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THE
RIGHTS OF THE POOR
CONSIDERED;
WITH THE
CAUSES AND EFFECTS
OF
MONOPOLY,
AND
A PLAN OF REMEDY
BY MEANS OF A
POPULAR PROGRESSIVE EXCISE.

BY GEORGE BREWER.

“ Happy are those few nations who have not waited till the flow-
“ succession of human vicissitudes should, from the extremity of evil,
“ produce a transition to good, but by prudent laws have facilitated
“ the progress from one to the other.” M. BECCARIA.

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THE
FOLLOWING PAGES
ARE
MOST HUMBLY DEDICATED
TO
MEN WHO HAVE GREAT POWER,
BY
ONE WITHOUT ANY.

S. GOSNELL, Printer,
Little Queen Street, Holborn.

P R E F A C E.

IT is not easy for a thinking mind to rest inactive in times when any portion of talent, however small, might be usefully employed; and, though I most freely confess, an Author seldom publishes from motives in which vanity has no share, yet, on the present occasion, an interest is created that supercedes any other principle. It is impossible not to feel for the present situation of the industrious poor. It is in their cause I venture beyond the pleasurable pursuits of literature that have hitherto filled up my moments of leisure; to consider objects, and individual facts, requiring in their investigation, all the strength

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of true judgment and philosophy ; but the public will judge with complacency of the design : this is certain, I could not have enlisted myself as a political writer, at a better moment, or in a better cause.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

THE Thoughts on the Rights of the Poor are published on the strength of the following propositions : First, That Government is desirous to preserve the political health of the people ; and secondly, That every suggestion aiming at the public good, come from where it may, will be acceptable.

In defining the Rights of the Poor, the Author trusts he shall pursue, as near as his abilities will permit, a chain of philosophical argument ; that he shall not be warmed into prejudice by the interest of the subject, or chilled into insensibility by the fear of offence to any. The object of every inquiry should be the truth ; and if a writer has no other end in view, it is difficult to imagine he will have

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any thing to apprehend, even from the folly of prejudice, or the opinion of party.

The truth is so forcible an appeal to the human understanding, that no crooked policy, or ill-judged restraint, can oppose it long: it may be annoyed and suppressed, but it will be still found again of the same strength, and in the same place: it is the glory of human nature, and will continue to shed its rays into the mind of man, till its emanations are recalled from earth to the place from whence they flowed—the bosom of the Creator.

Every good man reflects at times on the situation of the society in which he lives. To them the present inquiry is addressed: an inquiry that does not ask, but demands attention; it respects chiefly the condition of the lower order of the people, but it involves in its consequences, the safety and welfare of the whole community.

The Author begs to be understood, lest he should otherwise suffer by misrepresentation, that he is, and with pride avows that he is, a
loyal

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loyal subject to his King, a sincere friend to the established Religion and Constitution of his Country, and an enemy to innovation, tumult, and disorder. The ground which he has taken is not, however, thus partially marked out; its circle spreads till it embraces the rights of all society—but most of all, the rights of the poor.

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THE

THE
RIGHTS OF THE POOR,
&c. &c.

CHAP. I.

The Rights of the Poor defined.

THE rights of the poor arise from the very nature of society, which induces a reciprocity of interest from one part of it to the other, for the good of all.

The reciprocities of society prescribe, that those who bring in a proportion of benefit to the common Weal, shall receive, in the same ratio, a share of its advantages, with the protection of its laws.

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The social compact is a bond, entered into by a people, to give and receive reciprocally, one from another, an exchange of interests and benefits: this mutual intercourse forms the great family of a commonwealth, and here the necessity of practising justice is preserved, by the right claimed of receiving it.

The Marquis Beccaria, in his celebrated Essay on Crimes and Punishments, explains the reciprocities of society, in the following clear and comprehensive manner :

“ If every individual is bound to society, society is equally bound to him, by a contract, which, from its nature, equally binds both parties: this obligation, which descends from the throne to the cottage, and equally binds the highest and lowest of mankind, signifies nothing more than that it is for the interest of us all, that conventions, which are useful to the greatest number, should be punctually observed: the violation of this contract by any individual, is an introduction to anarchy.”

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It being admitted that there are certain reciprocal claims and rights, belonging to each part of society, we are naturally led to consider, as the object of our present inquiries, what are the proper rights of the poor? I mean those rights which belong to them as tenants in common of the same happy soil.

The rights of the poor, as I take it, are principally these: first, The fair recompence of the produce of their labour. Secondly, The right of an equal protection with the rest of the community from the laws, to enable them to enjoy with a sense of safety, the fruits of that labour; which last right is derived from their having sacrificed part of their liberties to possess the rest in peace and security.

The constitution of this country is most admirably constructed for preserving to each part of society its proper claims on the rest, as settled by nature and reason. That equality so much talked of by late writers, is not to be reconciled to true experience; no peo-

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ple ever had, or can have it long : if it were by any false policy created, it would be destructive of its own design, the general good : the inequalities of talent and riches would still operate, according to their weight and measure, to make distinctions. The more the community is branched out into different degrees of wealth and condition, and the more the people are employed and engaged in a variety of pursuits, the stronger will be their mutual interests and connexions, and the better cemented the plan of society.

Every thing in a great community like this is measured according to its value, taking into estimation the genius suited to each employment, the mind, the character, the wisdom of the candidate: the recompense given to men placed in dignified stations is not therefore disproportionate, if rightly considered ; the merit and power of one such man to do good to the community, must be opposed, in value, to the lesser capacities

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capacities of a great number : the proper level may be easily ascertained.

Now the industrious poor, who compose by far the greater part of the society, must therefore be, when taken aggregately, the most useful of its members.

The only unnecessary part of society is that whose members receive advantages and emoluments, without ever having contributed, or being likely to contribute, to the good of the community.

Nothing appears to be less regarded, from what false policy I know not, than the mutual claims of society, of man, one to another, and the obligations of natural justice.

Perhaps the want of uniformity of opinion, with respect to right and wrong, may be justly attributed to the shock, the common sense of mankind has received, from a spirit of false philosophy, both dangerous to society, and an enemy to happiness.

But the rights of the poor engage our present attention.

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The rights of the poor may be urged with safety, from their agreement to the laws of nature and reason; and whenever they are not urged against the oppression of wealth, and injustice, the existence of society is endangered: little respect indeed would be paid to that constitution, whose policy might so far contradict the laws of God and nature, as to leave a part of its members unprotected, and in a worse condition than in a state of uncivilization, to give to another part an unequal proportion of wealth and luxury.

It is not the rights of kings and lords alone, that it is necessary to keep inviolate; we must be careful to preserve to the people, undisturbed, their natural rights, and such privileges as have been parcelled out to them by the wisdom of our ancestors; we must continue to give them, what we have hitherto allowed them, to possess in security what they have hitherto allowed us.

It is to be lamented, that the complaints of the poor have not been earlier attended to; they

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they have received nothing hitherto but the meagre soup of professed charity; they do not want charity, they want the reward of honest industry. It is high time exertion should remedy, what impolicy or inattention has permitted. It is time, that the dangerous abuse of riches, which offends the public health, and runs with strong current against the poor, should be stemmed before it is too late.

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CHAP. II.

*The proper Application of the Epithet
" Poor," in the present Times.*

THE word poor, from its Latin derivation, *pauper*, or the French one, *pauvre*, signifies, needy, indigent, necessitous.

It will not require much discernment to make the true application of the word poor, in present times, or to ascertain to what class of people it properly belongs: perhaps the following classification of the people, more than half a century back, is as near the truth as possible:

First, The nobility, &c.

Secondly, Merchants.

Thirdly, Tradespeople.

