, and the 1st of September following:

			<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>bu.</i>	
Wheat	—	—	721,993	4	
			<i>Cwt.</i>	<i>qr.</i>	<i>lb.</i>
Flour	—	—	176,292	1	20
			<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>bu.</i>	
Rye	—	—	114,176	3	
			<i>Cwt.</i>	<i>qrs.</i>	
Meal	—	—	11,882	3	
			<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>bu.</i>	
Indian	—	—	4,179	1	

Meal

			<i>Cwt.</i>	
Meal	—	—	425	
			<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>bu.</i>
Barley	—	—	33,284	1
Beans	—	—	11,159	3
Oats	—	—	308,347	
Peas	—	—	10,071	3
			<i>Bolls.</i>	
Oatmeal	—	—	1,165	

When we peruse this statement (for the correctness of which I will vouch) does it not appear astonishing, that such efforts in so short a period could have been made? In no country but this, and by no merchants but those which England boasts, could it have been effected. When the average imports in wheat for the preceding four years, have not been 540,000 for the whole year; and one of these years, a year of great scarcity, what must we think of 720,000 quarters (exclusive of Indian wheat) imported in eight months? One cannot by argument add to the weight of this fact, nor to the merit which the merchant may justly lay claim to.

Reflect then, I intreat you, before it be too late, on the importance of encouraging this valuable spirit of enterprize. The disappointments which the merchants have already experienced, the prospect of future loss, which the bad state of the grain and the expences of keeping it present, together

with the recollection of the treatment they formerly experienced from government, require that the public should rather excite than damp their ardor to serve them. Consult your own interests, and let no one persuade you that clamour is truth, or assertion fact. Be assured that the public prejudice directed against this body will recoil upon itself—always dangerous in its progress, it is most alarming in this. Think not that the high price of bread is likely to be diminished by checking the inclination of the merchant to risk his capital in importing it, or by those groundless suspicions of his conduct, and charges of monopoly, which if encouraged, must have the effect of raising the price instead of lowering it; for which of the various branches through which it passes in its progress from the vessel to the baker's shop, will not think himself (and reasonably so) entitled to extra remuneration for the risk he runs, from public prejudice, whilst the article is passing through his hands.

THE CORN FACTOR.

I shall not extend this pamphlet (which will become more bulky before I have finished it than I intended or could have imagined) by observations at any length on this branch of the Trade. I am informed it includes in it men of worth and of property, many respectable and industrious members of

of society. But what I have said of the Flour Factors, is, in principle, applicable to them.—Their business is with commission not speculation. The greater the plenty of corn at market, the more they sell and the greater their profits. It is evident that their interest is to bring it forwards, not to keep it back—to increase their commissions, not to diminish them.

* I understand that sometimes the factor has corn to sell on his own account, but that is a very rare case, and to no considerable extent.—However, if that be the case, the public can sustain no injury—for after what I have stated of the small quantity warehoused at all, and which, in the aggregate, could scarcely be thought dangerous as a monopoly in the hand of one or a few merchants, the danger would be much lessened by a division of ownership amongst another and a numerous class of persons in the Trade, if the fact were so.

Nothing but prejudice could bring a serious charge of injuring the public, against these persons. That they are included, can only be accounted for, because they are concerned in a Trade which supplies the daily wants of men, not on those terms on which they like to be supplied. They must be content to have their share of reproach, and must console themselves under a consciousness of not having deserved it.

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THE LIGHTERMAN AND WARE-
HOUSEMAN.

I have taken these together, because the employments of the lighterman and warehousman are usually found united in the same person; and nothing but a conviction in my mind (warranted by the experience of the last month) that every class of persons in the remotest degree connected with the corn trade are at this moment of popular resentment comprised in the obloquy so liberally dealt out to the trade in general, could induce me to take up the time of my reader, or to offer these gentlemen the apparent affront I do, in considering it necessary to defend them from an imputation of their being monopolists. One should have thought it impossible that men, who from the nature of their business, must be merely agents of others, could be the subject of a charge so extraordinary; yet the very circumstance of their keeping a barge to land, or a warehouse to contain corn; the having one employed, and the other filled, is sufficient (in these times of general prejudice against the trade) to mark them out as objects of public reproach. A great deal of this arises from general ignorance of the nature of their employ. It is only understood by men conversant in business; and perhaps limited, in a great measure, even to those in the neighbourhood of the metropolis.

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metropolis. The bulk of the people throughout England consider the man who has his barges and warehouses laden with corn as a great and alarming monopolist, who has landed all he could to keep it from consumption, till the price equals the demands of his avarice, reserving till that period in his barges for the same wicked purposes that which his warehouses could not contain.—No inquiry is made to whom the corn belongs. He and his men are constantly employed about it; and they deem it impossible (perhaps the highest compliment that can be paid him) so much active industry could be exerted for the benefit of another's property. The fact of possession constitutes his crime; and satisfied of this, the public make no further inquiries. One should scarcely have believed that this could have been the case in the neighbourhood of the Trade, where every man might have made himself acquainted with its nature, had it not been established beyond a doubt by the language and conduct of the mob who assembled in Mark-lane on the 15th of September. The terms of reproach and insult so liberally bestowed on the trade in general, were far from excluding the above class; and if the efforts of the civil power had been ultimately too weak to have repressed the commotion, the lighterman and warehousman would have been amongst the first objects of public vengeance. ' Why don't you let
' us have the wheat you have got in your barges
' and

‘ and warehouses, instead of hoarding it up till it
 ‘ is spoiled?’ was the address of the mob to the
 gentlemen concerned in this trade, as they passed
 to the Corn Exchange. You could not take a boat
 on the water, between Black-friar’s-bridge and
 Lime-house, the owner of which did not entertain
 you on your passage with similar complaints; point-
 ing out the warehouses and barges so stored—im-
 puting similar honourable motives to the owners,
 and mentioning many of them by name.—Nor was
 it in the streets only that language of this tenor
 was used; at the tables of well-informed men
 were daily to be heard invectives against the own-
 ers of vessels and warehouses stored with corn, re-
 presenting them as gorging themselves to the full
 with the article, and combining with the rest of
 the trade to raise the price.—In such places you
 had even an attempt at reasoning on the subject—
 Driven from the strong hold which the common
 people have taken, that possession is the proof of
 property, and the only necessary evidence to evince
 the guilt of the possessors; they argued the subject as
 if the explanation of the nature of their business was
 inconclusive to establish their innocence. “It is im-
 ‘ possible to believe (say they) that with the oppor-
 ‘ tunities these men have, when their craft is unem-
 ‘ ployed, and their warehouses unfilled, they should
 ‘ not speculate in Corn on their own account.”
 Arguing on the probability of such a conduct, one
 might urge, that in the present enlarged state of
 the

the importation of Corn during the last spring and
 summer (and for the truth of which I refer my
 readers to the statement I have before given,) there
 is no doubt but the constant demand for lighterage
 and warehouse room would find employment for
 the most numerous craft, and extensive warehouses,
 that the trade could furnish; that the very atten-
 tion necessary to speculation, would be in a great
 degree inconsistent with the personal care necessary,
 (and uniformly to be found) in this line of business;
 and that the inconvenience they would probably
 sustain, from not being able to accommodate their
 customers, by employing their vessels and filling
 their granaries with their own corn, would subject
 them to greater certain loss than could be com-
 pensated by any prospect of gain, under prices so
 excessive as the present.

It is in vain to use these arguments (which ap-
 pear to be so conclusive) to many; the answer is
 “We do not understand the nature of their busi-
 ness, nor the interest they have in not deviating from
 it; but we have no doubt that these men are links
 in the same chain of dreadful monopoly and of cruel
 combination to raise the price of corn.”

Such is their language—Such are their argu-
 ments.

Nor is it only amongst the uninformed on sub-
 jects of business, that this idea has been encour-
 aged. I have heard respectable tradesmen relate
 the immense quantities of corn, hoarded by men in

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their warehouses on the river, to which they attributed the present scarcity, and stating by name the persons so accused; who on enquiry turned out to be mere warehousemen not interested in one grain of the corn so housed. In the course of the autumn, a report was circulated at first in self-important but low whispers, and afterwards increased in openness and extended circulation, of one gentleman in most extensive employment, as a lighterman and warehouseman, and to whose warehouses, or to whose care the greatest part of the foreign wheat has been committed, who was enjoying a few days relaxation from business at a watering place, having absconded for fear of prosecution for monopoly; and he had no means of recovering his credit, and refuting the charge, than by quitting the society he was enjoying, and recording his appearance at the corn exchange, as well as at every other place where publicity could attend his appearance*.

But

* This reminds one of a similar report at the same time, which had for its object a worthy alderman (in whose company the above gentleman was reported to have absconded) said to have fled to the Continent, to avoid the public resentment, excited against him, from being supposed instrumental to the then scarcity, by the monopoly he had effected of foreign wheat for exportation. This rumour, from the distance might not reach him abroad; but on his return it is said that he found himself compelled to eat and drink his

But so unaccountable is prejudice, so misdirected in all its objects, and so careless of enquiring its foundation that whilst we lament, we cease to wonder at its operations. How else can we reconcile the charges of monopoly, as applied to this trade, the nature of which one should have thought, would have disarmed suspicion of every thing on which it could have fastened. If I am to judge generally of this class by those of it whom I do know, they sustain a very different character in society,

his way to innocence, through the Taverns and public places of London and its vicinity. This to many persons (especially under the extreme heat of the weather) might have been attended with serious effects; perhaps this species of fiery ordeal could not have met two gentlemen so prepared to endure it. The natural conviviality of their temper and habits, together with constitutions not utterly unused to such *hardships*, were protections against the serious injury that others might have found. May they long be enabled to partake of those convivialities to which they do so much credit, and to exercise that hospitality which honourable and successfully-directed industry, has entitled them to command, unruffled by charges, they know and feel, cannot be deserved by them, or by imputations which only disgrace those who bring them!

Before I close this note, let me remark as a proof how generally prejudice confounds its objects, that the wheat said to be hoarded up by this gentleman and his partners, could not have amounted to more than 50 *quarters* even by possibility, as that is the full amount purchased by the house in the period of the last *fifteen months*, either on account of themselves or any other person; either directly, or indirectly.

