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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

SCARCITY AND HIGH PRICE

OF

Bread-Corn and Bread.

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ON THE

SCARCITY AND HIGH PRICES

OF

Bread-corn and Bread

AT THE MARKET;

SUGGESTING THE REMEDIES

IN

A SERIES OF LETTERS;

FIRST PRINTED IN THE CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE,
AND SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN

BY GOVERNOR POWNALL.

CAMBRIDGE,

PRINTED BY FRANCIS HODSON,

SOLD BY MESS. WILKIE, PATERNOSTER-ROW; AND
MR. DEBRET, PICCADILLY, LONDON.

1795.

Preface of the Editor.

THE following Publication was in the course of this last summer printed in the CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE. Although when it appeared in detached letters it might seem miscellaneous; yet it is now seen that it forms a regular Treatise on the state of the *Supply and Consumption of the Community, in Bread-corn and Bread.*

From a general wish of the publick signified to us, coinciding, as we understand with the opinions of several persons friends of the writer, we have, with his leave, collected them and present them in a body, and are now permitted to announce Governor Pownall to be the author of them.

The purview of these letters is first, by stating the *Real Case*, to point out to the public at large, but to the abused and deluded classes of the poor labouring people, more especially, where to look for, and what

what to trust to as *the Real Remedy*: that they might not under their alarm and distress be any longer led by their passions to seek their remedy in force and violence; or be any further amused and finally deceived by ignorant pretences of remedy on one hand, or by delusive opinions founded in a false state of their case on the other. These letters mark from the nature of the case, that there are regulations which might prove both particular remedies in each process of the evil, and the last letter more especially, that *there is a one general, adequate and effectual remedy on the whole.*

They point out that some of these remedies depend more on prudent measures of police, than on penal statutes; and that others can alone be effected by wise laws, and a firm administration of them: but that both must commence in, and derive from Government; and that Government can alone be enabled to apply these remedies by the general consent of the people in an obedience to the laws and the administration of them. Under this consideration his principal aim seems to be to prepare the mind
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of the Publick and of the People for the reception of them.

Since these Letters were published, the harvest has been got in under the most propitious season, with every beneficial advantage, and without loss of time or waste; and the quantity and luxurious vegetation of the crops promise abundance in the grain: But alas! what are the blessings of Providence and the promises of Heaven: the reports and threats of the evil ones, whoever they are, blast all these hopes.

They say that a Scarcity of Bread-corn must still be felt, that the high prices of it must still continue, and more and more still advance upon the Consumer: that, although the Wheat plants were luxurious in their growth, they were defective in their grain and do not produce plentifully. This has been affirmed so promptly and so much before that fact could be decidedly known, that every body must see that it was a mere pretence to raise an alarm with the public, and to lay the ground for enhancing the price, before the Farmer had thrashed out any quantity sufficient to ascertain the truth
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of it; and before the ears were perfectly fit to give out and yield their grain; every one knows that the kernel of no fruit will readily part from the husk untill both be thoroughly dry and shrunk, nay every school-boy knows that the nut will not shell until it is a brown-sheller.

But if the fact is so; if it be actually true that the home-produce of Bread-corn is not equal to the consumption; and if the Farmers, taking this as the ground of their reason for raising the prices of it, avow the fact; then is the Measure, recommended in the last of these letters, namely, a Free-mart for Corn and Grain opened in Great Britain to all Europe and America, not only such a one as the Farmer cannot complain of, but is the only one which can remedy the evil; nay is become, on the ground of this fact, absolutely necessary.

That the stock of Corn and Grain might in some parts of the kingdom be exhausted by an undue, if not an illegal exportation there is too much reason to believe; but by accounts which come from various parts of the country, there is reason
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to believe that there were in most parts great stock of Corn and Grain in Store, kept back from the market--and which the great Dealers must lose by if they cannot keep up the prices of the market.

That the Expences of the house and family, not the agricultural ones, are now much higher, than they used to be, every one may see who views the state and port in which those families now live, and the mode in which their sons and daughters are educated at boarding schools for ladies and gentlemen. They should reduce their establishment and lower their port, before they make taxes and rents for thus raising the prices of their Corn and Grain. On the other hand when it is considered at what medium price of Corn, Grain and Stock the value and rents of farms are in general calculated for sale or rent, any person conversant in these matters must know that the farmers have made *six rents at least*, if not more, from the prices of last year.

Whether the writer of this preface be right or not in the opinions which he has here quoted, that will not settle the fact.
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The Land-owners, the Manufacturers, and more especially Government will, it is hoped, find means in future, to make themselves Masters of the fact and actual truth, and not take it upon trust, or on the credit of the assertions of the Great Farmers and wholesale Dealers.

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LETTER I.

Considerations on the present scarcity of Corn at Market, and the high price of Bread.

JULY 28, 1795.

THERE is generally for some weeks before Harvest a scarcity and high price of Corn at Market. The harvest of last year not producing an abundant surplus as in former years, and being gotten in last year a fortnight sooner, and the present being likely to be more than that later this year, has occasioned at this season a temporary defect, and high price, of corn and bread. There are of course alarms amongst the quiet, and clamours amongst the unquiet part of the people in towns and in the country. Some are impressed with fears of an absolute dearth; others, not entering into the consideration how that matter stands, demand the lowering of the prices. All this while, there is no actual fact decided on examination, so as to ascertain where the defect lies, or where the remedy is to be sought for, or where, and by what means, it may be actually expected.