Fourthly, Little tradespeople, mechanics, &c. *such as procured by their industry*

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industry all the common comforts of life.

Fifthly, The poor, such as were unable to work, from age or infirmity.

Sixthly, Vagrants, beggars, thieves, &c. the pest of society.

From a just view of the present unhappy state of society, the following arrangement forcibly applies itself:

First, The nobility, &c. &c.

Secondly, Merchants.

Thirdly, Tradespeople.

Fourthly, Little tradespeople, mechanics, labourers, &c. *unable to procure the common comforts of life, properly denominated the poor in the present times.*

Fifthly, Vagrants, beggars, thieves, &c. &c.; the present objects of mistaken charity, of soup-houses, &c. &c.

I wish, most sincerely, the last statement

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may be controverted, for if it is suffered to pass *sub silentio*, it is a reproach on the wisdom, the morals, and the policy of the country.

Let us see if the lower order of people, the industrious poor, have no claims that ought to have protected them from so degrading a transposition. Must they be all beggars? Have they no certain indefeasible rights?

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CHAP. III.

A View of the present Condition of the lower Order of People.

THE rights of the poor having been considered, it will be necessary to turn our eyes to their condition.

It is a melancholy truth, that all that has been done for the industrious poor, has been the work of charity; they must beg, to procure what they have a natural right to, without begging. Soup-houses, &c. have been established with the best mistaken intentions; but the fact is, the poor love to work for their comforts, they can then call them their own. They think, and rightly think, they can claim the wages of honest industry; but do not love the ungrateful task of asking charity.

The common people of England have an honest pride in their labour; they call it emphatically,

phatically, *getting their bread*; a strong term, and which would afford a stranger one of the most noble features of the British character, true independence.

Let us be careful this character becomes not extinct; it seems daily to lose in strength, and if once it is worn out, the industry of the nation is bankrupt.

Dr. Adam Smith, in his excellent work on the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, which I shall presently have occasion to mention, with a difference of opinion on a particular subject, but which weighs not a scruple against the general principles laid down by that great master of human nature, and human action, thus admirably defines what ought to be the recompense of the labourer: he says; "A man must always live by his work, and his wages must at least be sufficient to support him; they must even, upon most occasions, be somewhat more, otherwise it would be impossible for him to bring up a family, and the race of such workmen

workmen could not last beyond the first generation." Mr. Cantillon, quoted by the same author, seems to establish the opinion, that the lowest species of common labourers must every where earn at least double their maintenance, in order that, one with another, they may be enabled to bring up two children: this rate they consider the lowest consistent with common humanity.

What is then the present condition of the poor, when the common price of labour in London, and its environs, is stated at eighteen pence a day? Let opulence shrink from this inquiry, and luxury sicken at the recital—it must be made.

And yet, the common price of labour, small as it appears, would be sufficient, were not the produce of that industry partly lost by wanton voluptuous excess, and waste, and the rest by the ingenious management of wealthy men, sold again to the poor, whose industry produced the article, at a price which appears beyond credibility, and which

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places the common necessaries of life nearly out of their reach.

The poor are content with a moderate share of good, that they may enjoy that moderate share without encroachment, and in safety: few of them have the folly to wish for the *bona fortunæ*, they have common sense enough to know that most likely they would not be benefited by the exchange; but they should in all societies have what is called, the *bona corporis*, a comfortable and equal subsistence, enough to enable them to say, "*There is something in the world that is not Cæsar's.*"

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CHAP. IV.

The Causes of the Indigence and Necessity of the Poor.

WHAT are the true causes of the indigence and necessity of the lower order of people? Have they been corrupted into idleness and profligacy, or have they been driven out of the course of honest endeavour, by the tide of opulence and power being set against them?

I lament that I cannot pursue this inquiry, without reflections extremely unfavourable to the morals of the times.

I submit to the philosophical mind, that the principal cause of the indigence and necessity of the poor, is a depravity to be discovered in the mass of the people, that has loosened the bands of society, and nearly destroyed the sense of moral obligation from one man to another. This depravity has originated with the great, and rich, whose deviations

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tions have spread their example to the lower orders of the people.

These deviations are not such as can easily escape notice, or be considered as the ordinary effects of moral evil; they approach nearer to that unhappy state of society which leads to the downfall of an empire. Let us hope this epidemic evil may be checked in time.

Let us see how these deviations have acted upon society: but previous to this investigation, I shall just state what I humbly conceive to be the reciprocities due from one rank to another.

The king, the father of his people, and the fountain of justice and mercy; from his people, affection and allegiance.

The nobility, the counsellors of the state, and the guardians of the morals of society; from the people, veneration and respect.

The dignified clergy, the fathers, and preachers of a pure religion, beautifully

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fully corresponding with morality, and capable, by the loveliness of its precepts, of spreading peace and good will among all ranks of people; from society, zeal and attachment.

The judges of the law, the guardians of the civil rights of the people; from society, respect and obedience.

The navy and military of this country merit from the people esteem and admiration for character and capacities, that ensure to the island protection from foreign power.

The merchant, who accumulates wealth by fair and honourable traffic, deserves the esteem of his country, in proportion as he increases its prosperity, and employs its inhabitants.

The lesser tradesman, mechanic, labourer, &c, being the class on whom the mass of manual labour lies, deserve from the other parts of society, neighbourly love, and support, to encourage them

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them in industry, and teach them to set a proper value on the protection of their governors, and the laws.

These rights should be preserved to the lower order, with the justice and affection of a good master to a good servant; their wants, moderate as they are, should never fail of supply; every just complaint should have immediate relief; the reward of their labour should be ample, and in a country like this, *even the poor should be rich in the common comforts of life.*

It may be seen, by the above scale of society, how admirably one part depends upon the other, and how exactly the good brought into the common weal by one part, is equi-poised by the good returned by the other. The labour of many is balanced by the superior talents and capacities of a few, without whose learning and abilities, labour would sink in value, and society degenerate again into a state of savage barbarity.

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I have now to appreciate the real worth of the different parts of society, and to show where they have failed in their duty and moral obligations to the rest.

The nobility, without that fixed character, and energy of mind, which by its example governs the morals of the people.

I trust it will be understood that I speak generally: I am happily convinced that many noble branches follow the precepts of their religion, and perform all the moral and social duties of life; yet the character of our nobility has not been preserved. Not many years since, when the lower orders preserved a due respect for their superiors, seldom found in these times, the nobleman, and the peasant, though at a great distance in condition, were of the same social family, brothers, and friends; they met in the church, they pursued the same line of moral duty, and the example of the great was the practice of the poor.

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But the nobility and the people have been put at a distance by the crooked policy of the times, which foolishly hopes for subordination from the lower classes, independent of the only pledge they can have of its sincerity and durability—a sense of religion, and of the moral duties of life.

But the democracy of the French has alarmed the English nobility. Let them recollect that nation immediately before the revolution was become an entire mass of corruption, to which it owed its destruction. The great cause was the irreligion and immorality of the people, and if ever they hope for rest from the convulsions which have followed, it must be again in the sanctuary of religion, without which, morality is imperfect. “Religion is the best pledge of the morals of the people.” *Montes.*

I am now to speak of the clergy of this kingdom, and it is with a satisfaction proceeding from repeated observations on the character and manners of that respectable

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class of men, that I solemnly declare, in opposition to every vulgar prejudice, for I can have none other to encounter, that they are the most valuable members of society to the poor, and, with few exceptions indeed, perform the duties of their profession with true piety and punctual observance. If they are mistaken in any thing, it is in preaching subordination to the lower ranks, which comes ill from the pulpit, where the pure doctrine of Christianity should be un sullied with political differences and party opinion. The Christian religion teaches, without any odious allusions, the principles of subordination; and it is, I believe, sometimes best, to enforce a precept, without the application.