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than that of enemies to the public interest, or of improper attention to their own. To an unremitting, and occasionally most toilsome application to the business of their employers, always directed to the public advantage, and particularly so at this moment, they unite the liberal, enlarged spirit of the English Merchant. The national stock of industry receives no little accession from them. The expedition with which they unload the vessels of grain on their arrival in the river, and the personal attention and care, which they bestow on it, in its progress to, and whilst it is in their warehouses, entitles them (perhaps at this time more than at any other) not only to the thanks of their employers, but to the gratitude of the people; who may be assured, that scanty and slow as has been the supply of foreign corn brought to the market, it would have been much more scanty, and the quality still more indifferent, had it not been for these gentlemen, against whom, in that spirit of indiscriminate reproach, which is the unhappy fashion of the day, has been advanced the serious charge of contributing to the public distress—a charge which nothing but the extreme of wickedness or ignorance could bring, or of folly and credulity for a moment listen to.

I will not offend them by extending their defence.

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THE JOBBER OR MIDDLE MAN.

I hear my readers exclaim, “What will you undertake the defence of these men too? Will you attempt to convince the public, that these objects of general indignation, owe that indignation to prejudice and ignorance—that men whose notoriety of combination to enhance the prices of all kinds of provisions, and especially of corn, admits of no contradiction, are not the enemies of the public—the oppressors of the poor—the pests of society? Can you attempt the defence of men, whose crimes stand on record—whose convictions meet you in every street and alley of the metropolis—against whose nefarious practices, it has been necessary to seek refuge under the protection of the law—and against whom scarcely a day passes that there is not a serious charge of this nature brought, in the daily papers? Can you believe the world to be so wicked and cruelly unjust, as to brand with charges of this nature, men who by possibility can be innocent? Withhold then your pen from the attempt to defend characters so notoriously indefensible; contaminate not your pages with an attempt, which must end in your and their disgrace, and which will weaken the force of your arguments in favor of those you have already brought forward, and for whom, by possibility, something may be said.”

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I am not insensible to the arduous task I have undertaken throughout, and peculiarly in this instance. I am very sensible of the more than common prejudice entertained against this class of the trade. I know how lavish has been the abuse, and how violent the reproaches against them—but though this may increase my difficulty, it does not lessen my ardor—I never promised to flatter the passions of those whom I am addressing, but to speak the language of truth and candour. I shall do so now—I shall not withdraw the mite of my assistance, because these people stand most in need of it. If a greater degree of prejudice has encountered them, a less degree of justice probably has been done them. We are not to give credit to all we hear—even of abuse. At least we ought not to assume as proofs of general guilt, the alledged (or even proved) offence of an individual; or to suppose that a body of men, may not be highly useful, and even necessary to the state, one member of which (or for argument's sake allow many) has rendered himself by his conduct obnoxious to public justice, and deserving of public opprobrium.

Amongst all the classes of persons concerned in the general and necessary article of corn, who contribute in any degree to its progress from the moment of its growth, to the period of consumption, there is none (I speak with confidence and challenge contradiction) to whom the publick interest is more indebted, or who form a more useful and highly

highly valuable part, than these men against whom the charges are most abundant, and the abuse most gross.

Perhaps to them we owe throughout the kingdom, what in the metropolis we owe to the importer, that regular supply of corn, and that useful husbandry of the article, which in times of scarcity is the only remedy against actual want—which, whilst it may have contributed to a considerable rise of the article, has benefited the country much more by the salutary alarm, and timely retrenchment it has produced, than it has injured it by any advantage these men can have obtained from an advance in the price.

The conduct of the middle man, in periods of approaching scarcity, may be resembled to that of an attentive and skilful physician. Like him, his observations made from time to time, have enabled him, to discover the disorder, and to suggest the only remedies which the case admits of; he finds the disorder beyond immediate cure, and the disease too deeply rooted to admit of instant extirpation. Instead of administering the violent dredge of an empiric, which might give instant relief, but which in its consequences, would gradually undermine the constitution of his patient, and be inevitably followed by premature (however protracted) dissolution, he prescribes with the skilful hand of professional knowledge those palliating and emollient remedies, suited to the weak frame of his patient,

patient, and which by their mild and gradual operations may in time restore him to his wonted vigour and strength.—It is true he will expect for this an handsome fee—he will demand a liberal and perhaps a profuse recompense—far beyond the accustomed claims of his profession; but is he not entitled to it—has he not earned it? Remember there is great reason to believe he has saved your life, that he has added considerably to your days, and to the happy enjoyment of them, by restoring your frame, in danger of suffering by your imprudence, to that accustomed health for which too high a price can scarcely be paid.

Such, and so skilful and prudent, has been the conduct of this man, against whom you all with one accord lift up your hands. The information which the middle man has obtained of the country, with regard to its produce, the wisdom and experience which he has brought to the only subject that engages his attention, enables him to speak his sentiments to the public (more strongly than by a thousand orations) in the price, at which he disposes of to you the produce of the farmer's land. He soon ascertains the extent and depth of that wound, which Providence has been pleased to inflict on the nation. He tells you there is no immediate remedy for the scarcity, though on your conduct it depends, as to its being followed by actual want—that it behoves you to manage with frugality that which you can procure, as the only means to
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avoid a future greater scarcity and an increased price. This was the language he used to you in the beginning of the last winter, and (fortunately for the country) its reasoning and good sense was acted upon by the nation at large; if it had not, I am well convinced; that the months of July and August would have found us without bread to eat.

Nor let the public deceive themselves, by imagining, that the middle man adds in any considerable (or even in an unnecessary) degree to the price, by stepping in between them and the grower. Though our maxims of commerce will in these days receive little credit from their conformity to the opinions of even the great Lord Coke, (who if he had lived in these times, would, I think, have differed on this subject from some of his brethren,) yet I am very willing to adopt his sentiments on the rise of the article, in consequence of the hands through which it passes to the consumer, provided he will allow me, to insert the word *unnecessary*. If he means to say, that an article becomes dearer, when it passes through those hands, which are *necessary* to convey it with most promptness, and advantage to the public, I am completely at issue with him—I believe no such thing. I am assured the fact is otherwise—that the price is rather less, than greater to the public. Do people imagine, that if the farmer was himself the corn dealer also, and sold his single quarter of oats, or his bushel

or peck of other grain to the consumer, the article would be cheaper than it is? That if he was to add tradesman to his character, the public would either be as well or as cheaply served as at present? Do you think he could afford to give you his time, and to be out of his capital, for nothing? Are you not aware, that uniting these two distinct branches, would interfere with that hourly personal attention necessary to the successful conduct of his farm?

He would in fact, by being both, be neither. The open manly spirit of the English yeoman, would degenerate into the low cunning of the petty chandler, and the effect would inevitably be, that so far from the public being served cheaper, they would not only have to pay for the time and capital of the farmer, so employed, but for the certain loss which he would sustain either from ignorance of the business, or from the blending two concerns, distinct in their nature, and in the qualities requisite for conducting them to any successful end.

I would beg to remark, that in the article of wheat, the public seem under a misapprehension (as indeed they have been throughout) as to the business of the jobber with it. I have before observed that the wheat for the consumption of the metropolis and its vicinity goes immediately from the miller to the baker, where the distance is not considerable from the mill to town; but that in those cases where the assistance of a third person on the spot (as where it comes from the country mills)

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is necessary, the flour factor is the middle man. The jobber has nothing to do with it—he never deals in English wheat, and very rarely in foreign, except in consequence of orders from his correspondents along the coast, and which have almost been peculiar to the present spring and summer, when instead of the London market being supplied as formerly from the coast, the latter has been supplied by them, and not unfrequently so as to considerably affect the price here.

It is exactly the same in country markets. The jobbers, whether from the large sums necessary and which they cannot spare from their other business, or from the millers requiring not their assistance, do not speculate in wheat. The jobber may possibly deviate from this rule in the case of a great inequality in price (either from the causes which I have before allowed to be possible, or from adventitious circumstances) in markets not far distant from each other, by flying to the relief of the suffering one; and whatever may be his profit, if he relieves the scarcity (and of course the price) he is rendering the most useful service to the country, and whatever be his motives, entitled to the thanks of every man in the neighbourhood.

If it had not been that one of this class has been brought forward as a state delinquent, and treated with more than common severity and harshness, I should close my account of the jobber, with only a few observations on the nature of his business—

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But the interest I feel in (what appears to me) the unmerited obloquy, to which this individual, and with him the whole class, has been consigned, impose on me the duty, not only to explain (which I shall do very briefly) the nature of this man's traffick, but to make some remarks on that trial which has been the ground of a treatment so cruel.

The business of the Jobber on the great scale it admits of in the metropolis, is to purchase the cargoes of oats, barley, beans, &c. &c. imported at this time in quantities so considerable. To the Jobbers are these cargoes sold by the Factors, and by them dealt out to the public, or in some cases exported again to the coast. The Jobber is the middle man between the merchant and consumer; he enables the former, by immediately purchasing the whole of his article, to re-employ his capital instantly. He enables him to return immediately to market with his money, and to supply the public with a new cargo. By these quick returns of his capital, and the short detention of his vessel, the merchant can afford his goods at a price infinitely less than in any other case he would be able. On the part of the public, the Jobber supplies each individual according to his wants and demands; and for which though he pays somewhat more than the Jobber pays the merchant, he certainly pays less (exclusive of avoiding much inconvenience) than if he bought the quantity he
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stands in need of from the merchant himself. Suppose the factor had no middle man to whom he could dispose of his employer's cargo, but was obliged to sell it piece-meal to the consumer, in the quantity suitable to his wants, either in the vessel, or in the warehouse, if he chose to land it. If in the former, the difficulty of access will raise the price to the consumer; and the length of time, the hands he must keep in pay, and the uncertainty when the vessel will be unloaded, with the loss of interest on his capital, will wonderfully enhance the price to the merchant; all which, together with an extra charge incurred by the risk he runs of not disposing of his goods, before the price that he could originally afford them at suffered a depression, will also necessarily fall on the consumer. In the latter case, to many of these charges, the merchant adds as a strong set-off against the advantage he obtained from dismissing his vessel (and which is not of the benefit it would have been, had he at the same time parted with his cargo) the expences of lighterage, portorage, warehouse-room, &c. &c.—loss by remeasuring—expence of people to attend the sale, and lastly, the impositions he would be liable to, from those whom he must employ in this petty traffick. Whatever may be his expences in either case, must and will eventually be paid by the consumer. A thinking mind, revolving this subject for a few minutes, assisting his judgment by even the most favourable calculation of the expence,
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which this mode of transacting the business would occasion to the merchant, will soon be satisfied that the public has the article, not only in the manner and quantity, best suited to its wants, wishes and convenience, but also on terms the most reasonable.