This appears from the facts on the case being so variously stated. Some say that corn and grain grown last year has not, together with the stock in hand, been equal to the supply of the present year. Others complain that there are great hoards in the barns of the farmers, and in the stores of the millers and mealmen, kept back from the market. Both

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these cases cannot be absolutely true. The one or the other must be false: And no means have been, or can be, that I know of, taken to ascertain which is precisely the true case. Others again complain, that although the produce of last year's growth was fully equal to the supply of the year, yet that an unbounded exportation has been suffered to take place, and that the country is thus left without a sufficiency to supply the people. Others, finding the prices of bread to be such that are beyond their being able to purchase sufficient to support them according to the present rate of their wages, clamour against the baker, and miller-mealman. All these cases shall be stated and explained to the understanding of the people at large, and the true, real, and effectual remedies pointed out. In the mean time I can, if they will give me trust for a little while, assure them, that the baker (if he be not also a wholesale mealman) is not in fault: And I will point out the fact where the fault lies, and what regulations are necessary to remedy those operations which raise the price of the flour beyond the proportion of the price of grain. In the mean time I must beseech the people to consider, that the mealman, when his trade shall be regulated by an assize, as the baker's is, is absolutely necessary to the permanent and equal supply of great towns, and to the carrying on the business of the country. At the same time therefore that I say his business must be regulated, and the flour, as well as the bread, brought under an assize, I say the miller-mealman must be protected, and encouraged in his business; not interrupted, oppressed, or injured. This would be like *cutting down the tree in order to gather the apples more easily*. If, therefore, the people will be patient, and be content, as I hope their betters also will be, and

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and set the example, with the use of a somewhat coarser bread than they have for many years been used to, such as their ancestors always used to eat, (the nature and cheapness of which shall be described presently) and will not obstruct and distress the wholesale dealers, the great farmers and mealmen, in their operations of keeping and collecting stores of grain from whence to supply the market regularly, the people, I say, may hope to find what they complain of as an evil, will become a comfortable means of support, the only means, and a blessing; that is, the having hoards and stores of grain in the country. If there are not such, or if such hoards and stores are not permitted to remain safe and undisturbed, there soon will be not only a scarcity of corn and grain in the market, but a real dearth in the land.

If that is, or should by these means, become the case, the higher and the lower prices have nothing to do in the remedy. Be the prices what they may, that will not create a plenty. Cheap or dear the dearth will remain, and the more alarm there is, and the more clamour, the higher the prices will rise.

The fact is, that the present price of such wheaten bread as is made for sale, is such, as is out of the power of the labourer to purchase, by his wages, in a quantity sufficient to support him and his family. Either his wages must be raised, or a cheaper bread must be brought to market. This case also shall be stated and considered in the following letters.

As an immediate remedy, I will here state what may be done in the present case—what is in fact done in my neighbourhood.—We have the wheat so ground and bolted as that a load of wheat, weighing 22 stone, produces 19 stone of bread flour: which

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which is four stone more than even the standard wheaten will produce. Of this we have our bread made, of so good a sort as that we gentry hereabouts propose to use it in our own families and at our own tables; I myself do this. This bread is more than *two-pence in the shilling cheaper* than any bread which is usually made for sale or brought to market. This matter cannot at present be regulated *by law*, as the Parliament is not now assembled, but it may be done by *common consent*, if the gentry, the clergy, the substantial tradesmen, the corporations and colleges shew the way, and lead the people at large into the use of it.

This, I say, cannot at present be done by law; nor can the bakers make this bread for sale, unless the millers and mealmen will so grind and bolt the flour as will suit it.

Although they cannot at present be obliged by law to do so, yet I should think, that if the consideration of serving the people at large and the poor, does not operate to induce them, the consideration of what may affect themselves in such times, will prevail with them.

This I know is only a partial and only a temporary remedy. If this be not sufficient, some steps must be taken about the regulation of wages—which is a delicate, and may be, if not properly done, a dangerous measure: and would not, in the end, prove a remedy to the labourer, as all other prices would rise also.

If the wages are raised by *mutual consent* between the employer and the labourer, it will be a difficult thing to obtain that *mutual consent* to lower them again with the lowering price of bread. This therefore would not prove a proper remedy in the end for the poor labourer, as I will hereafter explain.—

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But the law of the land has provided the proper remedy, which the wisdom and equity of our ancestors devised in the earliest times, and which hath been universally continued from those times to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and is the law now in force. The Justices, &c. may, at their sessions after Easter, calling unto them such discreet and grave persons of the county, city, or town corporate, and conferring with them concerning the plenty or scarcity of the times and other circumstances, assess and settle the wages of labourers, &c. according to the price of provisions—see the statute 5th Eliz. ch. 4. § 15.—There is no danger or risque in thus, for a temporary purpose and season, raising the price of wages by this rule, because *by the same power and by the same rule*, this price of wages can be lowered when the price of bread lowers, and in proportion to such.

I shall say no more on these points at present; if you will, by your paper, circulate what I shall in the course of a series of letters send to you, I will go into the examination of the present state of the supply—of the present modes, habits, and course of consumption—I will state the case between the mealman, baker, and labourers—the general scale of prices, and the derangement of that scale—I will consider the proportionate share of profit accruing from labour, from land, from the raising or procuring the materials of food and manufactures—also from the application and employment of stock, or monied property, in agriculture, manufactures, trade and commerce—under which various heads most of the cases of the present difficulties will come into consideration.

LETTER II.

LETTER II.

On the Nature and State of the Supply in Bread-Corn, &c.

AUGUST 4, 1795.

THE first matter to be inquired into, and the first question which arises on that inquiry into the state and nature of the supply, is, whether the produce of the kingdom in Bread-Corn is, and has been for some years, equal to the consumption of its inhabitants.

Agriculture and farming is, without doubt, carried on in a greater degree of perfection, and to a greater extent, than it used to be; and more land is now under culture than used to be for several years back. Further, the produce by the improved œconomy of large farms is raised cheaper, than can be done by little and badly-managed farms: just as more work, and cheaper, can be done by a machine than by hand. But I desire it may be observed, that by cheaper, I mean cheaper to the farmer, so that he can afford and ought to sell it cheaper, if he would be content with his due profit. But if the effect of these farms tends to create a monopoly and command of the market, such produce will not come cheaper to the consumer. This shall be considered.