It is my next duty to speak of the great law characters of this kingdom; and here I am unwilling it should be thought I pay a tribute of praise from that respect alone which we are accustomed to show to persons of eminent situation in the same profession. The fact is, that I conceive it will matter lit-

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tle whom I praise or censure, any further than my remarks go along with truth; but I am called upon by the nature of the subject I am treating, to give an open and unbiassed opinion of the conduct and character of every class of society. I therefore declare with sincerity, that I believe, at no period of history, have the morals of the people, and the obligations of natural justice due from one man to another, been more wisely and carefully watched and protected, than by the present judges of the realm. God only knows how strong the swelling tide of depravity might have flowed by this time, had it not been forbid to pass further by integrity seated on the throne of justice.

From the collective reasoning I have listened to from the bench, I have learned more of the relative duties of private life, than I ever attained from books, though reading has been my constant delight, and philosophy the pursuit of inclination.

I have now to appreciate the character of
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the English merchant. If I represent him dealing with exact justice, yet without that spirit of trade mentioned by Montesquieu, and which adheres rigidly to the rules of private interest, of a liberal and humane disposition, assisting the unfortunate, and turning his wealth to the constant advantage of his country, and the benefit of his fellow-creatures, shall I exceed the truth? I will venture the proposition.

How different from the character I shall denominate the mere man of trade, who, without any other principle than the insatiate love of gain, pursues a steady course of arithmetical robbery, taking from all, giving to none!

I lament, that while I am asserting the rights of the poor, I am obliged to confess that the lower order of people of this kingdom, most likely from bad example, are, generally speaking, negligent of the duties of religion, without any fixed character, careless and remiss in the relative duties of life, frequently idle, given to drunkenness, and with
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little restraint from conscience in their dealings with the rest of society; but, perhaps, these deviations are in some measure the effect of their poverty, and not the cause.

It is astonishing, that, when the religion and justice of a country are so pure, the manners of the people should be so corrupt; the fact is, a mass of immorality acts against a small portion of virtuous energy, which, till it increases in strength by the addition of support it may providentially receive from good and well-disposed men, will be unable to check the prevalence of evil.

Let us examine how this vast portion of depravity has become disseminated among the people, and the different shapes it has assumed in the several branches of society. It has certainly needed no other cause for its almost epidemic influence, than the evil principle of man, unchecked, and unresisted, by morality and religion: it appears among the great in the shape of pride, luxury, voluptuousness, and waste; amongst the rich, as
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avarice and the love of gain, pursuing all means of obtaining greater wealth; among the poor it has the same characters, *cæteris paribus*, differing only with education and manners; dishonesty, idleness, inebriety, are prominent features: the *little great* are very much like the common herd.

Majus et minus non variant speciem.

Vain is the attempt of the higher classes to establish personal distinctions, when they are associated by bad morals and corrupt habits with the very dregs of society. What are called young men of fashion, have frequently the same language and the same shocking obscenities with the common drover and carman. Will this disgusting depravity be the means of restoring to us the true character of an English gentleman, humane, benevolent, of courteous manners, softening venial errors with the refinements of the understanding, presenting against their progress the principles of religion and morality, and never allowing them to become a precedent

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to others, or to corrupt the heart; in short, possessing at once, reserve without pride, and dignity without arrogance?

It is to be lamented, as another great cause of depravity, that many of the intelligent, and even learned part of society, are deceived with a false and wretched system of philosophy, at once dangerous to the morals and an enemy to happiness—a philosophy, that has deprived the poor of their valuable hope and trust in religion, and relieved the rich from every scruple of conscience. Specious arguments, apparently strong in proof, but logically false, are offered to confuse the understanding, and annoy the common sense of mankind, till the great point of human wretchedness is attained, deplored by Aristotle: *Anxius vixi, dubius morior; nescio quo vado*—“I have lived anxiously, died in doubt, and know not whither I go.”

I think I may venture a proposition with these learned professors: it is, that the Christian religion is the most perfect system of morality

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morality extant; and may it be cherished again among all ranks, from the highest to the lowest! I shall never consider the ruin of my country complete, while the Bible continues to be part of the furniture of the cottage table.

Let it not be imagined, however, that I am so little a citizen of the world, as to think the precepts of no other religion of value; I hold, that every principle, tending to the one common centre, the moral and physical happiness of man, let it come from the east or the west, the north or the south; whether conveyed in the Koran or the Shaster, from Mahomed or Confucius, are all of value, in proportion to the purity of their precepts, and no doubt acceptable with God.

Perhaps the greatest mischief done by the philosophy of Paine, was the erecting a formidable barrier against truth, by creating a jealousy and suspicious political distrust in the mind of government. That noble difference of opinion, once exerted

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only for the country's good, is now nearly lost to society. All men are classed as aristocrats or democrats, names equally obnoxious to the man of sense, who acknowledges no test but truth.

Having in some degree shown, that a general depravity is the chief, though remote cause of the present wretched state of society, I shall proceed to inquire, what are the more immediate causes of the indigence and necessity of the lower order of people, which I conceive to be principally as follows :

The neglect of agriculture.

The burden of the war.

The weight of taxation.

The offences against the public Weal, monopoly, forestalling, &c. &c.

The neglect of agriculture is another consequence of the unhappy deviations from morality, so sensibly felt in society, and which seem to increase in a considerable ratio the vast share of physical evil, that ignorance, prejudice,

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prejudice, and idleness, have permitted to ravage at large.

The celebrated Marquis de Beccaria begins his introduction to his Essay on Crimes and Punishments, with the following observation, as true as it is disgraceful to the morals of nations :

“ In every human society there is an effort continually tending to confer on one part the height of power and happiness, and to reduce the other to the extreme of weakness and misery.”

The desire of some to receive more than their proper share of benefit from the common Weal, keeps up this effort, which reduces a great number to poverty to raise a few to affluence.

Wealth is a blessing to a country, when, by the wisdom and virtue of the possessors, it is made to flow into the numerous small channels of industry, fertilizing, like the Nile of Egypt, wherever it comes : but it may be the greatest curse, if an insatiate avarice

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rice lays "field to field, till no room is left for the poor;" when the small farm, stocked with the comforts of life, becomes the hovel of a labourer, and its once happy owner a dejected slave.

Must this overgrown mass of evil increase, till it collects itself into that enormous bulk of immorality, that sinks a state?

The burden of the war is another great cause of the indigence and necessity of the lower order of people, besides the weight of taxation. A great number of men, necessarily engaged in the sea and land services, would otherwise be employed as labourers, giving the produce of useful industry to their country. In addition to this, the provisions, of the best quality, allowed to the fleets and armies, cause an unnatural consumption, as nothing is received in return, I mean nothing that can enrich our harvests, and fill our granaries. The country is debited with vast expenses for the support of their fleets and armies, but on the other side, it is creditor

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ditor by their bravery, and the protection they afford to commerce.

The weight of taxation, though intended to fall chiefly on the higher class, and distributed apparently with an equal weight, proportioned to the strength of each individual, yet does not fall where it ought: it merely takes a circuitous road to come to the same point at last, the impoverishment of the country. The landholders, to meet the pressure, raise the rents of their tenants; the farmer, the price of his crop; the merchant indemnifies himself by an advance on the commodity; and each individual, alike, endeavours to balance the deficiency, till at last it is paid by the consumer of the necessary articles of life. Now the poor, who cannot raise the price of their labour to meet the pressure occasioned by the dearth of provisions, suffer, with a degree of injustice, the burden of taxation; they dare not combine, they cannot starve, and are reduced to the mortifying necessity of preferring comparative

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tive wretchedness to absolute want. Let us turn away from this affecting picture, and hope for peace.