The hackney coach-master, the livery stable-keeper, the corn chandler, the gentleman and the tradesman, can alike, by means of the jobber, procure the amount of their respective and limited wants with facility. The extra-price they pay for this accommodation is in reality a gain. It can readily be conceived, that if they had to convey it from the vessel or the warehouse themselves, even at the price that the jobber pays for it, they would be no gainer; and it would be idle to suppose that under the disadvantages already stated the merchant could so afford it. In truth, half of the persons who consume the articles, could not fetch the article, if they were so inclined.

If the jobber too, in time of scanty importation and short supply, finds that the markets in the vicinity of town are stocked beyond their wants, and of consequence low in price, he goes thither, and brings to town that excess, which when taken, is not missed there, but renders incalculable service here. If on the contrary, they have a short and dear market in the country, he carries thither the necessary supply, from London. Nor is the jobber in the country less useful. His business is to purchase

purchase at the best market of the farmer (or if in the neighbourhood of London of the factor) that produce in the gross, which he deals out again in small quantities to the inn keeper, corn chandler, farmer, or gentleman, who are not able perhaps to procure a supply of their limited wants from the farmer, without subjecting him to inconvenience, and themselves to extra charge. The jobber equalizes by his alternate supply of each, those variations of prices, which, in the vast concern of corn, must inevitably arise in markets even near to each other. He is frequently enabled to render the most essential service to the country, when its markets are ill supplied, either from actual scarcity, or from a partial and temporary withholding of the article. In these times he pours in a supply, and by this means draws the commodity forward, if there is any, or supplies the wants of the neighbourhood, if it is really exhausted of the article. He is indeed frequently able (yet with no inconsiderable profit to himself) to supply the market, (though he has the expence of distant carriage) on terms lower, than it can be afforded on the spot. He frequently does so, and the public, all but the grower, reap the benefit. The assistance too which the great corn dealer in town gives to the merchant; in the country is given to the farmer; he buys of him those different articles in the gross, which the miller wants not, and deals them out in lesser parcels according to the wants of the neighbourhood.

bourhood. On the other hand, those articles of feed corn, which the farmer wants, the jobber furnishes him with, to the great convenience of the former, which if he were to endeavour to obtain himself from the market where they were best to be procured, would rob him of time he could ill spare from his home, as well as add, instead of lessen, the price he must pay for them.—By this subdivision of labour, and of capital, two persons obtain a comfortable livelihood, where one who united both branches would be in danger of starving.

Be assured that this is the case; that the jobber or middle-man, whether in town or country, is the most useful oeconomic medium through which the wants of this vast country (taking every circumstance into consideration) can be supplied. The greater wonder is, that it is supplied so well, and on terms so reasonable, as to the gain of those through whose hands the articles pass.

The subject too of their profits, deserves some little consideration.—Doubt not that every thing of this kind is always exaggerated.—When men are held up to the public indignation, the censure of the world is never limited to that which is founded in truth. To effect our ends, it is not sufficient to paint them dark, they must be jet black. When therefore, in the true spirit of censure, we represent the conduct of those we mean to injure in the eyes of the public, we sometimes forget, how possible it is, that we may counteract our own views, by the excess of those imputations we have

have lavished on the objects of our prejudice, and which from their nature cannot be true. How truly in point is the charge of immense profits brought against the jobbers by their enemies, and borrowed from what passed on the examination of an evidence (or which was supposed to pass in *his mind*) at a trial which I shall shortly notice. If we are to believe these charges, his profits are almost beyond calculation—50 per cent. per ann. will not content him—he must have 100, 200, and in some cases even 500 per cent.

It is in this as in every thing else, where an object is to be answered.—The public have been taught that every man who stands between them and the grower of corn, contributes to the price of the quartern loaf, and that this man does so more than any other—he is therefore to be crushed—and to do it one must not be over-nice in the means—he has once in his life perhaps made at the rate of 1000; or 2000 per cent. per ann. on an article. This casual advantage is instantly rendered the permanent, or not unusual profit of his trade, whilst the losses which have not unfrequently been at the same rate, are sunk in the account. Torrents of abuse are to be poured upon him for the unconscionableness of his gains, but no notice is to be taken, not even one word of commiseration to be heard for his losses, however severe.

But what is the idea we have of the word profit? Do the public think that it is the difference of

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price which the feller receives, from that which he pays, for the article? Whoever takes this definition as a correct one, wanders very far from the truth. For instance, a jobber buys at Mark lane this Monday 50 quarters of oats at 40s. per quarter—he sells them on that day fortnight at two guineas. According to this idea of the word profit, he gains at the rate of 130 per cent. per ann. by this bargain. No such thing—he more likely makes nothing by it. When he bought it, it was part of a cargo, on board a ship or a lighterman's craft—he has since landed and warehoused it. When he comes to reckon up his lighterage, portorage, warehouse rent, loss by remeasuring, interest of his money, &c. &c. if he has cleared 3*d.* per quarter, he must consider himself a fortunate man—and yet the publick, when they find him make at the rate of 5 per cent. in a fortnight, instantly cry out upon the unconscionable rogue, and blazon his profits through every street of the town, without waiting to examine, with what expences this profit has been burdened, and in what proportion it has been by this means diminished.

Very different however, is their conduct, when he has sustained a loss; you hear no publication of this. When oats fell from 56*s.* to 30*s.* in one fortnight (or little more) when those who were obliged for want of money, to part with this article, lost *more than half the capital embarked in it*, we heard not a word of it. No—this would not have answered

answered the purpose; which was to excite the publick resentment against this class, by representing them as always gainers, but never losers.

Yet if the truth is to be spoken, it will be found in a very different statement of the subject. Liable, occasionally to considerable gains, and equally so at times to heavy losses, they conduct their business at an hazard equal to any other branch of the trade—the whole of the concern in corn is a most hazardous one—the game is played at very high stakes, and those who play at it, must occasionally meet with some profits, which in the regular course of trade, where little hazard is run, may seem at first sight immense. If the jobber did not, it would be impossible for him to go on—his business would not support him.

His interest however leads him never to risk the keeping his property by him long, especially in times of probable fluctuation in price—his general maxim to which he invariably adheres when possible, is, quick returns and small profits.—In proportion to the length of time in which he has been out of his money he expects a proportionate recompense.—If you do not oblige him to land the property he has bought, but will work it out of the ship at no expence to him, he will be content with a trifling advantage—if on the contrary he must be at the expence of landing it, &c. &c. he looks for an advance in price; but do not believe that in this case he is not frequently mistaken. From specu-

lations which promised advantage at the outset, he is often obliged to close his account on terms which have snatched from him the advantage of many former bargains, and there is only left to him the hope of better success in future.

Such often is the lot of this man, whom you brand with every epithet of reproach, and condemn to public infamy. You have heard that one of this class has been convicted by a jury of his country of the crime of regrating, and though you do not know all the circumstances, yet you feel satisfied his crime must have been of the blackest dye, because the jury were told on that occasion, that a verdict of condemnation "would carry glad tidings to the people, and particularly to the poor." Of consequence, he must be considered as one amongst the number of those who are represented as preying on the vitals of the people, and by their avarice contributing to the publick misery. You consider him no longer in the real character he deserves—that of the middle-man, who stands between you and the grower for the mutual advantage of both. You see in him only your bitterest enemy, officiously interposing his offices, where you neither wish them, nor think you can receive ought but deadly injury from them.

What then are the circumstances of this dreadful crime which has so increased your wonted prejudice against this class? What can an individual have done, so as to attach ignominy to *all* those persons

persons who pursue the same branch of trade with himself. If a man has been convicted of the monstrous crime of regrating, let us examine, whether he has been convicted of that, which at the time he did it, he thought wrong—whether he carried to the act, the mind and intention necessary to constitute *crime*—whether he has not been indirectly encouraged by the highest authority in the country, to do what he has done—whether, in legal strictness, he did the act at all; and lastly, whether he has done any thing, which every other man with the same opportunities, not in his business only, but in any of the various branches of trade, to be met with in the kingdom, does not do every day of his life, without the smallest suspicion that he is doing that, which either the laws of his country, or of morality, forbid.

I must premise, that the report of the Trial which I have read, is that printed by Ridgway, and stated to have been taken in short hand by a Barrister.