Prior to the year 1770 there was a great surplus of Bread-Corn more than our home consumption required. This was exported, so as to produce to the nation "a * nett profit of not less than 651,000l.

* See the representation of the Lords Committee of Council, 1790.

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per ann." About the years 1771, 1772, a great change began to take place. † There began to be a deficiency in the proportion of bread-corn to the consumption; and difficulties in that matter began to be felt.

In the year 1773 I brought into the House of Commons, and carried through the House, a Bill to regulate the exportation and importation of corn. This passed that year into a law. The principle and plan of that law was, that, preventing the exportation of wheat when the price rose to 44s. or upwards per quarter, the law might act as a dam, so as to keep up a quantity in the country, as equal to the consumption as the home-produce could supply: but at the same time, if there was a surplus, to serve as a wear to let that surplus run over, for the benefit of the farmer and trade. At the same time the plan of the law provided, that if the prices arising to 48s. per quarter, denoted the beginning of a scarcity, then to render the importation of foreign-corn practicable, and to encourage it, this law repealed all the high duties formerly paid on such importation. This system and plan of law, had it been carried to the extent which I proposed, so as to give a full operation to its effect, would have prevented a deficiency in the home-supply arising from foreign exportation; but it was counteracted. However, the business is now come to a crisis, which renders necessary to be now done, what I would then have done, viz. The so ascertaining the Port-prices, as to prevent fraudulent exportation taking place contrary to the true intent and purport of the law.

† Since that period so much corn and grain has been imported, instead of our great export trade, as on an average to amount to 291,000l. per annum, paid to foreign countries.

[Ibid.]

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If the *general produce* of the land has been for many years back more abundant than in former times, how comes it that there has been of late a deficiency in the supply of *bread-corn* in proportion to the consumption of its inhabitants? First, there has been for some years an *increasing population*. There are more mouths to feed; and those mouths (owing to various circumstances which shall be explained) are supplied with bread in a less economical manner than formerly, by an undue and wasteful division of the flour. Another and principal cause of this is, that a greater proportion of the *general produce* is appropriated to the sustenance of horses and other stock, than formerly, in a degree to affect the proportion of *bread-corn* destined for the sustenance of man: and a greater proportion of the produce of the wheat itself is, by the course of the trade of the *millers-mealmen*, appropriated (in various shapes of Pollards) to the feeding poultry, hogs, and horses, than ought to be. No part of the pollard, according to the present course of dividing the meal, goes to the sustenance of man, which it ought to do, and used to do.—Bread made of flour, with the fine Pollard mixed in with it, makes a better, sweeter, and more nutritive food than bread made of the fine dressed flour alone.

Although the agriculture of the country is improved by enclosures, yet it is certain that *not more wheat* in the proportion of the general produce, but rather a deficiency in *bread-corn*, stands in the proportion of other articles raised by the improved produce. The lands of the upper and middle counties, remote from the London market, which, while in open fields and small farms, used to produce a surplus of *bread-corn*, sent down to the market towns on the rivers having communication with the coast, being

being by enclosures, and the collecting of them into great farms, cultured to the producing *other articles*, for the sustenance of horses and stock, do no longer produce a surplus of *bread-corn*. On the contrary, they now come down, to the markets which they used to supply, to buy wheat for their own subsistence, and flour from the mills on those rivers.

This change of circumstances in the supply of the country, requires a change in the police of our corn laws.

Although it does not come in here regularly to mention remedies, that being left to a future letter, yet I cannot but here suggest the following proposition, as it applies directly to some present and immediate difficulties.

The law provides, that when wheat is at or above 44 shillings the quarter *in those parts or places* whence it might be exported abroad, that then such foreign exportation shall be prohibited in those ports with which those parts have communication. Now does not the same reason require, and ought not some regulation, by the same rule, to take place, when the price of *bread-corn* in any part rises so high as to denote an actual scarcity? If transportation from those parts continues to go on, after such actual scarcity takes place, in such manner that sufficient for the sustenance of the inhabitants of those parts, would soon become deficient, ought not all transportation of *bread-corn* from those parts to be prohibited for a time, and from time to time? But who are the proper judges of this? Who can have a right to inquire; and who can have the means of knowing the state of every farmer's and mealman's barns and

‡ I could here give an instance, in some counties, of such transportation, so exhausting them, that they are now forced to import again, at any price.

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stores? Not the people at large; not mobs: nor is there, at present, any law to authorise this enquiry; to regulate how it shall be done; or to act upon it. What is the consequence? The people, although they cannot reason about this, yet when an *actual scarcity* takes place, feel it, and *feeling's the truth*. But acting from their feelings, and inflamed by mischievous people, all is violence, outrage and plunder; they waste or destroy all they can find, or put a total stop to the dealer's supplying the markets: so that what was a scarcity they make an *actual dearth*.— There is neither law nor discretion.— But in such case, when there is a real not an imaginary scarcity, ought not both law and discretion to interpose? In the first place, there ought to be an *authorised discretion* to inquire into the real case, and not to suffer people to run wild after an imaginary one. Next, to judge and determine upon the real case, whenever such exists, what can be, and what ought to be done; and there ought to be authority by law to do it. If the people saw that the magistrates, whose duty and interest it is to protect and support them, had such power, and did, in such cases of extremity, exercise it, and act upon it, they would become patient under their difficulties, and peaceable in seeing all the regulations going on, which would become the means of preventing evil, or of relieving it, if it fell upon the country.

The corn laws must, as I have said above, be amended so as to carry them to the effect which was intended to be produced; and when that comes before Parliament, a clause to the following purpose, and in some such form as what is here proposed, ought to be inserted for future regulation.