But to proceed to the more immediate causes of the indigence and necessity of the lower order of people, occasioned by monopoly, forestalling, &c. &c. against which to find a remedy, is the proper object of my labours.

Offences against the health of the public have certainly been permitted; the poor have patiently suffered the undue weight and influence of wealth, till the pressure has become insupportable.

Pity it is, that men cannot see that their best interest is to be just and fair to each other; and that they do not hesitate a little longer between right and wrong.

Judge Blackstone, in his excellent Commentaries on the Laws of England, says, "As the Creator is a Being, of not only infinite power and wisdom, but also of infinite goodness; he has been pleased so to contrive
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the constitution and frame of humanity, that we should want no other prompter, to inquire after and pursue the rule of right, than our self-love:" a truth, the experience of life will one day or other prove to our regret.

The man who imposes on the weakness of his neighbour, under the impression that it will serve his own true interests, is in all cases betrayed and deceived; the fact is, that, by such a breach of the civil compact, he becomes exposed to constant warfare; his conscience renders him irksome and dissatisfied with himself; and when the statement is fairly made, he will find more is subtracted from his account of happiness, than has been added to it by a mean or selfish action.

It will be proper to impress upon the minds of the wealthy, the reasoning forcibly inculcated by Locke, in his "Considerations of lowering the Interest:" *When a nation is running to decay and ruin, the merchants,*
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and monied men, do what you can, will be sure to starve at last.

Let us briefly sum up the chief causes of the present unhappy state of society, and of the miseries of the poor.

First, A general depravity.

Secondly, The luxury of the rich.

Thirdly, The neglect of agriculture.

Fourthly, The abuses of monopoly, forestalling, &c.

The general depravity must be opposed at once, by a virtuous energy and desire among the upper classes of people, to pursue the pure precepts of religion and morality, as best suited to the interests of society, and of the nation.

The luxury of the great and rich, the great and rich have the power, and, I hope, the desire to avoid. It is to be done easily: by turning the effect against the cause, and instead of making it praiseworthy to give public entertainments,

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tertainments, where the gaping mouth of waste swallows more than all the guests, let it be praiseworthy, let it be fashionable, to place only on their tables an economical, choice repast of delicate and wholesome food. I believe among many persons of fashion this economy is already begun: it is more elegant, more refined, more suited to the tables of those who meet to converse and not to gormandize*.

The neglect of agriculture proceeds chiefly from the little stimulus there is given to the industrious to exert themselves. I conceive the only way to remedy this misfortune will be to cherish again an useful being, almost annihilated in this country, the little farmer.

* "The sole glory of the rich man is, to consume and destroy, and his grandeur consists in lavishing in one day upon the expense of his table, what would procure subsistence for many families; he abuses equally animals and his fellow-creatures, a great part of whom, a prey to famine, and languishing in misery, labour, and toil, to satisfy his immoderate desires and insatiable vanity, who destroying others by want, destroys himself by excess."—BUFFON.

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The rich too have the power to do this ; they may branch out their estates in small farms, stock them for the tenants, and be remunerated by a small additional rent. I believe the owners would have no reason to repent the plan. A house in small tenements lets out to greater advantage than the floors together ; indeed I conceive the rent-rolls would be considerably more (even allowing for the incapacity of some of the occupiers to pay their rent), than they are at present, branched into large farms, that check industry, and cause the neglect of agriculture.

The use of oxen for the purposes of husbandry, in the plough, teams, &c. would lessen considerably the consumption of oats, and much of the ground appropriated to that grain might be sowed with wheat ; a high duty should also be laid on all horses of pleasure. These concurring efforts, tending to the same point of national prudence, would alter the face of things : small weights help to turn the balance.

Abuses

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Abuses must and will exist in all governments ; but the great depredations of immorality and injustice should be checked in time by wise laws and regulations.

Let not the monstrous hand of Monopoly grasp away the comforts of the poor,

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CHAP. V.

Of Monopoly, &c. &c.

THE word monopoly is derived from the Greek, and signifies, a selling alone. Fore-stalling is the buying or bargaining for corn, cattle, &c. by the way, before it comes to the market or fair to be sold: the word is derived from the Saxon *fore*, i. e. *via*, and *stel*. Re-grating is the buying and selling a commodity in the same market or fair, or within five miles thereof.

Engrossing is, properly, the buying the whole of a commodity, or an unreasonable quantity of it, for the purpose of selling it out at an enhanced price.

All monopolies, even granted from the king, are void at common law, being against the freedom of trade, and discouraging labour and industry, putting it in the power
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of particular persons to set what price they please on a commodity.

Forestalling, ingrossing, and regrating, are offences at common law, as will be shown in a following chapter.

The growth of monopoly has increased with the bulk of wealth in the country. It is an improvement on speculation, inasmuch as it is a combination of rich men to make the advantages of the trade a certainty, by governing or directing its usual vicissitudes in their own favour*.

I should think myself extremely unworthy of attention, if I joined the common hue

* I cannot help remarking, in this place, the great encouragement paper credit, and the usual accommodation of country bankers, give to monopoly, forestalling, &c.: a recent fact is well authenticated. A grazier, who had occasion to take his cattle to market, to raise a present supply, was informed, in a letter from his salesman, that if he kept them a little longer, he could get a greater price; this letter was shown to the country banker, who immediately accommodated him with the sum, for that purpose.

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and cry against monopoly, or permitted my feelings to be mistakenly excited against an object that existed only in idea. In my attempt to disprove the reasoning of Dr. Adam Smith, I shall enter more fully into the argument, as the refutation of his propositions will, in a great degree, be the establishment of mine. I shall, for the present, only state positions afterwards to be proved; they are as follows:

First, That the mealmen of the present day are mostly wealthy men.

Secondly, That the wealthy mealmen are in a constant and uniform combination to regulate the price of corn, as may best serve their interests.

Thirdly, That the farmer, mistakenly, conceives it to be his interest to submit to the management of the mealman.

Fourthly, That the mealmen are in the habit of engrossing corn.

Fifthly,

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Fifthly, That a combination of mealmen govern the market.

Sixthly, That the abuses of forestalling, regrating, &c. actually exist.

I shall now attempt to disprove the arguments of Dr. Adam Smith on monopoly, and then, to use a legal phrase, sum up the evidence, both positive and presumptive, in support of the propositions I have stated,

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CHAP. VI.

The Reasoning of Dr. Adam Smith, as it applies to Monopoly, disproved.

WE are too apt, when a great name is affixed to a work, to make our estimate accordingly; and where a man is known to be a philosopher, to give implicit belief to his assertions, on subjects on which he is supposed to be well informed. It is however a poor compliment to such a writer, to be so very indolent as not to read enough to judge, or so unfair as to deny him an examination, flattering to his abilities, and which might prove the particular, as well as general merit of his book.

I should very properly be considered vain and presumptuous, if I attempted to refute the general principles established by the author of the Inquiry into the Nature and Causes

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Causes of the Wealth of Nations: one cannot enough admire the great scale of human knowledge to be traced in his capacious and well-informed understanding.

It will not, I trust, be difficult to discover, at what point the researches of that intelligent writer, on the subject of monopoly, were intercepted. No man better knew the causes and consequences of great events; no man better knew the history of commerce, or the probable chances of trade; but then it was the fair game. He was unacquainted with the machinery and stage trick of the Corn Exchange, since exposed to public view: he would now be convinced he had sought for intelligence where it could not be pure; that is, from interested parties, from very *clever* men, mealmen and jobbers, who afforded him every information, but that which they thought prudent to conceal.