This person, Mr. John Rusby, was indicted for regrating, or re-selling in the same market, and on the same day, 30 quarters of oats, part of a lot of 90 quarters purchased by him in the morning, and by which re-sale he obtained a profit of 2s. per quarter.—Every man acquainted with the business of the Corn Exchange, or who has taken the trouble to inform himself on this head, will find, that it has been the constant and universal practice,

practice, to re-sell any part of a commodity bought, where there was either an advantage on such re-sale—where the quantity originally bought was larger than either party wanted, and of course a mutual accommodation—or where the lot, after it was bought, was repented of by the purchaser either from the price, or quality.—Whatever might be his reasons for the re sale, no one objected to a practice which had existed beyond the memory of the oldest man at the Corn Exchange—which was a general convenience to the trade—which facilitated instead of interrupting the commerce—and from which the public could sustain no possible injury equal in amount to what the restriction on the free agency of the jobber would inevitably occasion.—This was done openly, even when it was known, that there were statutes which prohibited it.—They were generally considered, though in force, as not likely to be acted on, and that which was known to be illegal, was scarcely practised with secrecy, or covertly.—But when the more enlightened spirit of Commerce began to dawn upon the nation, it was considered possible, that these restraints, though disregarded by the bold, might have the effect of restraining the timid (but not less useful) members of the trade, in the free exercise of their industry and capital.—Men of intelligence, and those best acquainted with the true principles of commerce (at that time a science in the mere state of childhood) exerted their influence with

with the legislature, to procure the abolition of those laws, which they considered (and justly) as tending, if put in force, to the utter destruction of that commerce, and of those very interests they were meant to uphold and protect.—This measure, the result of sound reasoning, was greatly aided in its progress, by the transcendent talents and comprehensive mind of a gentleman * who though since dead, has raised for himself a monument “ære perennius” in the grateful affection of the nation, by the important services which he rendered not only to his country, but to the whole of civilized Europe, in the political writings which employed the few last years of a life, usefully throughout, engaged in the public service. This gentleman considered the freedom of trade as the foundation of national prosperity, and those restrictions and prohibitions, which prejudice and vain fear had engendered in the early periods of its growth, as fungous excrescences exhausting its vital powers, and effectually and most banefully checking its progress to maturity.—The nation felt the sentiment to be just, and instantly repealed the whole of those acts which had remained on the Statute Book, a monument of the poverty of its principles (though nearly as a dead letter) from the time of Edward VI.—The gradual increase of the prosperity of commerce since the year 1772, the period in which this repeal took place, is the best

* Mr. Edmund Burke.

panegyric on the wisdom of the measure. The preamble of the Bill is particularly worthy of attention at this time, when the propriety of restoring them to the statute book, has been suggested from high authority (I think not in the moment of reflection), because it shews the spirit with which it adopted those sound and conclusive principles (and almost the very language) of that great and luminous character Dr. Adam Smith, which were afterwards submitted to the world in the able and comprehensive work of that writer. It stated that, "Whereas it hath been found by *experience*; that the restraints laid by several statutes upon the dealing in *Corn, Meal, Flour, Cattle*, and other fundry sort of victuals, by *preventing a free trade* in the said commodities, have a tendency to discourage the growth and *enhance the price* of the same—which statutes if put in execution *would bring great distress* on the inhabitants of many parts of the kingdom, and *particularly on the cities of London and Westminster*, be it therefore enacted, &c. &c.

Now is it possible to conceive a more complete acknowledgement of error—a more candid and manly confession of the imprudent conduct it had hitherto pursued in preventing the benefit of a free trade, and of the effect which had been in consequence produced, in the great distress which the people had suffered throughout the kingdom; but especially in those parts, where the freedom of trade

trade is essentially necessary, to the daily regular supply of its inhabitants?

Are these principles then unwise and imprudent to be acted upon in the year 1800, which were deemed not only salutary, but necessary in the year 1772? Does the freedom of trade require less protection or encouragement, when the support of ten millions of inhabitants look to it for the supply of their wants and wishes, than when six or seven millions only depended on its aid?—Are its principles to be disputed at this day, when we have witnessed the salutary effects of their operations, in the almost unlimited expansion of that commerce to nearly its acmé of perfection since that period? Look to the imports and exports of that year, reflect on the state of the internal trade in 1772, and then say whether the most sanguine could have ventured to form an expectation so vast as that which has been realized in that period. To what is it to be attributed, if not to the enterprising spirit and active industry of the merchants, fostered by the encouraging hand of legislative protection, and by the abolition of those statutes, which had hitherto restrained men from the open employment of their capital and industry in that manner, which, whilst it accords with their views and inclinations, is best calculated to promote the real interest of commerce, and to carry it to its utmost state of prosperity?

From this moment the trade did that openly and

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extensively, which before they had done covertly and partially. It was not peculiar to an individual or an house, it was the universal practice of the trade. Is it possible to believe that these men imagined they were doing wrong, when the legislature had openly acknowledged the impolicy and mischief of the restraint it had formerly imposed upon them? Could the man who, having bought a parcel of corn, more than his occasion required (or tempted by price if you will) disposed on the instant of part of it, not secretly, but in an open market, in the face of the world, think that he was offending against the laws of his country, when it was written on the highest record of the nation, that his former prohibitions had been found by *experience* an offence against public interest, and such as the nation would no longer encourage, or endure?—Are these dealers then to be told, in answer to this cogent and powerful reasoning—“It is true, the legislature has repealed the statutes against forestalling, engrossing and regrating (except a little reservation in a parenthesis) but notwithstanding this, if you adopt its sentiments, and act upon the principles which it acknowledges to have caused the abolition of those statutes, the common law will step forwards to punish you.”

Of what advantage then, was it to abolish this act? What benefit could the country derive from this half measure, ushered in with so much solemnity

lemnity by open undisguised avowal of error and contrition. I know it will be said, that the legislature could not abolish with the statutes, the provisions of the common law—but were there no means it could have taken to protect those who might suffer from its persecutions? If it did not, what a mockery of bounty did it present, what a solemn but contemptible farce was it acting before the public. Of what use was this vaunted privilege, granted in the fulness of its generosity, and which was to protect the trade from *all* “further prosecutions, informations, indictments, or suits for the *inflicting of any punishment*; or recovery of any fine, penalty, &c. any *law, statute or usage* to the contrary notwithstanding,” except to entrap him into guilt, and to trick him into punishment. In vain can you say, that the repeal of the statutes only was meant to take away the penalty—it says more; it speaks much stronger language; yet if the common law was to have its operations, it would not even protect him so far; for though the exact penalty there inflicted could not be recovered, no one will venture to say, that on a verdict of guilty under an indictment at the common law, the sentence may not be fine and imprisonment. So that you have merely changed the word, and he is still subjected as before to the same actual punishment.

I declare to God, that since I have read this trial—since I have observed the favoured spirit

of persecution stalking abroad, scattering about its venom on the heads of guiltless individuals, and poisoning in its fatal progress the very sources, from which spring all the energies of trade, I have more trembled for my country—I have had greater apprehensions for its safety, than during all that period of political convulsion, when in common with the rest of Europe it was attacked by the absurd but specious philosophy of the Rights of Man, with all the farrago of nonsense imported at that time into the country, in the “Gipsy Jargon” of the late French School—I have felt my mind more agitated, more worked up into a resentment, which (however warm my mind and temper naturally may be) is not I trust its usual character; when I have reflected on this monstrous and cruel usage of men, who whilst they are contributing to the wealth and prosperity of their country, are subjected to persecutions, the prominent feature of arbitrary government, and forming the strong contrast to those mild, and just principles on which the liberties of Englishmen are founded. Let any man have asked Mr. Rusby previous to his trial (God knows the poor man has heard and felt enough of it since) what the common law meant—would he, or nineteen out of twenty of his trade have been able to tell you? Or would he have given you credit, if you had told him, or indeed could he have believed it possible, when the legislature says to him, “Go on, according

according to your will and pleasure—henceforth exercise unconstrained liberty in your dealings for the benefit of the public, which has been injured by the former restraints, that in its folly and ignorance of its true interests it imposed upon you,” that some incomprehensible, unknown, undefined, but superior power is lurking in secret to watch his motions, and to punish with the extremest rigour those acts which have the open sanction of legislative approbation, and which have been proclaimed aloud, by the omnipotent voice of Parliament, to be the only genuine and true sources of national prosperity and commercial greatness.

Taking this subject in all its bearings on the character, consistency and justice of the country, and the important consequences connected with it—the ample discussion of it would take a pamphlet of itself—I refrain therefore from further discussion of it, and hasten to the case of Rusby, as the only instance we have lately known of the exercise of this right of the common law, as to the corn trade.

After what I have said, there is no ground for affixing a criminal imputation on the defendant—according to the maxim “Actus non facit reum, nisi mens sit rea,” however he may suffer the punishment of a criminal, he was guilty of no crime in a moral sense. Indeed this was not attempted to be maintained—but let us see whether he was guilty of the *Act*, laying the criminal intention

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out of the matter. What is the charge? that of regrating—he must to do this, both buy and sell— one act is not sufficient—but he did not—nor could he be persuaded so to do—the act of selling was the act of another person, who, though a partner, acted not only without the consent, but in direct opposition to the will of the defendant—how then was he guilty of the act *as laid in the indictment*? He was certainly not.

But I am well aware that in supporting this assertion, I must necessarily have to combat the law which was laid down on that occasion, as to the liability of one partner for the act of another. It may be presumption to dispute the soundness of the law, when I consider by whom it is laid down; but I do resist it. I can never bring my mind to admit, that the partnership account extends to guilt—What (as was properly put by the defendant's counsel) if one partner forges a bill, are the rest liable? If one partner obtains money under false pretences in a swindling transaction, are the others involved in the guilt or punishment? Even in the case of a civil injury, as a trespass by one partner, are the rest answerable? I will concede that generally speaking, any act done by one partner for the mutual benefit of the partnership, involves them all in its consequences, but then it must not be a criminal act; I will even allow that a misdemeanor of the nature of that in question *might* have subjected the whole partnership to punishment,

ment, though the act was only committed by *one*; but then, they must have been all privy, or consenting to the transaction—or at least not dissenting.

I must not be told “that if the transaction was a common one, not to be distinguished from many others which preceded it, that was sufficient to imply consent.” So I acknowledge it might, if there was no actual dissent. As well may you say, that if two housebreakers set out according to their usual custom, with a view of breaking open an house, each carrying part of the instruments necessary for the purpose—they commence together their operations, but before the actual burglary is committed, even when it had been in part accomplished by both, a quarrel arises as to further proceedings—one man obstinate to go no farther, the other to go on—it ends in separation; one retires to a distance beyond the possibility of assistance, first expressing his dissent to and disclaiming all further concern in the transaction. On the return of his comrade, he refuses too to take any part of the spoils, obtained by an act done against his consent—will you say that both are guilty of the burglary? and yet all the difference between this and former transactions, was, that setting out with the same intentions one man alters his mind, and refuses his consent to the completion of the project (no matter for what reason.) Exactly similar is this case; the men commence their operations with
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the same intent, that of the uniform course of their trade, but in the progress to that act which constitutes the criminal part, they quarrel, and one man enters his protest against and wipes his hands of any further proceedings.—Is he then guilty of a crime, he had no share in, but in that of resisting it with all his power? Surely not.