“ In order to prevent all riots and mobs, which
“ have a direct tendency to obstruct the supply of
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“ the markets with bread, and to destroy the trade
“ in bread-corn and flour, the source of that supply,
“ May it please your Majesty that it may be enacted;
“ and be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that,
“ when the prices of *bread-corn* arise to such a
“ height as denotes an approaching scarcity, the
“ Justices and Magistrates acting in and for those
“ parts where such scarcity begins to operate, be
“ required to meet in special sessions, and when three
“ or more such Justices, whereof one to be of the
“ quorum, are so met, that they be empowered and
“ required, by such such means as they in their dis-
“ cretion shall judge meet, to inquire into the state of
“ the supposed scarcity, so denoted by the high price;
“ and if they find that there is not, within those
“ parts wherein and for which they act, more bread-
“ corn than is sufficient for the subsistence of its in-
“ habitants at the time being, then and in such case
“ they be empowered to prohibit all transportation
“ by land or water carriage of such bread-corn or
“ or flour from said parts for ***** weeks, and to
“ continue the same prohibition in force from time
“ to time as the necessity of said case may in their
“ judgments require. Be it provided nevertheless,
“ that they may, in such instances wherein they
“ judge it may be done without risk and danger to
“ the supply of said parts, grant, without fee or re-
“ ward, special licenses, for transportation of certain
“ quantities, in the same manner and under the same
“ regulations, as cockets are granted for carrying
“ corn and grain coastways.”

The effect of such legal regulation would prevent all unfounded alarm and all causeless clamour: would place the remedy, in case of actual need, in the discretion of the Justices and Magistrates acting under the authority of law, and take it out of the indif-

cretion of mobs acting against law, and doing mischief instead of good and counteracting all remedy. The people at large in the mean time, having a confidence that all which could be done, would be done for them in cases of distress, would rest at peace, in patient expectation of remedy. This prohibition in such cases, could have no other effect upon other parts of the country, where the enclosures, and other changes in their course of agriculture, have been turned to the product of other articles than what are for the sustenance of man, than to make it necessary for them to turn again their agriculture more to the producing *bread-corn* than they now do; it might also have some effect in putting some stop to the unbounded number, and luxurious use, of horses.

LETTER III.

Modes of encreasing the Supply of Bread-Corn.

AUGUST II, 1795.

ALTHOUGH there may be, and it is to be feared there is, a decided deficiency in the home produce of *bread-corn* in proportion to the present inhabitants, their habits and mode of consumption, so as, every year, in the present state of the country, to risque the incurring of a scarcity: yet the country is not to be despaired of. There are means, if the people and Government unite in adopting them, which may be taken to promote the raising of more; and next, so to make a more oeconomical use, by less waste and less luxury, of what the country has, as to make it go further; and lastly, in

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preventing the exportation of bread-corn beyond what the home consumption can spare.

First, as to the raising more than is done at present on the lands which are already in culture. The measure proposed in the foregoing letter, of prohibiting the transportation by land or water carriage, of *bread-corn*, in times of decided scarcity, as therein regulated, will render it necessary for the great enclosed dairy, breeding and feeding farms, and especially those which raise more in food for horses than for man, to convert the culture of their farms, on those lands which are capable of it, to the raising more *bread-corn* than they now do, at least such, and so much, as may be sufficient for their own subsistence in times of scarcity.

Secondly, by continuing the bounty on the export of such surplus as the home consumption can at any time spare, great and substantial encouragement will be given to the farmer to raise such surplus. This measure was adopted at the time of the Revolution—is a proved and accustomed ground of encouragement—has been found to be so, by the experience of these hundred years' practice.

This ought to be continued, which may be safely done, when the regulations of the corn law of 1773 are rendered efficient, as was proposed by the author of it, by a legal method of ascertaining at the ports, what the real prices of corn and grain are in the countries which admit of exportation.

At the time of framing that law, this question, of continuing or not the bounty, was fully considered at repeated meetings of gentlemen then in Parliament, advising with country gentlemen not in Parliament, and with persons concerned in commerce: and it was concluded that without such bounty the farmer would lose his encouragement to raise a surplus.

plus, and therefore always risque a deficiency; that without the bounty, which goes towards paying the freight, commission, warehouse-room, &c. our corn could not in the ordinary course of trade, meet the corn of Europe in the foreign markets on equal and practicable terms.

A second question was then proposed, whether, when the price of corn in the foreign markets exceeded the price of the corn of Great Britain by a sum greater than the amount of the bounty, whether, I say, in such case, and for such time, the bounty might not be suspended.

The difficulty, if not impossibility, of any power being safely lodged in Government, or even in law, by which so to ascertain that fact, as to act upon it, was considered as an unanswerable and complete objection to that proposition.

The result of these repeated and mature considerations was, That THE BOUNTY MUST BE CONTINUED.

If these regulations and these encouragements, (and if there be no other which can be devised,* as I do not know any which can, consistent with the intire liberty under which agriculture must be carried on,) will not operate to the promotion of raising more bread-corn on the lands already in culture, measures must be taken to put more lands into culture. This is an engagement which requires a fund of money to do it: and it is fortunate at this crisis, that there is, by the money of almost all Europe and Asia coming in our country, an immense fund of this sort which will want employment; there never was a greater.—I say will want employment when the war is at an end.

* I do not venture, in these times, to enter into the great and deep question of TITHES. If means for the support of the Clergy, on terms equivalent to these, could be devised, the abolition of them would be a great and essential encouragement.

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We will then consider what lands there are. In the first place, the Crown lands and forests, saving the timber; these ought to be sold, or otherwise granted out, on condition of their being in a great measure cultured to the raising wheat and other bread-corn. I could here, but it would be too long for letters like these, printed in a newspaper, enter into the modes of doing this.

There are great extents of wastes, commons, and undrained lands.

As to the recovering of drowned lands which now are incapable of culture, or at best but half-year lands, there is no difficulty if those who engage in it begin by securing an outfall to deep water; but if presumptuous men, who entitle themselves Engineers, are employed; they will make just such work as the country will experience from the late measure of the Eau-Brink Cut, barring up the outfall instead of making one.