It is most likely, from these reasons, that, if we pursue that author's observations on monopoly, beyond the general principles of trade,

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trade, we shall find many false propositions and assertions, which, to use a professional expression, "have been put in his brief," without evidence to support them.

Dr. Adam Smith commences his digression with some very just remarks on the unmerited praises given to that mistaken and impolitic act, which establishes a bounty on the exportation of wheat; and then proceeds to divide the corn trade into four branches: first, the trade of the inland dealer; secondly, that of the merchant importer for home consumption; thirdly, that of the merchant exporter of home produce, for foreign consumption; and fourthly, that of the merchant carrier, or the importer of corn to export it again. Now these I consider, with Dr. Adam Smith, to be the different divisions of the fair trade; and, as he does not make any mention of the subdivision of the first branch, into jobbers, &c. it is probable he was unacquainted with the existence of that *most reputable* class of men: the Doctor, therefore,

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therefore, setting out with a false proposition, wanders in plausible error through the rest of the subject.

Dr. Adam Smith observes, that the interest of the inland dealer, and that of the great body of the people, are exactly the same; that it is the dealer's interest to raise the price of his corn as high as the real scarcity of the season requires, and it can never be his interest to raise it higher; but concludes his observation with another erroneous proposition, that by raising the price he discourages the consumption, and puts every body, more or less, but particularly the inferior ranks of people, upon thrift and good management. Strange! that a man so well acquainted with human nature, should not have recollected, that bread is an article that cannot be spared: the necessity of having it will always ensure the dealer success in his abominable machinations. Hunger will give a high price for food. It would be hard for the labouring man, who exhausts his strength daily,

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to be abridged of nourishment; perhaps he might consent to it, but the baker would be offered his whole week's wages sooner than his wife and children should want. The first law of nature seems extremely favourable to the views of monopoly.

Dr. Adam Smith compares the ingenious management of the dealer in corn, in times of scarcity, to the prudent regard the captain of a ship has for the preservation of his crew, who puts his people on short allowance; there is however difference enough to make the cases totally dissimilar. The crew of a ship have evidence of a real scarcity; we have no evidence of any real scarcity; it is all enveloped in the mystery of trade—but we are pretty well convinced of the ingenuity of dealers in making artificial want.

The same author speaks of the indignation excited against the dealer as a peculiar hardship. I have reason to think this is balanced in the account of *cash* creditor.

The Doctor then says, "Were it possible, indeed,

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indeed, for one great company of merchants to possess themselves of the whole crop of an extensive country, it might perhaps be their interest to deal with it as the Dutch are said to do with the spices of the Moluccas, to destroy or throw away a considerable part of them, in order to keep up the price of the rest." I am afraid the English corn-dealer and Dutch spice-merchant may shake hands; and though mealmen have not been incorporated, their minds and interests have a close copartnership.

It is curious, that throughout the whole of the Doctor's observations on the corn trade, he presupposes fair open dealing, and then draws his conclusion from those premises; and thus reasoning right from wrong principles, proceeds to the minor proposition before the major is admitted.

The Doctor next makes a remark that inclines me to think he was not personally acquainted with any of these gentlemen dealers in corn, or he would have known their circumstances

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cumstances better, and that, whatever men they might have been to the public, they were certainly *good men* on 'Change.

It is a well-known fact, that one mealman near the metropolis can furnish in a few hours the whole stock in money of the London Mill Company.

Dr. Adam Smith goes on to observe, that the farmers and dealers are too much dispersed about the country to enter into a general combination. I will allow it, for the moment; but partial combinations are equally destructive to the Common Weal: a combination at Bristol will do the same mischief there, as a combination at the Corn Exchange will do in London. But it is somewhat remarkable that the Doctor contradicts his argument in another part of his work: speaking of masters in manufacturing trades, he observes: "We rarely hear, it has been said, of the combinations of masters, though frequently of those of workmen; but whoever imagines, upon this account, that masters rarely combine,

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is as ignorant of the world as of the subject: masters are always and every where in a sort of *tacit*, but constant and uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labour above their actual rate." The reader will easily see where the application may be made, and judge whether the same constant and uniform combination does not exist among dealers in corn, to keep up the price of the article.

The same intelligent author observes, that whoever examines with attention the history of the dearths and famines, will, he believes, find that a dearth has never arisen from any combination among the inland dealers in corn. How far they might have assisted to do it, he does not say.

The Doctor considers excessive drought, or excessive rain, as the most unfavourable seasons for corn; but he says, that the distribution of high and low lands is so equal, that what is lost in one part of the country, is compensated by what is gained in the
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other: this makes strongly against real scarcity, at almost any season, particularly when importation is also allowed.

He next adverts to the impropriety of compelling dealers to sell their corn at what is supposed to be a reasonable price. This, he says, by hindering them from bringing their grain to market, may have the most dangerous consequences. I readily allow this proposition.

The Doctor continues: "No trade deserves more the full protection of the law, and no trade requires it so much, because no trade is so much exposed to popular odium." This, I presume, is meant to apply to the fair trade.

Dr. Adam Smith seems to admit, that the corn-merchant is generally in contract with the farmers to furnish him corn for a certain number of years at a certain price. It is no wonder, therefore, that agriculture is discouraged, when the farmer, as well as the

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the consumer, are subject to the management of the inland dealer.

Another opinion of the Doctor's is, that the dealer's extravagant profit is no more than sufficient to put his trade on a level with other trades, and to compensate for the losses he sustains from the perishable nature of the commodity and the fluctuation of its price: but the fact is, the fluctuations are all his own, he governs the incidents of trade, and even the perishable nature of the commodity assists his designs. The corn trade is not a speculation, but ingenious management which turns every thing to advantage.

It is really astonishing, that a writer of such eminent abilities should be so much mistaken as to state the following propositions: That great fortunes are as seldom made in this as in any other trade; that it is abandoned to an inferior set of dealers, millers, bakers, mealmen, and meal-factors, together with a number of wretched huck-

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sters, who are the only middle men, that, in the home market, come between the grower and the consumer." How little pains, sometimes, do men of the first abilities take to be correct, and how falsely do we appreciate the characters and conditions of men! It is known to every one, that mealmen (who by the by are millers) are some of the richest individuals in the country. The wretched hucksters the Doctor speaks of, are, no doubt, of the same genus with the eminent jobbers: how little was he acquainted with the natural history of the species!

The Doctor next observes, that the ancient policy of Europe encouraged the popular odium against the dealers in corn, and mentions the acts made in the 5th and 6th years of the reign of Edward VI. I will maintain as long as I have breath to draw, that the ancient or modern policy of men and nations, kings and ministers, is only just and valuable as far as it agrees with truth and morality.

The reason of the acts is stated in the pre-
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ambles, which give a concise view of forestalling and regrating; they were made agreeable to the common law of the land, and the repealing them was at once impolitic and absurd.

This great author next observes, that our ancestors seemed to have imagined the people would have bought their corn cheaper of the farmer than of the corn-merchant, who, they were afraid, would have an exorbitant profit to himself; they endeavoured, therefore, to annihilate his trade altogether; they endeavoured to hinder, as much as possible, any middle man, of any kind, from coming between the grower and the consumer. Our ancestors seem to have discovered pretty well where the evil lay, and if they had encouraged fair trade, at the same time they discouraged fraud and deceit, we should never have had occasion to repeal those statutes. He next very justly observes, that the farmer ought not to exercise the trade of a corn-merchant, as it would divide his capital

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tal and prevent him from employing it in the cultivation of his land. This is extremely true: corn-factors are necessary people, but then all corn should be sent to the market and sold but once.