A case was said to have been cited by the noble judge, from Lord Raymond's reports, to confirm the doctrine of the liability of one partner for the act of another, by analogy to that of a master for the act of his servant. I have looked with care over those reports, but I find no such case. I find nothing about a builder and his servant—a parcel of rubbish—a coach and no light—and the catastrophe of the over-turn, all so gravely and minutely put by the short-hand writer into the mouth of the judge. I can find, it is true, the case of Turberville and Stampe, which was an *action upon the case grounded upon custom*, against the master, for the negligent act of the servant in burning a field of the plaintiff's heath—in this civil action the Lord Chief Justice Holt is made to say "If my servant throws dirt into the highway I am indictable"—the mere dictum of a judge, by way of illustrating an argument—it is no case. With all the respect I entertain for that great judge, I should be sorry to subscribe to this dictum as *law*. I think had the actual case come before him, he would not have thought it a fit one to go to the jury, as involving the

the master in the *criminal* part of the transaction, if the master could prove that the act was done in his absence and after a strict charge, before he left his house, to the contrary. I do not say that the doctrine of "respondent superior" is not a very salutary one, for the general interests of society; and a criminal act of my servant, by which another sustains a civil injury, *may* (it will not always) form the ground work of a civil action against me. Just so as to the case supposed. The owner of this coach, so overturned for want of light, in consequence of my servant throwing the rubbish into the street, might have a civil action against me for the loss he had sustained by the negligence of my servant; or if he could prove that my servant did the act in question, with a wilful intention to do him an injury, he might indict *him*—he could not indict me, or at least if he did, the judge must tell the jury, that so far from my being guilty or accessory to the crime, it was not in my power to prevent it, but that I did all, which, under the circumstances, I could do, to avoid it. What jury would find me guilty? I think none could be found to do so—I should think myself very harshly used if they did.

Now let us consider what was proved in the case of Rusby. Was he not proved to have completely and sincerely resisted the act for which the indictment was laid: did he ever give his assent to, or take any part in it? did he receive

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any subsequent advantage from it, either directly, or indirectly?—No, quite the contrary. How then is he guilty of a criminal act?—how then can he be made the subject of a criminal indictment, much less of conviction?

It appears indeed that he was convicted, by opposing inference to proof, by inferring from his conduct in former similar cases, the commission of an offence in this, which he was *proved* not to have been guilty of, or to have had his usual concern with. But the witnesses who were brought in support of his innocence are not credited by the judge, and their testimony goes with strong impeachment to the jury.—Certainly if they were believed to be guilty of gross and wilful perjury, no wonder at the verdict. It could have been no other; but let us examine whether these men deserve this imputation on their character, whether their testimony has been such, as to warrant us in believing that they have perjured themselves.

I well know that, for obvious reasons, the most candid and open testimony of partners, in favour of each other, goes to a jury, with some shade of suspicion. But of itself it ought not to go with more than this, and if such testimony is corroborated by other evidence, the suspicion is removed; and there is no ground for entertaining it an instant.—Now let us shortly examine what passed on this occasion.

Thomas Smith, one of the partners, swears that the resale of the oats bought by Rusby was his whole and sole act—steadily and repeatedly opposed
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by Rusby, and the transaction as well as the benefit of it (though considerable) entirely disclaimed by Rusby—so completely so, that the original entry made as usual on the partnership account was exchanged in the Factors book, to that of Thomas Smith only.

William Smith, the other partner, confirms this evidence in every material circumstance; he describes the transaction, as Thomas Smith had done, the altercation that ensued, and the consequent determination of Thomas Smith, to take them upon his own account; and he adds, that the threat of prosecution was long subsequent to this determination.

Now if the case stood thus, is there any doubt upon it? Is there not that consistency which entitles it to credit, and which ought to counteract any suspicion arising from partnership alone—But we have the corroborating testimony to the truth of the material part of the transaction from another evidence—What does Mr. Nattrafs the Factor say?

He says, that he sold the oats, for the house of Smith, Rusby and Co. that he knows not who brought the sample; that it was very likely it was Rusby, but of this he has no recollection. For they had so many samples brought to their stand, that it was impossible for him to remember every sample exactly; but he swears positively and without reserve, that the original entry in his book to the account of Smith, Rusby and Co. was altered (and this ap-

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peared on production of the book) for that of Thomas Smith only, at his desire, and that this was done long before he heard of this prosecution, and soon after the sale.

Now with this corroboration of the evidence of the partners, what grounds were there for supposing, that the jury had not heard the truth?—Why, this last evidence could not speak positively enough to entitle him to credit, and the first witness (for by the bye, no one attempts to impeach the testimony of William Smith, and his evidence alone would have acquitted Rusby) has spoken too positively to be believed. There is too much certainty in one case and too little in the other.—Let us see how this is made out.

In the case of Mr. Nattrafs it is said “he has not spoken with more than *belief*; he has expressed a considerable doubt of the exact circumstances of a transaction (not distinguished from thousands of others which have since passed through his hands) which he must remember.—Is it possible he should not have known who gave him the sample bag?”

Has either the noble lord, who presided on the bench, or any of the counsel who conducted the prosecution, ever been on a market day at the Corn Exchange? if he has, and has witnessed the hurry, confusion and noise at that place, he will only wonder that the factors remember any thing, not that they forget at the end of *eight months*, the particulars of a common transaction, or even at a week's end,

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end, are not enabled to tell you, which of a partnership actually delivered to them the bag in which the sample was. You would put most factors to their wits end, to ask them to relate to you at the end of the day all the minute particulars of every bargain which passed in the course of it, such as who brought the sample—what instructions (except in main particulars) were given at the time—how many persons looked at the sample—what they each said on it, &c. &c. And yet this man's testimony is to be received with caution, because at the end of this long space of time, he cannot swear to a circumstance as insignificant and unimportant *at the time*, as any one of those I have mentioned. What did it signify to Nattrafs and Prest, who brought the corn to them?—they were to sell it as Factors, for the house of Smith, Rusby and Co.—they could have attached no importance to the circumstance—they *might* have remembered it, but it was not *necessary* they should—it was very improbable they could have *sworn* to it.

But there are two circumstances, which clear up the matter both as to the evidence of Nattrafs, and the innocence of Rusby, beyond all doubt in my mind.—Mr. Nattrafs says, that he really could not swear who brought the sample—and Mr. Thomas Smith tells you, that he delivered it to Mr. Prest, not to Mr. Nattrafs—and that he does not know whether Mr. Nattrafs was even present when he delivered the sample to Mr. Prest.

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This certainly reconciles, because it accounts for, the doubt, expressed by Mr. Nattrafs as to the party who delivered the sample—the hand which delivered it, he did not (for he could not) recollect.—It might have been Rusby as well as any one else—but in fact it was not—he might however very naturally confuse the period in which he saw the sample first on his stand, with that of the original delivery by Smith to Prest.—So much for the want of positiveness in the testimony of this witness.

I hardly think it necessary to observe on the advantage attempted to be taken from his having called an *extract* from his book a *copy*. It drew forth a severe admonition and reproof, and of course I suppose it deserved one; after this, one can say nothing upon it.—The misnomer did not weigh a grain, as to the real merits, however much has been attempted to be made of it.

And now we have done with the too little positiveness of one witness; let us consider that of the other, which was thought too great.—He swears—to the total innocence of Rusby—to the quarrel in consequence of the transaction—and tho' his brother confirms the facts, yet it is too much for credit—the man has acted with exalted friendship, but to it he has sacrificed the "laws of God and Man"—it requires an unaccountable degree of credulity to believe him, and in his wish to exculpate his friend "he has violated that regard to truth, which un-
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der the solemnity of an oath no friendship—no motives can excuse."

I have given this subject much attention, and I cannot find a particle of imputation justly fixed on the testimony Smith has given—it is consistent throughout.—Nor is much stress to be laid on the manner in which he gave his evidence.—He was (to his credit be it spoken) as much out of his element in a Court of Justice, as the counsel would have been out of theirs at the Corn Exchange.—Coming into Court, with the express but honourable intent to speak the truth—to exculpate an innocent man, even at the probable hazard of furnishing materials for his own conviction, he would naturally feel somewhat more embarrassed, than a well-taught evidence, or an old practitioner would be. Nor would that embarrassment be lessened, by the frequent admonitions addressed to him on one side—which he might construe into threats, or from the repetition of questions on the other, which he knew not how to answer, without subjecting himself to future prosecution, alternately assured of protection, and alternately threatened with punishment—encouraged to circumspection in his answers, yet branded with imputations, when he exercised the privilege—informed that his evidence would be taken down, and yet interrogated as to points which, if he had answered with truth, would (without any real guilt) have furnished his enemies with those materials
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for an indictment which they were seeking for so anxiously, was it surprizing that he should not have preserved the ease and composure of an hardened, and well-tutored evidence? Or thus assailed, is it not more wonderful that he should have preserved throughout the perfect consistency he did?

The respect which I entertain for Courts of Judicature induces me to abstain from saying all that arises in my mind on this subject. The treatment which witnesses sometimes receive in Court (and indeed too frequently) is a subject of no little import to the interests of public justice. It is a subject however so very delicate, that if I had time, I should not be inclined to discuss it at this moment. Let me however be permitted to ask the Counsel who conducted this prosecution, on what principle of candour, of justice, or even of common humanity, the following question could be put to this witness, or the inference drawn from it which followed.

Counsel.—Have not *you yourself*, re-fold in the market, on the same day you bought it, corn at profit of 5s. per quarter?

Witness.—I do not chuse to answer that question.

Counsel.—That will do as well for *my purpose* as if you had answered *yes*.

I mean no disrespect to the Counsel, but is this the fair and candid treatment a witness is entitled to?

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to? You put a question to him—if he answers in the affirmative, you have instant grounds for prosecution—if he claims the privilege of silence, which he is not only entitled to, but which you have exhorted him to do, it is inferred that if he had not been deterred by personal apprehensions, he would have said yes. What man so treated could have left the Court, under the circumstances in which Smith stood, without an imputation on his character and conduct?

In vain may you talk of the impossibility of getting the truth from him by other means—that he is an unwilling witness, and a great deal more which is usually advanced in justification;—this means nine times out of ten, that you have attempted to confuse him, but that you have not succeeded; that you cannot get him to say what you wish (and which if he did, he would perjure himself) that he is the man on whose evidence the case turns, and that it cannot be established, if his credibility is not impeached either directly, or by inference.