There are many actual and many popular objections to the enclosing of Commons; but if the measures adopted in doing this provide for the maintenance of cottages, and support of cottagers, by adding a portion of land to each, such as may serve for the raising garden-stuff, and a little pingle for a cow, all those objections would not only be done away, but great benefits would accrue to that class of people, who demand and deserve support, so as to become a blessing to the country.

When I come to consider the state and course of the consumption, I shall consider the great saving, both in quantity and price, which would arise from the proper division of the meal, by regulating the due making of flour for bread, and by putting the miller as well as the baker under the assize.

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The next letter will consider the measure of penning up, by a legal dam, a sufficient quantity of the home produce of *bread-corn* for home consumption, and preventing more from being exported than the surplus, which the country can safely spare.

LETTER IV.

On the mode of preventing more of the home produce of Bread-Corn being exported, than the home consumption can spare.

AUGUST 18, 1795.

FROM the decided deficiency of our home produce, in proportion to the consumption, which has taken place for several years back, and from the quantities which were exported, it becomes now at length necessary to protect that *legal dam* which the law of 1773 formed; and to pen up, within the land, a quantity of bread-corn sufficient, at all times, to the supply of the consumption; as also to provide, by seasonable importations, a timely aid to this supply.

Although great quantities of wheat, to the amount of 3,981,223 quarters, on an average 173,096 quarters per annum, have been imported into Great Britain since 1770; yet great quantities have been exported.

exported. For although there was a deficiency, as before stated, within the land, yet there being, at these periods, a greater deficiency, and higher prices, on the continent than at home, trade has been tempted to export. And as the law which was proposed to protect the *legal dam* had not the fortune to be made law, there was no law to prevent such exportation, be the prices what they may; great quantities have actually been exported.

It will be necessary to explain the nature of this dam, in order to render plainly intelligible the measure now become necessary to be taken.

The setting the height of this dam so as on one hand to pen up a sufficient supply within the land, and to keeping the prices of wheat and grain on a level with the general scale of the prices of labour, was a matter of the greatest difficulty which the proposer of this system, and the framers of the bill, had to encounter. This was investigated by repeated enquiries, and sought from every person, and every part of the kingdom, whence any information, to be depended on, could be drawn. This was at last, upon mature and deliberate consideration, so fixed as that all exportation should cease when the price of middling British wheat was at 44s. per quarter. But as *the mode of ascertaining at the ports*, what the prices of corn and grain were in the country, which might permit, or stop, exportation, could not by any new regulation, at that time, with any certainty, be inserted in the Bill of 1773, it was agreed not to clog the Act with any difficulties; to leave the law in that point, as it then stood, although they knew its defect; and to bring into Parliament the then next sessions, a Bill, *as part of this system of corn-law*, expressly to regulate and direct this matter.

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The proposer of this system, upon various inquiries made, and from various informations received, formed a memorial explaining the state of the laws in that respect; stating their defect, and proposing a mode of settling that point. He presented it to Government in hopes of their assistance; he could not obtain that necessary assistance: without it no Bill of this kind could pass the Legislature; and so nothing was done, and the law left imperfect. It has thus continued now one and twenty years. Several fruitless attempts have been made since; and at length the Lords Committee of Privy Council reporting "that there is at this time no law in force sufficient to prevent the exportation of corn, whatever the price thereof may be;" and "that although the principles on which our corn-laws are founded, are in general wise, and that although they correspond with those principles by which the corn-trade ought to be conducted, yet some further provisions are wanting to amend and improve the said laws:" The original proposer of this system of law is not a little flattered to see that what he proposed in 1774 is at last found necessary, and not the less flattered that the measures now proposed by the Committee of Privy Council are nearly and in general what he proposed one and twenty years ago.

When those regulations which this Right Hon. Committee report and suggest, are by law carried into efficient operation, the people may rest assured that they will be no longer in danger of having more *bread-corn* exported than the country can spare: and that so far as the home-produce can go, a sufficiency to supply, at all times, the home-consumption, will be penned up within the land; and that,

that, if still there is any deficiency, *care will be taken to secure, by foreign importation, timely aid to the home supply.

The writer of this letter has read † the advice offered by this Committee of Privy Council to his Majesty; and as far as he takes upon him to judge, which perhaps, on this subject, he may without great presumption venture to do, he thinks the regulations, if followed by law, and by a due execution of such law, may prove efficient; he has, however, some doubts on one or two points, which he will take the liberty to suggest. He greatly doubts whether the setting of the *Port-prices*, by a general average of the kingdom, instead of that of the several districts respectively, would answer the end proposed. He fears it would not, but might create great distress in some parts, unless the regulation, proposed in the second of these letters, is carried into a law; if it is, the general average may be safely taken as the rule for the *port-prices*.

Although he is clear and certain that a free circulation of the trade in corn, within the country, is right and necessary *in general and in the ordinary state of things*: yet in the case of such scarcity, as is stated in the second of these letters, he is as clear and decided that some such regulation of law, as therein proposed, will in all such cases, times and places, become prudential; if not absolutely necessary.

He is clear, that the "permitting wheat to be exported, when the price thereof is between 44s. and 46s. although without a bounty," may be attended with many inconveniences, and liable to

* Government seems to be preparing measures to that end.

† Printed for Stockdale, Piccadilly.

many a fraudulent evasion of that purport of the present law, which is intended to prevent too great exportations, beyond what the home-demand can spare. Nay further, he should think this absolutely dangerous, if it were not that he hopes to see the regulations suggested in the 7th article of the report carried into a law, viz. "that a power be lodged by law in his Majesty, with the advice of his Privy Council, during the prorogation of Parliament, to prohibit generally the exportation from this kingdom of any sort of corn, &c. whenever the average price thereof is higher than the price at or above which foreign corn is allowed to be imported." This would have been at all times a wise, prudent, and in the present is an absolutely necessary measure. It must however be here observed, and impressed on the minds of those who are to act in this business, that such discretionary interference must be exercised *only on the operations of exportation*. For if there is not *some period certainly fixed for which the port-prices, by which importation is to be regulated, shall remain permanent*, no merchant or others can give any orders, or enter into any engagements for the *importation* of corn and grain, however necessary, if he is to risque the ports being shut against him when his corn or grain arrives: and thus there will be a total end of our corn-trade. The Act of 1773 did in its original operation allow such fixed period, viz. three months. —How it has been perplexed and perverted since by new-fangled regulations, I do not care to enquire.