He next enlarges on the great advantages that would accrue to the country, by turning the farming stock of the kingdom to its proper business, the cultivation of land; this I trust would be done more effectually if the farmer's endeavours were not subject to the schemes of the mealman.

The Doctor then mentions the statute of the 15th of Charles II. by which the engrossing or buying of corn to sell again, as long as the price did not exceed 48s. was declared lawful to all persons not being fore-stallers, that is, not selling again in the same market within three months; and then goes on to say, that if a merchant ever buys up corn, either going to a particular market, or in a particular market, it must be because he judges that the market cannot be so liberally supplied

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supplied through the whole season, as upon that particular occasion, and that the price, therefore, must soon rise: if he judges wrong in this, and if the price does not rise, he not only loses the whole profit of the stock which he employs in this manner, but a part of the stock itself, by the expence and loss which necessarily attend the storing and keeping of corn. I believe we have a complete answer to this: he does not always store the corn, but sells it again in less than an hour, in the same market, at an advanced price; or if he does store it, he can manage, with the assistance of his friends, to create a scarcity whenever he pleases.

The Doctor continues: "He hurts himself, therefore, much more essentially than he can hurt even the people, whom he may hinder from supplying themselves on that particular market-day, because they may afterwards supply themselves, just as cheap, upon any other day." It must be presumed, not just

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as cheap when the market is rising; and the dealer knows better than to buy under any other circumstances.

Dr. Adam Smith also makes the following observation: "In a real scarcity the best thing that can be done for the people, is to divide the inconvenience of it as equally as possible through the different months, weeks, and days of the year: the interest of the corn-merchant makes him study to do this as exactly as he can; and no other person can have the same interest, the same knowledge, or the same abilities to do it so exactly as he." I think the dealer is not quite disinterested enough to do this altogether for the public good. But this eminent author's most remarkable assertion is, that the popular fears of engrossing and forestalling may be compared to the popular terrors and suspicions of witchcraft. I admit the resemblance of the popular terrors, except that there is a little more reality in one than
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in the other: the mealman's is a kind of natural or rather arithmetical magic; a *black art*, infinitely beyond all the supernatural intelligence of a wizard.

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CHAP. VII.

*The Existence of the Offences of Monopoly,
Forestalling, &c. proved.*

I BELIEVE every day's experience of facts must have gone a great way to refute the principles laid down by Dr. Adam Smith on monopoly, without much reasoning on the subject; I shall, however, add some few observations, warranted by the positive and presumptive evidence obtained, some within my own reach and knowledge, some authenticated by the testimony of intelligent and worthy men, and others still more strongly proved by the unwilling evidence of interested parties themselves, in support of the propositions I have endeavoured to establish.

I believe it is allowed me that mealmen are in general wealthy individuals.

The second proposition, that they are in a constant

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constant and uniform combination to regulate the price of corn as may best serve their interests*, has been pretty well proved by the reasoning of Dr. Adam Smith, on the existence of other combinations; it is extremely difficult to get positive evidence of the fact. The combination does not act in any fixed or marked character, but consists in a general and uniform consent to do the best they can for their own interest, however against the interest of the public; their mode of diffusing the secrets of monopoly, like Weishaupt's scale to the illuminati†, arranges the plan, and communicates it to all its members at once.

The third proposition, that the farmer mistakenly conceives it to be his interest to submit to the management of the mealman, is

* Mealmen, till they have bought in their stocks of wheat, by combinations, lower the markets; but when they have engrossed great quantities into their own hands, by management and artifice in the market, they sell the flour at an exorbitant price.

† See Barruel's Memoirs.

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a well-known fact in the country. The farmers, to save themselves the trouble and expense of sending corn to market, and to gain the advantage of a quick return of their capital, open their barns to the mealman at the price he offers, submitting to a management diametrically opposite to their true interests.

It would be to the advantage of the farmer that all corn should be sent to market: the difference of the price it would fetch, would sufficiently compensate for the trouble. It would not be advisable for farmers to turn corn-dealers, as it would take them from the great business of husbandry; but the course to be taken would be very simple and easy; it should be sold by the factor, who would then be a useful person, and the whole profit would be the farmer's. Dr. Adam Smith admits that the farmers are sometimes in contract for two or three years with the dealers: I will leave any thinking mind to judge whether they

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they are gainers or losers by these ill-judged agreements.

The fourth proposition, that the mealmen are in the habit of engrossing corn*, is admitted by Dr. Adam Smith, but it is denied that the practice is detrimental to the public. The reasoning, however, on which the common law against engrossing is grounded, is strong, distinct, and clear; it is not the language of speculative philosophy; it is that broad, plain, common sense, to which the mind assents as easily as to the problem, that the sides of a right-angle triangle are equal.

The fifth proposition, that a combination of mealmen govern the market, has been proved from the authority of men whose duty requires them to attend Mark Lane, and who admit that a few opulent individuals have the entire guidance of that place, and return to the meal-weighers what price they please

* A farmer in Hertfordshire having said he could always tell when it was likely to be a plentiful year, and being asked in what way? humorously answered, "It is when Mr. M. buys no corn."

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for flour, which price they artfully regulate by sales to the necessitous bakers, and give to the meal-weighers as the *bona fide* sale, by which means the assize of bread is advanced. A quarter of wheat is eight bushels, which usually yields from five to six bushels of flour, according to the quality of the wheat. It has lately happened when the price of bread has been fixed from the average price of flour being 5*l.* per sack, that the baker has been obliged to pay at the rate of five guineas. This can only be accounted for by the management of the mealmen, who will not grind but when they choose. There is no law to compel them to sell their flour, and in vain is the price of wheat reduced, when it cannot reduce in proportion the price of meal.

The sixth proposition, that the abuses of forestalling, regrating, &c. actually exist, has been proved in a court of justice. It is impossible for the common sense of mankind to be played upon so successfully as to assent to a contrary belief. Not all the ingenious
perspective

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perspective into which abilities or science could throw the transaction can place it in a favourable point of view; not all the cloaks of consummate falsehood heaped together, could cover this mass of iniquity so as not to be seen; not even the new system of logic set up by the country gentleman, can convince us of the *harmlessness* and *inoffensiveness* of his friends. In attempting to clear up characters like these, he resembles the varnisher of a bad picture, who only brings forward its deformities.

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CHAP. VIII.

*The Insufficiency of legal Remedies against
Monopoly, &c.*

I SHALL just give a short account of the principal bills, and regulations of the legislature, with respect to monopoly; forestalling; &c. because it will be somewhat a curious inquiry to trace the rude honesty of our ancestors, gradually refining with the growth of riches and luxury, into improvement and corruption.

From these acts passed at different periods, useful lessons on the weakness and inconstancy of human wisdom may be drawn, demolishing one fabric of absurdity, to raise up another, and leaving the historian's page a contemptible display of human folly.

All monopolies, even granted by the king, are void at common law, being against the freedom

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freedom of trade, and discouraging labour and industry, putting it in the power of particular persons to set what price they please on a commodity.

This is the reasoning on which the common law is grounded, and in which, even now, the common sense of mankind must join.

The offences of forestalling and regrating, being offences at common law by the common custom of the realm, before any act of parliament, sufficiently show in how detestable a light our ancestors viewed this practice.

“ All endeavours whatever to enhance the common price of any merchandise, and all kinds of practice which have any apparent tendency thereto, whether by spreading false rumours, or by buying things in a market before the accustomed hour, or by buying, and selling the same thing again in the same market, or by any other such like devices, are highly criminal at common law, and all
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such offences anciently came under the general notion of forestalling, which included engrossing, regrating, and all kinds of offences of this nature." Haw. P. C. 234. 3 Inst. 195, 196.