The Counsel who conducted this trial, seem, if they have not acted with the extreme of candor, yet to have managed it with much skill. I am quite satisfied, that this question (which could by no means affect the then prosecution of Rusby) with the stress afterwards laid upon it, occasioned the conviction. The man was in fact found guilty, not for the offence alledged, which it was *proved*,

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he did *not* commit, but for the many offences and enormous profits, which from the silence of his partner, he was *inferred* to have made in former instances.

I cannot refrain from just noticing this charge of immense profits, which naturally would be established if the man had answered *Yes* to the question. If he had answered in the affirmative, I dare say he would have spoken the truth. Why, you will say, this is at the rate of 12½ per cent. for one day, or perhaps for one hour. Very true it is—and all the reply I shall make to the astonishment excited by an acknowledgment of this immense profit, is, *that this very house of Smith, Rusby, and Co. have sold within these last four months, a Cargo of Oars, on which they actually lost 20s. per quarter, four times the amount of this profit.* One cannot add, by comment, to the force of this answer to all the nonsense on the head of profit, which that trial gave circulation to.

The reply of the Counsel for the prosecution, and the address of the Judge, would form the subject of much observation and criticism—but as I have little inclination to further agitate my mind—or to run the risk of violating that respect I really entertain for the actors in this part of the scene, I shall dismiss it, with briefly observing, that the opinions and language of the Counsel and the Judge, whether in reference to the law or policy of the immediate subject, or taking the wider range

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range of general principles, meet my utter dislike and unqualified opposition.

I cannot perceive, in them that candor or good sense, which I should have expected in their application to the case, whilst it is impossible I can shut my eyes to that great and manifest danger, which considered as general principles, must attend their promulgation, and which, if once universally, or even generally, recognized and acted upon, would totally demolish that valuable fabric of Commercial Wealth and Prosperity, which has been erected, under the fostering auspices of a protecting and once discerning public, by the active and enterprising spirit of individuals.

I declare, that I know nothing of the man who was the object of this prosecution (I had nearly said persecution). I know a little personally of the witness Mr. Thomas Smith, but I have never spoken to him, since the trial which I have been discussing. I have, however, taken much pains since I read it, to learn the character, and usual habits of trade of this house. The result of my enquiries has been much in their favor—they are represented to me as harmless, inoffensive characters—though extensive in their concerns, yet fair and moderate in their dealings. Though trading largely as Jobbers, yet rarely given to speculation, and less frequent still to *regrating*. In fine, as men wholly undeserving the cruel treatment they have met with,

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and considered by those who know them as harshly treated, and oppressed individuals.

The effect of this prosecution to Rusby has been most serious. The papers have informed us of the demolition of his house, and of the deliberate plan laid for seizing his person. Can we doubt that this trial, and what passed on that occasion, was the directing post, to guide the hand of public vengeance to a fit victim? Held up by a Court of Justice as a delinquent of the blackest hue, the excesses of the mob sought and found a shelter under the sanction of that which passed on that occasion; and from the little I know of those persons, who were in any degree accessory to that verdict, I will not pay their feelings so ill a compliment, as to believe they would have entirely preserved their serenity, if the demolition of this man's house had been followed by the murder of the owner—a catastrophe perhaps only avoided by his flight at the moment!

After all which I have said on this extraordinary trial, as to the failure of proof against Rusby—after the opinion that I am free to give, that the verdict was not only against the weight of evidence, but in the very teeth of it, and therefore, that he ought to be acquitted; yet I would not have my readers imagine, though he was strictly and legally innocent of this particular transaction, that I mean to contend that there was any cause, better than *chance* to be assigned for it by his warmest

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warmest friends.—He is not the hypocrite to pretend it. An unwillingness to disoblige a particular factor, was the reason assigned, and the true one, why he would have no concern in a transaction, which at another time, he would very gladly have shared in—his unwillingness to do what appeared to him irregular, and the warmth which might be engendered in resisting the contrary opinion of Smith, induced him (perhaps in a fit of pique which he might afterwards repent, though too late) to throw the bargain upon his partner. He could claim no merit from his conduct, he only was not guilty of the act *laid in the indictment*, and that is all I contend for. Nevertheless, if he had joined in the transaction, he could have deserved no imputation in an immoral view—he knew not that he was doing wrong—he did what every one in his own trade, and in every other, have done, and are doing hourly, and which in no degree is any hardship to the public. If a merchant buys an 100 hogsheds of sugar, or of tobacco, will he not dispose of it on the same day, if he can get a profit by it? The most conscientious merchant on the Royal Exchange has done so. The price of course to the public, if they *must* have it in their turn, is somewhat raised, that is, if the man who bought it, has a just notion of the scarcity of the article. If he should be mistaken, the public will perhaps have it cheaper than he obtained it himself, and he will be a considerable loser by the
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the speculation. If it turns out that he is right, it does not follow, that the great profit he obtains is an unreasonable charge on the public, or that they pay more than they ought for it. Viewing it according to the scarcity, he bought it too cheap, and it has only found its level of price, which there is no reason to suppose it would not have done, if it had remained in the first merchant's hands, except we are to suppose him a fool.

The same reasoning applies to the regrating of the jobber; for there can be no difference arising from the word market, whilst he has done nothing immoral in the act of regrating—he has done no injury to the country by it—he has received no more than the worth of the article in a relative proportion to the demand. If after his purchase, the market had been loaded, and he had bought more than he wanted, with a view of selling part of it again, he must either have kept it at a probable disadvantage, or have sold it at a loss instead of a gain; his speculation in such case, would have increased the cheapness, because it increased the supply, and the public would have been benefited for it.

But I have now done with this man, and his hard case. Before, however, I quit the subject altogether, permit me most solemnly to disavow the slightest intention in any language I may have used, or opinions which I have given on the subject of the above trial, or in any other part of this pamphlet,

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pamphlet, to lessen the respect which the country justly entertain for the great talents and virtue of the noble and learned Lord, who presided on the above occasion. Whatever may be my persuasion of the mischief that many of his opinions have done to society, however I may have felt the effects of them in my own person, I trust I am above the littleness of feeling resentment for injuries I have received from those, who whilst they were inflicting them, considered themselves as conscientiously discharging their duty. There is no man in the country who is more inclined than myself to do justice to the purity of those motives, which have on all occasions influenced the conduct of this noble Lord, in the high situation he fills. I believe a more honourable and virtuously-directed mind, never occupied that august seat, nor one more intensely anxious to promote all the great and valuable interests of society. If I doubt the efficacy of the means employed, I am not the less insensible to the worth of the mind which has suggested them. Thinking as I do, that his great and active mind has taken a bent, and direction, very injurious to those interests which he is ever most anxious to promote, whilst I respect the motives which have influenced his conduct on this, as on every other occasion, I cannot but deeply and feelingly lament, that the weight of his (deservedly great) authority has been thrown into the scale, which already preponderates too heavily

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(at least in my opinion) for the peace and welfare of the country.

The task I have undertaken is, I think, now finished; I am not aware that I have omitted any branch of this extensive trade, except it is that of the Corn-Chandler, whom I have not passed over from slight, but from the impossibility of his needing any defence, or having been the subject of accusation. Absurdity itself would be outraged by the charge of monopoly against this branch of the trade, the greatest part of whose dealings meet the eye of every one who enters his shop, in the bins and sacks, that crowd his limited space; a truly useful medium through which the minutest demands and wants of the poorest individual, are to be satisfied, in the various articles of corn, feeds, &c. or the shop of the pastry-cook supplied with the materials for his tarts and buns. By exercising a trade, in its amount so limited, they are as valuable members of society, and as serviceable to the wants of the public (though they may be thankful, that they are not so obnoxious to its prejudices) as any other part of the trade. If they had stood in need of my defence, and had been accused with as little foundation, in truth, as the rest, such as it is, it would not have been withholden from them.

In the view I have taken of this interesting subject, I have confined my observations to the neighbourhood of London, because the defence of the trade

trade residing near the capital, seems most called for, by the prejudice of the day; but the same principles and reasoning apply—the same practice prevails—the same benefit results from the labours of every dealer throughout the kingdom. In considering them as a most valuable body of men, I have never pretended to say, that there may not be found some few individuals amongst the immense numbers engaged in this traffic deserving of public censure, and even of execration,—men who have taken advantage of an occasional local scarcity, and preyed upon those wants, and that affliction, which it was their duty to relieve. Such men ought to be held up to public detestation, and consigned to perpetual infamy; they deserve not the protection of any man, nor shall my pen be prostituted in their support. But this proves no more than we all know, of which very little observation will convince us, that in every trade there are unjust and wicked men, who sacrifice every principle to their avarice, and make self-interest their God. Brand not however, with indiscriminate censure, a whole body for the misconduct of a few individuals. Assure yourselves, that these instances are neither frequent, nor important in their consequences; they are made the most of by malice, and distorted into every shape, that answers best its purpose.

I know that I am using a language little agreeable to the taste of many of my readers. I feel that nothing can be so unpopular as all the opi-

nions and doctrines I have submitted to them on this subject; but they are not the less true—a little reflection will satisfy them that are so. Whatever therefore may be my success, however popular clamour may be raised against me in my turn, I have done my duty, and in that I shall seek consolation. I write to undeceive the people, not to obtain their applause. I should feel a truer satisfaction, in having rescued by my efforts, one innocent man, from public odium, and unmerited oppression, than to be followed by the acclamations of thousands, whose delusions I had encouraged. I can flatter no man, nor any body of men.—I cannot say to the public, “I go with you in your prejudices and feelings on this subject.” I know them to be fundamentally erroneous, and in their indulgence most dangerous, and I must tell them so. I am satisfied that these men whom they revile are their best friends, and that it is very much indeed their interest to keep them so—Sensible of this, I must try to stop their unmeaning, but dangerous clamour—I cannot join with them in their cry—no, not even to enjoy the enviable distinction—the exalted title of the *Man of the People*.

It may then be asked “If these persons whom we have always suspected, and who have been stated to us (from what we have considered good authority) as the only real causes of the high price of bread, are not so—if they contribute not to its

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price, how comes it that it is so dear—to what then is it owing?

Though the professed and real object, of this Pamphlet is to exculpate a Trade, from an unmerited charge, not to write a treatise on the causes of the dearness of provisions, (and which has been so much more ably done by a gentleman,* to whom not only the agricultural world, but every man of curiosity and enquiry is much indebted for useful information, and actual research) yet I will just touch upon some of the causes, which in my opinion occasion the present high price of corn.