Such a discretionary power lodged in the Crown by law respecting exportation, so as to protect the legal dam for penning up a home supply sufficient for the home consumption; and for preventing trade from pouring

pouring out at the ports, at any time, more than the country can spare, was suggested and recommended in the years 1774, and 1790, but not adopted. The writer of this letter rejoices to see, at length, a spirit in Administration, that is not afraid to stand forth, to take this responsibility on itself, and to adopt it. I hope the opinion of the country will join Government in adopting this measure. Government only can be the center to which actual information of the state and extent of the exportation may come, so as to act upon it. This will be done by the chief officer at each port being directed to make weekly returns of the entries of corn and grain *outwards*, to the Board of Customs: and this Board to make weekly reports of this matter to the Treasury, or to the Committee of Privy Council.

Other and further measures must be taken to meet a dangerous and mischievous practice of *enhancing prices above due profit*, which has taken root, and is a growing evil, encouraged by the distress of the times. These shall be mentioned in a future letter, wherein *the scale of prices* will be considered.

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LETTER V.

On the waste of bread-flour, from its being applied to other uses than for food: and of the perversion of it by the divisions into which it is made by the general course of the meal trade.

AUGUST 25, 1795.

THE two foregoing letters not only state the necessity of taking measures to create a greater produce of bread-corn in the land; not only the necessity of preventing more than the home consumption can spare from going out of the land; but suggest how this may be done: yet, if a still greater produce was raised than is at present, and a real sufficient dam was maintained to pen up within the land a quantity of *bread-corn*, equal in all times to the consumption: Waste and luxurious use, and the undue divisions of the meal, as hath been practised by the course of the trade for some years back, would pervert this blessing from the food of man; and will always, defrauding the poor and labouring class of the people in a certain portion of what should be man's food, enhance the price of what they are permitted to have.

Bread is the mere sauce to the various articles of the food of the rich and upper classes: but it is almost the only article of food which the poor and labouring class have to eat. And it is become now at length necessary that the

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the Legislature should seriously and in earnest prepare sufficient and efficient remedy by law to meet these evils: and that the Administrative part of Government should, from the first and highest Magistrates to the Justices of the Peace, see this faithfully and with energy executed.

Every one is so much convinced of the waste of Bread-flour in the article of Hair powder, that it would only lessen the conviction which all have of it, if one was to adduce any argument to prove it. I cannot however but mention, as impressing the fact on the mind, an instance of drollery that occurred on its being mentioned in the House of Commons that every Member in the House had at least the flour of an halfpenny roll on his head. Sir Fletcher Norton, the then Speaker, sitting in the chair, said aside, "if that be the case, I must have a peck loaf in this bushel of wig which I wear."—I would recommend this remark to our young ladies who wear their hair in the form of Judges' and Speakers' wigs.

Government could ascertain, but it is unnecessary, the makers of starch have acknowledged, the great waste of Bread-flour which the manufacture of starch occasions. Whilst there are other materials which might become the basis of this manufactory, the making starch of Bread-flour from wheat, should never be permitted when the price of wheat is so high as to call for importation in aid of the supply.

The quantity of bread-flour wasted in the paste which upholsterers, paper-hangers, paste-board makers, and book-binders use, is infinitely more than those who have not considered this point would believe. Government may easily form some estimate of this as used by the paper-hangers—the Stamp-office

office knows how many pieces of paper are made in a year; any one may soon learn how much paste is used in hanging each piece of paper; a calculation formed on these data, allowing for pieces of paper exported, will give the amount. I formed this calculation one and twenty years ago.

When one considers the great extent of the paste-board manufacture, one may at least double the above; but Government on similar grounds as above may calculate this also nearly.

The quantity used by book-binders is not such as to be beneath notice, in times of great scarcity.

There are various other gelatinous materials, both animal and vegetable, which would answer these purposes. The waste therefore of bread-flour committed in these articles ought to be stopped by legal prohibition, when the prices of bread-corn rise so high as to permit and call for importation.

The waste made in these articles perverts immense quantities of bread-flour from its right use in the food of man. But I believe that the divisions of the meal in the course of the miller-mealman's trade, and the very different uses which great part of these divisions are applied to, is a great source of perversion of bread-flour from the food of man.

The meal of wheat as it comes from under the stones of the mill, is in the bolting divided into eight sorts, four called flour, and four called pollards and bran.

The general course of the meal trade divides a load of wheat (price 4s. per quarter) as follows, on the supposition that the bushel of wheat produces 42lb. of flour only, whereas it will produce from 43½ to 46.

Household,

Household, so they call the flour which should make the wheaten bread	1080
Seconds	215
Thirds	96
Middlings	289
	<hr/> 1680

These they price and sell as follows:

Household 1080, 43s. per sack	8 5 10½
Seconds 214, 40s. do.	1 10 8¼
Thirds 96, 38s. do.	0 13 0¼
Middlings 289, 28s. do.	1 8 10¼
	<hr/> £. 11 18 5¾

This was the mode in 1774. The pollards and bran in this statement are not taken into the account, as the trade allowed that these articles paid the miller's charges.