"And surely there can be no attempt of this kind but must be looked upon as a high offence against the public, as it apparently tends to put a check upon trade, to the general inconvenience of the people, by putting it out of their power to supply themselves with corn without an unnecessary expence, which often proves extremely oppressive to the poorer sort, and cannot but give just cause of complaint to the richest." 1 Haw. P. C. 234.

"No person can lawfully buy within the realm any merchandise in gross, and sell the same in gross again, because by such means the price will be enhanced; for the more hands any merchandise passeth through, the dearer it must grow, because every one will make his profit of it."

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Is this reasoning or not? Is it not a plain simple proposition?

"And if such practices were allowed, a rich man might engross into his hands a whole commodity, and then sell it out at such price as he should think fit; which is of such dangerous consequence, that the bare engrossing a whole commodity with intent to sell it at an unreasonable price, is indictable at the common law, whether any part of it be sold by the engrosser or not." 1 Haw. P. C. 234. 3 Inst. 196.

"And so jealous is the common law of all practice of this kind, that it will not suffer corn to be sold in the sheaf, perhaps for this reason, because by this means the market is in effect forestalled." 1 Haw. P. C. 235. 237.

What would our ancestors have said to corn-dealers contracting with farmers for the crops of three years—admitted by Dr. Adam Smith?

"It is said that by an ancient statute

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the offender should be grievously amerced for the first offence, condemned to the pillory for the second, and be compelled to abjure the *ville* for the third; and at this day offences of the kind are punishable by fine and imprisonment upon an indictment of common law." 1 Haw. P. C. 235. 3 Inst. 197.

The ordinance for bakers, &c. *incert. temp. c. 10.* made during the reigns of Henry III. Edward I. or II.; but uncertain when, or in which of their times, is another relic of the wisdom and honesty of our ancestors.

"No forestaller shall be suffered to live in any town who manifestly is an oppressor of the poor, a public enemy of the country, who meeting grain, fish, or other things coming to be sold, doth make haste to buy them before another, thirsting after wicked gain, oppressing the poor, and deceiving the rich, and by that means goeth about to sell the things much dearer than he that brought them; who cometh about merchant strangers, and offereth

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them help in the sale of their wares, and informeth them that they may sell their wares dearer than they meant to have done; he that is convicted thereof the first time, shall be amerced, and shall lose the thing so bought according to the custom of the town; he that is convicted the second time, shall have judgment of the pillory, the third time he shall be imprisoned and confined, the fourth he shall abjure the town."

Then follow statutes expressly made to prevent these abuses: the statute 2d and 3d Edward VI. chap. 15.; 5th and 6th Edward VI. chap. 14.; 5th Elizabeth, chap. 12.; 15th Car. II. chap. 17. grounded on the same rules of reason with the common law.

Now I conceive that it requires great consideration before we are tempted to disturb or repeal any act of the legislature, as most probably they were not framed without wisdom and caution. A change of the circumstances of the times may, in some cases, make it necessary;

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cessary ; but if the principle of an act is the same with the rule of reason from which the common law is derived, it must stand for ever ; the repealing of it is a mere nugatory effort of party or prejudice ; the law is still the same, and without statute, ordinance, or regulation, commands assent : what is against reason *cannot stand* ; what is with reason cannot be *annulled*. We shall now see how the legislature abandoned the principle it had for ages pursued, and established the contrary proposition, not judging between the restraint of fair trade, which ought never to be permitted, and the wise restraints against monopoly and forestalling, which are the protection of the fair dealer, and of the true interests of trade ; the defects of the former acts were, that they did not allow a free exportation and importation of corn, not that they restrained practices prejudicial to trade. The preamble to the act 12th George III. is as follows : “ Whereas it has been found by experience, that the restraints laid by several statutes

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statutes upon the dealing in corn, meal, flour, cattle, and sundry other sorts of victuals, by preventing a free trade in the said commodity, have a tendency to discourage the growth, and to enhance the price of the same ; which statutes, if put in execution, would bring great distress upon the interests of many parts of this kingdom, and in part upon the cities of London and Westminster : be it therefore enacted.”

I will ask, what are we to act from ? the rules of reason, or the rules of nonsense ? To say that restraints against dishonest practices in a trade are an injury to its freedom, is to say that a proposition can be both true and false at the same time : see how it stands : “ The best protection to trade is honesty.” —Honesty is an injury to trade.

The freedom of trade, like the municipal law, *commands what is right, and prohibits what is wrong.*

All that was wanting was a free exportation, and importation, checked by the proper

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per restraints of the former acts as to engrossing, forestalling, regrating, &c. Encouragement would then have been given to fair trade, and the wise restraints against its abuses would have remained.

Without the spirit of the acts of the 2d and 3d Edward VI. and the 5th and 6th Edward VI. is restored by parliament, nothing effectual can be done. The common law, though open to all who choose to seek the relief it affords, will be resorted to, but by few: we have to trust merely to individual pique, or resentment, to bring the *secret* transactions of trade to light; and when the parties come to a better understanding, the unpleasant task of bringing neighbours and brother-dealers into court, will be abandoned as very *improper* and *impolitic*.

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CHAP. IX.

The Insufficiency of public Measures already taken against Monopoly, &c.

IT does not appear that any public measures already taken, are equal to meet the calamity. They are rather speculations against monopoly, than means derived from that sort of wisdom which may be justly called, *Magis experiendo, quam discendo*.

As yet we have only to lament that nothing to the purpose has been done. Slow and majestic resolutions have been passed, and annulled; much breath has been spent in argument, and much time lost in "strenuous idleness."

We must, however, give Government and magistrates credit for good intentions; it has been found a matter of great difficulty to unravel the mysteries of monopoly, forestalling,

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&c. but as they have at last been drawn out and exposed, let us hope a remedy is not far off.

Among the public measures adopted against the oppression of monopoly, the London Mill Company ranks highest as a benevolent institution. To the characters of the proprietors is attached that respectability which gives a sufficient guarantee to the world of pure and patriotic intentions.

It is in effect, opposing a gross and offensive monopoly, by a monopoly for the public good.

I am, however, afraid it can never be carried into execution; the plan is defective *ab origine*, and the act an incongruous mass of permission and restraint, power and proscription.

The first difficulty that may reasonably be looked for, will be an abated energy in its managers; for it is not easy to believe, that men who are constantly occupied and engaged, both on the great scale of public and
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private affairs, will be able to find the time and unwearied attention the institution requires, and which certainly cannot be comprised in weekly meetings. It may be said they will have servants capable of the undertaking: servants, I will admit, may attend to the minutiae of trade. It is easy to find book-keepers; but the extensive system which unites the public interest with the interest of the proprietors, must be formed in the mind, and operate from the talents of men who have time to think and act, and whose object may be liberal recompense, who are capable of active penetration and constant perseverance, superior to obstacle, and who can turn every thing to the fair advantage of the establishment.

Such, as near as possible, should be the conductors of the London Mill Company.

But a more serious difficulty presents itself in the certainty of a powerful competition. It is a fact received in evidence, that the Albion Mill Company felt the necessity of
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coming to an agreement with their competitors, who had been underfelling them for a length of time; and this agreement was proposed by a servant of that concern.

It being impossible for the London Mill Company to come to any such agreement, it is next to impossible that they can withstand a combination assisted with all the skilful management of the trade.

Symptoms of the *vis inertiae* have already appeared. As yet the design and the execution preserve the same distance as at first: surely by this time the Company should have become acquainted with the people, their plan should have been published, and their views better explained to a jealous public. Temporary mills and bakehouses should have been procured and set to work, till the great scale of the design had had time to arrive at maturity, and the spirit of exertion had been mixed with the public spirit of the times.