Its first, and important cause is *Scarcity*—not an artificial, but a real one, arising from no weak or wicked efforts of man to enrich himself at the expence of his fellow creatures, but from the visitation of God. A brief examination of the produce of the harvest of 1779, and of the usual consumption of the country, will satisfy my readers as to the justness of this conclusion.

And here permit me first to remark, as a matter of serious regret, that no means have yet been taken by the government of the country to obtain an account of the number of acres sown with wheat (or it might be extended to other grain) in every parish throughout England and Wales—the average crop, and the mouths to consume it

* Mr. Arthur Young.

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which the parish contains. Such a return might be annually procured from the resident minister.

The advantage which government would receive from this knowledge is incalculable, in the judgment it would at all times be enabled to exercise in its bounties, and in its occasional interference with the trade. The public purse would occasionally be saved, and the public want always anticipated. The danger of exciting apprehension of being taxed by taking the number of the people, need not deter them—the present state of taxation bids defiance to apprehension. The benefit which the country *might* receive from this measure is obvious. The thing is so highly useful, and yet so simple and feasible, that one wonders it has not been long since done. It ought not to be delayed a moment longer.

In the present state of our knowledge on this subject, we must a great deal trust to conjecture, or to information, which cannot be entirely relied on, for any conclusion we may form. I have sought in the writings, and in the experience of men, for the best data on which to rely.

Nothing is so uncertain as political arithmetic. The present numbers of the people, calculated by the returns of taxable houses, with all the correction and checks that can be used, are for many reasons liable to dispute, and so indeed are most of the other sources, from which any thing like certainty is presumed. Amidst all the vague opinions
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and calculations of the last ten years, we will steer a middling course, and without arraigning the grounds of these different calculations; (in lieu of which one could perhaps substitute no better) let us take the population of England and Wales, as it was stated some years since by Mr. Arthur Young, at 10,000,000. If it was too high at that time (which would be the general opinion), in all probability it is under the mark now. The same author calculates, that out of these, two millions live on barley or oaten bread. I have made some enquiry on this head; the result will not enable me to accede to the idea, that even at this time of scarcity, there are even half the numbers so fed. But I believe this would be nearer the truth. We will take them however at 1,500,000. According to this calculation, there will be 8,500,000 persons, who eat wheaten bread.

Now if (as this author says) each of these persons were to consume annually a quarter of wheat per head, it would require 8,500,000 quarters to supply them; but this must be over-rated. A quarter of wheat has been stated in the Committee of the House of Commons to average a sack of flour, (even of seconds) and a sack of this flour will make 80 quartern loaves; this would be at the rate of a loaf and a half per week, and two loaves more. The experience of the last year will prove that this was the full amount, (and more than in most parishes, where even no soup was given,
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and they wholly lived upon bread) of the consumption of the poor in the country, where it is their chief article of food—of course much too high when you ascend to higher spheres. Instead therefore of giving them a quarter each, I will allow the 8,500,000 consumers—7,500,000 quarters, which is more than the weekly allowance of a loaf and a quarter per head.

Now according to this we must grow 7,500,000 quarters of wheat per ann. and whatever we grow less, must be either made up by importation, or saved, by the use of substitutes, or by restrained consumption.

The land in present cultivation is stated as from 30 to 33 millions of acres—allowing for large woods, hedges, &c. &c. let us take the former. Now on the average of farms throughout the kingdom (for what we take away on account of the dairy farm, we must give to the common field farm, which is mostly corn) one acre in ten may be reckoned as the proportion of wheat. This will make the quantity sown in the kingdom three millions of acres; now multiply this by 3 the full average of the quarters grown per acre, through the kingdom, and in an abundant year, you will grow nine millions of quarters of wheat.

If the wants therefore of the inhabitants in the article of bread only, requires 7,500,000 quarters; there will be left, in an abundant year, 1,500,000 quarters.

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The foreign wheat imported in the four last years, averaged upwards of 500,000 quarters (one was a year of scarcity.) Now I will take the whole of this, and add it to the excess of growth, in a plentiful year, above the consumption, and it amounts to 2 millions of quarters in hand. In this it will be recollected, that I have only allowed the amount of the flour imported, to supply the quantities of flour, biscuit, (and even wheat) exported to our West India islands. I have taken no notice of the additional consumption, which the supplying part of our population, on board of ship, or on service, will necessarily occasion; nor the wheat used in the distilleries, starch manufactories &c. &c. Now, with this stock, of 2 millions in hand, if the deficiency of the last harvest was one third (it was at the least that) let us see how the account would stand, on the 1st of September, 1800.

	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>bu.</i>
Average Crop	9,000,000	
Stock in hand	2,000,000	
Imports, from 1st January, 1800, to		
1st September — Wheat	721,993	
Rye	10,194	3
	<hr/>	
	<i>Qrs.</i> 11,732,187	3

Deduc-

<i>Deductions.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>
Deficiency of Crop, one third	3,000,000
Annual Consumption	7,500,000
Seed, at 2 bushels per acre	750,000
	11,250,000

	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>bu.</i>
Amount	11,732,187	3
Deduction	11,250,000	
Balance	<i>Qrs.</i> 482,187	3

So high as the crop of 1799 is here set, and so ill as it yielded in flour, these circumstances must be considered as in a great measure counterbalancing the effect of the saving occasioned by the limits of consumption generally adopted. These took place about Christmas—Under all these circumstances I will allow the saving from this to have been 400,000 quarters, this added to the balance, would leave at 1st September, 1800, a stock in hand of 882,187 quarters 3 bushels,—a supply of somewhat more than 5 weeks consumption!

If this be so, and we consider an instant, shall we wonder at the high price of corn, on the 15th of that month, when little English wheat had (for the reasons I have before given) been brought to market, and (perhaps) only *three weeks* supply of old in the kingdom? Can any man turn a moment in his mind, how imperceptible this quantity scattered

tered throughout the kingdom would be, and how very like actual want this would appear, even to men who had the best information, and then can we for a moment be surprized at the price? With the prospect of little corn from the farmers, and the knowledge of very small importations going on (for since the 1st of September, there have been only 4 or 5 cargoes of wheat imported, of from 5 to 700 quarters each) there was no occasion to call in the aid of artificial scarcity, to make the high price. Would it had been so! that would have been an evil of short duration—but unfortunately the scarcity was too real. It is so now; and the prospect is, that it will be so, even if this year's crop turns out well (which if I am to judge from the little I grew and have thrashed out, is not the case) except some steps are taken to prevent it; and those who talk of an artificial scarcity occasioned by monopoly, talk of what they do not understand—they have given no attention to the subject, and in their turn deserve no other, than to be restrained from doing mischief by their opinions.

That there are causes, which have operated to increase this scarcity, cannot be doubted. The war has done so in a trifling degree, by the greater waste (and some little addition in numbers) occasioned by supplying our people, when they are from home—but it should be known, that in times of scarcity the purchases of government are purposely

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small in quantity, to prevent the market being affected; amongst the nonsense of the last summer (engendered I suppose as maggots are by the hot weather) are heard of the alarming purchases of government, from faces which alarmed you much more, till you knew the important secret. There is no time now for comment on this charge; nor any occasion. Their purchases for 6 months, viz. from January to July were as follows:

Wheat 31,197 quarters

Biscuits 74,296 hundred weight.

Flour 14,535 sacks.

In wheat for six months, about *eleven days* supply of London only!

A circumstance which has much more considerably tended to increase the scarcity, has been the *discouragement* the merchants have received; I do believe if they had been assured in September, that government would not have interfered with their speculations, the moment they found the state of our harvest, they would have commenced their purchases of all the old corn they could have got from the northern powers, and in this case the difference even of 2 or 300,000 quarters would have been very material.

I know of nothing else which has materially contributed to this scarcity of corn; the remedies which must occur to every one, are, strict œconomy in the quantity and state in which we consume it, and generous encouragement of importation, not that

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that kind of niggardly bounty, which leaves the merchant in doubt of ultimate profit, but either on a scale so liberal, as to ensure handsome profit, with tolerable success and prudence; or by an assurance of indemnity for loss, where it was not the consequence of imprudence: I lay great stress upon this, because I have some reason for believing that their speculations generally have been attended with loss in the course of the last summer. One can easily conceive that to many it must have been so: the merchant began his purchases in the early part of the spring at 3*l.* 15*s.* per quarter, he closed them at 5*l.* the average 4*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.*—his freight (taking the average of winter 12*s.* and summer 8*s.*) 10*s.*—insurance (on the same average of winter 4*s.* and summer 2*s.*) 3 guineas *per cent.*—this is the expence before a grain arrives in port: in the condition a great part was in, (as I have before stated) the expences of landing, warehouse-rent, kiln-drying, &c. &c. are to be added; when you have so done, and have struck the balance of the account, how problematical will be his gains!

A great deal has been said of a general inclosure bill, as an effectual means of removing the present scarcity. The immense number of private bills which have passed the legislature within these last ten years, and the little effect from them in any perceptible additional supply, make me less sanguine than others as to the benefits to be derived in this view from the measure.

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Allow that six millions more of waste land were brought into cultivation, and one tenth set apart for the growth of wheat, 600,000 acres; if this should average two quarters per acre, (I put it low, because out of these six millions, there would be a great deal of land, which in the opinion of many would not grow a quarter of wheat per acre) the additional growth of wheat would be 1,200,000 quarters, from which take 150,000 quarters for seed, and there would remain for consumption 1,050,000, not 320,000 quarters more than the importation of eight months of the present year, when we have just been enabled to go on, with scarcity, though without absolute want. The population too, which would naturally be the consequence of giving employment to the numbers wanted to bring this into cultivation, must of course be maintained from it. I am supposing a very moderate increase of numbers in putting them at 500,000, most likely it would be double that number.

I only state this, to prevent sanguine minds from imagining that if this measure took place, we should be guarded against the evils of scarcity without importation; and who if they found that was not the case, would impute it to monopoly, or knavery, or something different from what it was.

God forbid that I should be thought adverse to this great and necessary measure of a general increase; the real wealth of a country consists in its inhabitants, and of all descriptions these are the most

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most valuable. The adding to its numbers, and to the stock of national wealth and industry, by the cultivation of its waste land is a delightful prospect to look forward to! may we live to witness the speedy accomplishment of it!