The following statement is of the present time:

Fine Houshd. 1265 4-10	Fine Pollards 125 6-10
Seconds 378	Seconds 47
Thirds 157 6-10	Thirds 36 6-20
Fourths 97 4-16	Horse pollard 164 3-20
Bran 22 1-20	

Not only the law, but what the two sorts of bread, made for sale and fold, purport to be, namely, wheaten and household, require that the flour should be divided into only two sorts of flour, namely, wheaten and household, in near equal quantities; and for the standard wheaten bread, that the whole flour should remain undivided. As the flour in the course of trade is divided, the baker cannot make either

either wheaten or household. The wheaten is too dear, the household too bad; and when the reader of this letter shall observe, that more than three-fourths of the meal is thrown into fine households, that is, the flour of which the bread *that they call wheaten* is made, he will see there is not left a sufficient quantity of flour for the household bread; and secondly, that so much more in proportion than should be, of the heart of the flour, being thrown into fine households, what remains is not what the law requires for household bread, nor that the bread, which is sold for such, is what it purports to be.

The reader will also see, that the quantity thrown into the fine households, is, by the account of the present mode of dividing the flour, much greater than according to the mode of 1774.

Hence it was, that the standard wheaten bread never was or could be made by the bakers; is not at this day, whatever the nobility and gentry making resolutions about the use of it may imagine; and never will be; nor the real wheaten and household neither, until *the due making of flour* be regulated by law, and *the miller be again brought under the assize*, for the same reason and on the same ground that the baker is.

He will see the reason why the price of the flour never was in any fixed proportion to the price of the wheat.

He will see, lastly, the reason why the poor and the labouring classes of the people are drawn into the universal habit of eating wheaten bread, paying dearer for this food in the proportion of sixteen pence to twelve pence: whereas that which the law requires to be made at twelve pence, if it was made as it should be, and they could get it, would not only be food one quarter cheaper, but such they
on

on experience would choose, as more wholesome and more feeding. But they can't get it, they can get nothing but *brown bread, not food sufficient for a working man*. So that while we gentry are at present under resolutions to which we have engaged ourselves, eating what we are pleased to imagine to be, but is not, standard wheaten bread, the poor and labourers are eating white bread, at the enormous price which it bears at this time.

I will close this letter with the opinions of two gentlemen, who, I am sure the millers will allow, understood this business, whatever they may think of the writer of these letters.

The late Mr. Pelham of the Victualling office says, "It is in vain to think of tying down the bakers to sell bread according to the assize from the market price of wheat, and at the same time to leave the millers at liberty to buy up the wheat, and make the bakers pay what price they please for the flour."

The late Mr. Charles Smith of Stratford says, "The assize table seems to want some enlargement, no notice being therein taken what price flour should be esteemed to bear in proportion to wheat."

The mealmen and bakers did formerly, and do at this day assert, "That no division of the flour, other than they in the present course of trade make, could produce more than the present divisions do." This was and is a fallacy. The getting more out of the grain than the miller does was never thought of or aimed at, but the getting *more food for man*, and better and cheaper, will, when the law obliges the miller to make the flour proper for it, be obtained. I may venture, from a series of experiments made at the Victualling Office, and from

a like series of experiments made since, to assert, twelve pecks and a half more, at least, in the Load.

LETTER VI.

Describing the wheaten grain as it respects the food of man: also the standard wheaten bread: and giving the mode of the precise assay of standard wheaten flour.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1795.

IN order to prepare the reader for more readily understanding the case between the mealman and the labouring classes of the people, as it now stands; and for duly conceiving the remedy which will, in a consequent letter, be proposed: this letter will describe the nature of the wheaten grain, as it respects the food of man.

Wheaten grain consists of a farina or flour enclosed in a covering of many laminæ or coats. The outward hull seems to be meant rather as a guard or shield to the flour (as the shell of a nut is) than as part of the aliment. This is easily separated from the flour, and will, in great part, moulder away by age to dust; it does actually so, in the great magazines kept sometimes for years, in some of the great cities abroad.

The inner finer laminæ or coats, are not so easily separated, and even, when the force of art attempts to tear them off from the flour kernel, they will carry off inseparably with them some of the flour also.

Nature

Nature hath by this circumstance mixed in with this article of food, the principles of digestion and nourishment. The one part, (these inner coats) is the vehicle which aids the digestion; the other is the aliment or food. That which nature has so allied as not to be easily separated, the law of nature, as well in physical as moral truth, doth not mean should be separated. When the grain is ground down, and no separation made of the outward unnutritive hull or shell, there the food is conveyed by a digestion too quick, in proportion to the nourishment which might otherwise be derived from it, as in ammunition bread of the armies, which often occasions fluxes: and so in proportion of all other sorts of brown bread, wherein any part of the coarse sharps are mixed, as the labouring people find. On the other hand, where the contrivances and force of art have separated the kernel of the flour from every part of the inner and finer coats, as above mentioned, the flour in *this excess of refinement, does not in reality become either so wholesome or so nutritive*; this is seen by its drying into so hard a substance in so short a time. The defect is, the want of the proper parts to keep it moist, and to carry on the digestion.

That medium preparation therefore of the flour, which, throwing off the outward and coarser coats; keeps, at the same time, the inner finer ones, such as nature hath united so as not to be separated easily, appears to be the *true standard of food* between the two extremes.—And accordingly this, invariably for many hundred years back, even up to the Saxon times, has been, by the wisdom of our ancestors, deemed the whole produce of the food of the grain of wheat, and this by a series of experiments made from age to age, through those periods, has been deemed

deemed *three fourth parts of the grain* whereof it is made, which would be the four sorts, as now divided, all thrown together. The grain would, and does in fact, produce more than three-fourths in flour: *but the law required only three-fourths*, leaving the other fourth for the miller's profit and charges—which he can grind almost intirely into pollards, as was shewn in the last letter. The trade will not deny, when this matter was under consideration they did not deny, but that this fully pays their cost and charges.

If the labouring classes of the people did but once taste *this standard wheaten bread; could they but get it, and make a fair trial of its nourishing qualities*, they would never buy or eat any other. But it is not to be had. The miller does not so divide the meal as to make the flour proper for it; and the bakers seem afraid that the people should ever know what it is, and *how good it is*.