The proprietors of this establishment are the patrons and friends of every charitable institution.

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institution. How much better suited to their characters, would it have been to have instituted a charity by voluntary contributions, to have supplied the industrious poor of large families, or such as were in sickness, with a portion of bread, leaving the active and healthy to meet the pressure by their own honest exertions, not to give relief to any whose real situation was unknown to the subscribers?

Notwithstanding I foresee difficulties innumerable in the execution of the benevolent design of the London Mill Company, it has, I am sure, the hearty wishes of every good man for its success, and I most firmly believe that both the managers and projectors have come forward with the plan from the purest principles and motives.

CHAP. X.

*Thoughts on the probable Means of Remedy
against Monopoly, Forestalling, &c. &c.*

IS there no plan by which Administration might check the growth of monopoly, without injuring the honest views of trade? Is there no way by which they might make the scarcity of the season a cause of much honour and credit to themselves? like the Emperor Trajan, whom Pliny delicately praises for the care he took of the people, by making ample provision of corn to supply their necessities in a season when the Nile failed to give the land of Egypt its fruitful inundation: *Nilus Ægyptio quodæ sæpe sed gloriæ nostræ nunquam largior fluxit*—"The Nile never flowed higher for the glory of the Romans."

I shall first state the chief cause of the annual

annual scarcity of corn, which I conceive to be the injudicious restraints occasioned by the want of a free exportation and importation. In favour of which remedy I shall be supported by the great principles of commerce, and the reasoning of the wisest men, approved by experience and trial. "When Sully entered on the administration of the French finances, the corn in France was at an exorbitant price, occasioned by the neglect of husbandry during the civil war; that sagacious minister discovered the secret of re-establishing agriculture, and of reducing the price of corn, which is to allow a free exportation: so rapid was the success of that bold but politic measure, that in a few years France became the granary of Europe." Lord Kaims's Sketches, vol. ii. page 236.

This great national object cannot however be attempted, before sufficient time shall be given for industry to start forward in aid of its completion: a public notice should be advertised

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advertised in the Gazette, that, after the harvest from the next sowing, exportation shall be free.

But let us see what public measures it will be proper to adopt to meet the pressure of the moment. The great present object appears to be that of producing an early importation of corn: the price will bring foreigners to the country. Government must take care it is sold openly in the market; and to do this effectually, we conceive the following measures are necessary:

First, A plan to prevent future combinations among farmers or dealers.

Secondly, A plan to prevent middlemen, or jobbers, coming between the factor (the representative of the farmer) and the mealman.

Thirdly, A plan by which an affize of flour might be fixed to bear a due proportion to the price of wheat.

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I now venture, with submission to Government, to offer, as a plan embracing these beneficial views, the establishment of a popular progressive excise.

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CHAP. XI.

A popular progressive Excise on Corn, Flour, &c. &c. suggested.

WHAT I mean by a popular excise, is one from which the *revenue* shall derive no benefit; an excise solely for the *public good*, for the purpose of enforcing *proper* restraints on trade, the produce of which excise shall be applied to pay the salaries of proper officers, and the surplus bestowed in bounties to little farmers, for corn cultivated and brought to open market, in proportion to the quantity.

This plan would, I trust, be agreeable to the principles of trade. Montesquieu, who understood those principles well, says, "The constraint of the merchant is not the constraint of commerce;" and in the same chapter observes, that the English constrain the merchant, but it is in favour of commerce.

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In favour of the fair corn trade, I venture to recommend an excise, because I am sure no other remedy can reach *the disease*; and I am satisfied that the farmers of this country will have occasion to rejoice in a plan that will give them the first fruits of their labour, which they have hitherto shared with the dealers.

Though we have not hitherto equalled other countries in the accuracy of calculation and in the work of intelligence, yet I believe there are men to be found, who would possess Government with a statement of the average consumption of corn throughout the kingdom—a necessary measure in the plan I venture to recommend: of which the following is a prospectus.

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CHAP. XII.

Prospectus of Plan.

THREE commissioners, 500*l.* per annum each.

Duty—To receive the returns from the different inspectors of the consumption of corn.

To receive the returns of the different inspectors of corn-fields and granaries throughout England and Wales.

To estimate from those returns the probability of the country being supplied with corn through the year, on which estimate is to be settled the *ratio* of the progressive excise, which shall be made to *increase* or *decrease* on the stock of the farmer, and mealman or dealer, in an equal ratio with the *plenty* or *scarcity* of corn in the markets; the great object of the commissioners being, by prudent management, to *divide* the inconveniences of scarcity
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equally through the year, *increasing* the tax in plenty till it produces the supply wanted and no more, and *decreasing* it in scarcity, to the end that a prudent reserve might remain in the barns to answer future exigency.

This would not injure but assist the true interests of the farmer, which are, to secure a fair and liberal profit, and quick return of his capital without risk or speculation: in short, an excise intended merely for the purpose of intelligence, and to detect abuses, and not at all as a burden on the farmer or dealer.

Twelve clerks, salaries 100*l.* each. Duty—To make entries and proper minutes, &c. &c. under the direction of the commissioners.

Inspector general of corn-returns, 300*l.* per annum.—To receive and average the returns supplied by the inspectors, and to prepare the estimates for the commissioners.

Inspectors of the consumption and produce, appointed for different districts, to be chosen from persons of small independent property, of good character: salary 100*l.*

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Having thus far shown what has suggested itself to my mind, as a full and adequate means to prevent combination, I shall proceed to that part of the design which aims at the annihilation of monopoly, forestalling, engrossing, and regrating, by destroying the race of jobbers and middle-men, the *go-betweens* of trade, *whose knowledge we cannot believe is always exerted for the public good.*

I conceive this may be included in the same plan, by appointing inspectors of the principal markets, who shall grant a permit for every sale, expressing the quantity sold and the feller's and buyer's names, with a heavy penalty if he permits the same article to be resold in the same market; this inspector also to return to the meal-weighers the proper price for flour, to be regulated in proportion to the price of wheat.

The inspector of the London market to have a salary of 500*l.* per annum.

The inspectors of other principal markets to have 300*l.* per annum.

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An inspector of the principal mills.
Duty—To take weekly the stocks of different millers, and *mark* the bags of flour as they are filled, with the price, as *regulated* in the market, and *at which* they shall be sold. Shifting the flour into other bags, or forging the mark, to be felony.

This will prevent mealmen from asking what price they please for flour, which they do at the present time with impunity, as they are not obliged to sell at the price returned to the meal-weighers, that *ceremony* being merely to settle the assize of bread.

Buying or selling corn, above a certain quantity, without proper permits, to be transportation.

Small farmers, or mealmen, and dealers in the country, to be allowed to sell or buy small quantities, not exceeding a quarter of wheat or a sack of flour, provided it is removed, and no other transaction between the buyer and feller on the same market-day.

By these means the farmer will have a sure

sure and handsome profit for his grain; the miller will have his, fairly affixed, in proportion to the price of wheat; and will only be compelled to do what honesty requires, to sell his flour at a liberal profit.

If this plan *determines* the line between the advantages of fair trade and the abuses of trade, if it fixes the *point of profit* at which the moderate dealer will be *content* to employ his capital and exert his industry, or *abandon* his pursuits as unprofitable; if it gives freedom to trade, by restraining its *abuses* only, it has probably come nearer perfection than any design hitherto suggested.

I leave it however to wiser heads to decide on the merits of the plan, feeling at least the self-satisfaction, that my time has not been mispent while employed in the service of the industrious and much-neglected poor.

THE END.