Though it is no part of the object of this work (as I have before said) to treat of any other species of provision than corn, let me be permitted before I conclude, to remark briefly on those causes which appear in my judgment to create, or assist, the high price of provisions in general. The price is a real and alarming evil, endangering the prosperity, and even the very peace of the country; by no description of persons is this evil more felt, than by those who though they do not fill the very lowest stations in life, are perhaps more sensible of the evil, and more incapable of enduring it than those who do—With a scanty and very limited income, with no means in his power of increasing it—used to better days, and subjected to worse by no fault of his own—witnessing daily, from the increase of taxes, and still greater increase of the price of food, the deprivation of those little comforts, which time has almost rendered necessaries, and which nature can scarce endure the loss of—declining perhaps in years, as in comfort—he has the dreary prospect of being just able to preserve an existence become scarcely valuable, from the impossibility of adding enjoyment to it. Such a character (and I fear there are many, very many, to be found at the instant I am writing) living

living in a country, whose laws and liberties are the just theme of universal praise, is secluded by his necessities from the enjoyment of them, and separated by the cruel bar of almost want from society and happiness: This man's case, however severe, is the natural effects of the times. Worthy as it is of legislative consideration, I declare it seems to my mind, to baffle legislative interference, and almost to set at nought all the attempts of consummate wisdom and experienced legislation: there is one great measure, which if it removes not, may greatly lessen the evil: I will presently point it out.

Listen not however to those who would persuade you that engrossers, forestallers or regraters are the sources from whence this calamity springs; the evil that such men can possibly do, (allowing as is perhaps the truth, that in some articles these practices exist) depend on it, is limited in its extent and duration; it is not in their power to effect a *permanent and general scarcity*, by any arts or contrivances they have the power of using. The evil they do is not equal to that you would occasion by any regulations or laws which you could devise in seeming wisdom to stop their practices; if they were every one shipped off for Guiana, your situation might be worse, but it could not be one whit better. Your demand treads close on the heels of your supply, and the produce of the country keeps scarcely pace with its wants. This is the simple, but real truth—He who assigns any other, with the best intentions, is your very worst

worst friend. Pause before you credit the possibility of any man "buying up all the articles in a market, to deal them out to others at his pleasure and profit."—If the highest authority in the nation was to tell me that this is no uncommon thing, I should ask him his authority for believing it.—If he were to ask me "what Adam Smith would have said to the case of a rich man planting messengers at all avenues, and buying up every thing coming to town, and thus raising provisions 50 per cent." I could not have ventured to say what would have been the reply of Adam Smith, I rather think he would have said nothing, he would have only smiled—If he had attempted to account for this miracle, he must have supposed this Dives and his messengers, to have had the eyes of Argus, the hands of Briareus, and the purse of Croesus; he could have accounted for it no otherwise.

No, my fellow countrymen; the causes are not to be found in the arts of cunning, or the roguery of wicked men. The daily extended demands of an immense nation, are the causes. They are augmented (in some degree) by the war—by the increased population—by the collective riches and commercial prosperity of the nation, which has thrown into the enjoyment of luxuries, those who were wont to be content with comforts, or necessaries—by the much greater quantity of grass land appropriated for the keep of horses than formerly—by the vast national debt

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debt—and last (though by no means least in importance) by the almost unbounded issue of paper money, in a great measure the consequence of the debt. That all, or some of these causes operate to increase the evil, no one can doubt—the last most certainly does. We may be sure whilst money is cheap, provision will be dear—that is, more of the money is required to obtain it. Those who are in any way of business take care, when they part with the commodity they deal in, to demand such a proportion of money for it, as they know will be demanded of them, when they in their turn go to make the exchange. The cheapness of the one, or the dearth of the other, to them is immaterial. But the man who has no means of procuring more of this money, than he could ten years ago, and who, when he goes to market, finds its value 50 per cent. less than it was, he must either have had an abundant deal more than he wanted at that time, or must be dreadfully inconvenienced now, to maintain himself and his family. No proposition can be (unfortunately for the country) so self evident. The time will not allow me to shew, the manifest connection between the debt and the paper circulation, and their joint effects (beyond imagination) on the increase of price—a few moments consideration will convince any one of it.

These are the causes undoubtedly which so greatly increase the scarcity—but how are they to be

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be removed. Many of them, whilst we deplore their effects, we do not wish to remove, and others we cannot. The national debt must not be wiped off with a sponge, though it may have engendered the monster of paper money. Certainly a 20 years peace would much decrease the debt, and of consequence, the enormous size of this monster; but whilst he is merely losing his flesh, half the nation will be actually starving. I know but one effectual and adequate remedy: In the true, liberal and manly spirit of commerce, open your ports to all the world—invite all nations to bring their surplus, or if they like money better, to give you their plenty. You would then have no occasion to be giving bounties in order to procure food. You would soon witness comparative abundance. It might not be cheap with reference to ancient times, but it would be attainable by the lowest income. Look at the Dutch, in the most prosperous state of a republic founded in commerce—their ports were open to the world, and their subjects were fed with corn (and are to this day) cheaper than we can grow it.

The defalcation of the revenue, the people would be glad to repay—the benefit they would derive from the measure would enable them to do so.

I can conceive no other adequate and speedy remedy for this monstrous evil. Temporizing expedients suit not the disease—something must be

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done, and that shortly, or a very numerous and valuable class of your people, will quit your shores the first moment it is in their power, and seek in some less expensive clime, those comforts of life, which their limited fortunes cannot procure here.

Above all things however, whilst we do remain inmates of the same ship, and prudence suggests to us the propriety of acceding to the being put on short provisions, let us not sour the morsel that falls to our share, by foolish murmurs against those by whose provident care we have it at all. Let us resign ourselves to the will of Providence, who has thought fit (doubtless for wise tho' hidden purposes) to impose this calamity upon us. Let us not think that we shall be able to make even our allowance (short as we may fancy it and grumble at it) last, if we unite not our energies, and exert in unison our best faculties, to keep the mariners quiet and content—and to obtain their cordial co-operation in working the vessel into port. The ship has encountered many storms, which have been weathered by the prudence of the crew, and the great and discerning judgment, and experience of those, under whose direction they have acted. Let me then entreat you, if you value the future safety of the vessel, which is still far from port, and may have many storms yet to weather—by the property you have in her—by that principle of self preservation we all acknowledge—and by that humanity due to your comrades, not to drive by your unjust re-
proaches

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proaches and cruel suspicions, those men from the helm, who have hitherto managed it with a skill of which you are not aware, and with an attention to your safety that you dream not of.

To drop the metaphor, let me again, and again intreat you, that instead of increasing the unmerited odium, with which the world has been too much inclined to load those persons who are the medium to convey their daily bread to them, you will henceforth consider it your interest to protect them from the effects of it. When you hear of the great profits the trade have made by iniquitous monopoly, one should expect instantly to see in its train, an aggregate of immense wealth. Where is it to be seen? Is there a body so numerous, whose capital employed is so beyond calculation, that is so little wealthy? If we talk of their guilt, where is the evidence in the convictions, or even prosecutions? and yet malice has been most industrious to discover it, I had almost said to make it. Justice has been over keen, and high authority almost officiously urgent to pursue it. Retrieve then your error, I beseech you, before it is too late. Instead of clouding the brow, and damping the spirits of these men, by severe and uncandid treatment, cheer them by your just encouragement—instead of fostering the public prejudice, hasten to remove it if you can—instead of harrassing them with prosecutions, or reviving obsolete statutes which would disgust them, treat
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them with the same liberal allowance, and give them the same freedom of conduct, as the rest of their fellow creatures—instead of talking in a strain of harsh imputation, of their vast capitals and unbounded monopolies, invite them to embark their capital in your service, and protect them in the free and unrestrained use of it—encourage those monopolies you are so apprehensive of—they will not be (they cannot be in this article) sufficiently general to hurt you, and partially they will greatly assist you—they cannot monopolize to injure you, however they may themselves—it must be in the end for your benefit. Attempt not to drive any one class from the trade, under the idea of its being useless, or of its raising the price upon you. In the present overgrown state of your population, and of increased demand, you have more reason to applaud the wonderfully happy arrangement which exists for your regular and ample supply, (even in times of acknowledged great scarcity) than to disturb its useful progress by your absurd opinions, or more absurd interference. Be assured there is not one man between the grower and consumer who is not necessary to the regular and most economical perfection of supply. Attempt not then to break even one of those well-formed links of the great and necessary chain, which connects the produce with the consumption. There is not an useless one amongst them—you cannot spare one—indeed you cannot.

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Before I conclude, let me deprecate any idea which might be hastily formed from the tenor of my language, in this publication, that I am hostile to the interests of the poor; I have them as much at heart, and I feel for their distresses, as much as those, who (perhaps carried away by their feelings for them) are encouraging them in dangerous error—I am giving the best and highest proof of my friendship and regard for them, by treating them with sincerity. But whilst I am warning them to avoid a conduct which will inevitably plunge the country in deep distress, and in its consequences may convert scarcity into famine, I am not insensible to the claims which the poor have at this time (and in all times of scarcity) on the public for supplying that difference which exists between the price of their support, and that of their labour. It should be given to them in the liberal spirit of compensation—as that which they are entitled to from the unavoidable circumstances of the times—not as a charity which their personal want or misfortune has called for. I would even indulge (what is called) their whim for the colour of their bread; it constitutes nearly their whole food, and let them have it as they like. In every thing, even in innocent prejudice, shall they have my support; but I cannot indulge them in the exercise of that, which I know and feel, will lead them, and perhaps with them, the nation, to sudden and inevitable destruction.

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I have now done. I have effected my task, and long as I have been, I have compressed much which this very interesting subject suggests. I am satisfied my opinions and statements as to the Trade are strictly correct and true; and I do verily believe that the general principles I entertain, and which I have laid down in this work, are equally so—I feel the strongest conviction in my mind of the truth of the proposition, with which I shall conclude—
That the commercial prosperity of a great nation will be in proportion to the protection and encouragement which every man in it receives to employ his talents, his industry, and his property, in that line most conformable to his views, or inclinations.

September 30th, 1800.

THE END.

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