Even now that, in many parts, the Justices have made an order, as by law directed, “prohibiting *the makers of bread for sale* from making for sale, “any other one or more sorts of bread, being, or “purporting to be, of a superior quality, and sold at “a higher price than the standard wheaten bread;” yet the standard wheaten bread is not brought into use, but an inferior sort is substituted, which the labouring man will not buy—and wheaten bread purporting to be finer, and sold at a high price than standard wheaten bread, is made and sold, and is the common food of the people in general: for that inferior bread which the people are led to believe is the standard wheaten bread, they will not eat—and the bakers will have the comfort of seeing their prejudices against the standard wheaten bread impressed still more strongly on their minds. It may be

be hoped that Government will undeceive the one and disappoint the other, by taking care that the people shall be supplied with the *real standard wheaten bread*.

The bakers say there is no penalty incurred by breaking this order. But they will find, if the Justices please to carry their order into execution, that by the 13th clause of the Bread act of 1773, the magistrates have the same powers relative to the making for sale, or selling of bread, as they may have by any law now in being.

It is also said, that there is no legal way of deciding what shall be the flour made as the proper material of this bread. The millers know very well what it is, and how it should be bolted.—They will hardly deny, that the following is one way:—“That “the flour of wheaten meal, being without any “adulteration the whole produce of the grain, “dressed either through a thirteen shilling bolting “cloth, made of woollen yarn, six feet in length, “and six feet seven inches in breadth at the head, “or thereabouts; and six feet nearly broad, at the “tail; consisting throughout of thirty-two threads “to an inch in the warp, and of twenty-eight “threads to an inch in the shoot, and weighing, “when new, one pound: or through a wire bolting “machine, of about six feet in length; the wire- “work of which to consist throughout of forty-two “wires to an inch square, and to weigh at the rate of “one ounce one dram to every six inches square, “may be held and deemed to be *standard wheaten “flour*.”

This is a precise assay of the Flour. Although the detail in words under which this description and direction is given may seem intricate, and very little

little calculated for common understanding and common practice, yet it is neither more nor less than the actual process, which is the daily and ordinary mode of dressing flour by a bolting machine, and is the actual description of the cloth, as also of the wire, given by the manufacturer of each, in his defined specifications of the several sorts of cloth and wire made for the trade.

The bolting cloth and wires applied to the dividing of the meal into nearly equal parts for the wheaten and household bread, such as the law requires, but is not made for sale, can in the same manner be ascertained, with the additional mode of setting the divisions in the bolting machine, so that, when the legislature shall take up the measure of bringing again the miller under the assize, there will be no difficulty in doing it.

[Faint mirrored bleed-through text from the reverse side of the page, including the words "LETTER VII."]

LETTER VII.

LETTER VII.

Of the Defect of the Law—in consequence of which the due making of Flour, for Bread, such as the law requires, is perverted—and the Price enhanced on the labouring Classes of the People.

SEPT. 8, 1795.

THIS Letter, in order to mark the necessity of some remedy, and to point out what the remedy should be, against the perversions by which the divisions now made of the flour enhance the price of bread to the poor and the labouring classes, the bulk of the people, shall give a narrative and explanation of this matter, as it was given to the public together with the copy of a bill for the due making of flour for sale, ordered to be printed by the House of Commons, and to be circulated.

By this it may be seen, how the mode of dividing the flour into four parts, throws a great disproportionate share into that division which the mealmen prize and sell at the greatest price: how, it does not leave that equal share which should go to the household, the bread meant for common use; so that the bulk of the people are not only led, but forced to the habit of eating white bread, and paying more for it than they ought: when they might have a more heartening, and better spending bread, at two-pence in the shilling cheaper. The consequence of which is,

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that as the flour is at all times sold at a price disproportionate to the price of the grain; never holds * any fixed proportion to it; but rises faster; the distress with respect to bread is aggravated, when corn rises; and an alarm of scarcity is spread through the country, which again gives occasion to those, who take advantage of the distress, to raise the prices still more.

Bread, although not as at present almost the sole, was always the principal article of the labourers' sustenance: This article therefore was always affixed according to the price of the grain—allowing the cost-charges, &c. of the whole manufacture, including both miller and baker.

By looking into the journals of the House of Commons, and by reference from thence to the papers belonging thereto; by reference to the paper journal, folio 238, entered in the Guildhall, London, 1517; we find that a constant watchfulness, as necessary, was observed, in endeavours to keep the practice of the millers and bakers conformable to law.

From the time of the revolution we find that the deviations in these matters had become such, that various schemes of new laws were attempted. Finally, in 1709, the 8th of Queen Ann, the practices of the millers prevailed over the law, which had remained steady and uniform for so many hundred years: We find Parliament, then for the first time, instead of reducing the practice to the law, made the law to conform to the practice. They left the good sense and forgot the justice of their ancestors: they repealed the old

* Vide the Lord Mayor's Journal of the prices of grain and flour for 46 years.

law,

law, and introduced confusion: which with its train of perverse mischiefs remains triumphant to * this day. The millers no longer observed in the manufacturing of flour, the making such sorts, as the sorts of bread directed by law to be made for sale, required; nor kept any proportion of price between the sorts of flour, which they did make, and the price of the grain whereof it was made.

The magistrate found himself incapable of reducing the practice to a conformity with the law: And the legislature, instead of assisting the magistrate by regulations made for that purport, gave way; and threw all open to the discretion and at the mercy of the mealman, by permitting for the future, that the affize of bread should be set, *having respect to the meal or flour as well as to the grain* whereof it should be made. THEY EMANCIPATED ONE BRANCH OF THE MANUFACTURE OF BREAD FROM UNDER THE REGULATIONS OF THE ASSIZE, AND YET ASSIZED THE WHOLE WHEN MANUFACTURED, by an affixed rate. They left the miller to make what sorts of flour he should please; and the mealman to sell these sorts at what price he should please: yet ordered the baker to make of these undescribed, undefined, unregulated sorts of flour, specifick sorts of bread at an affixed rate as to the price or weight. If any Legislature was to order a shoemaker to make a pair of shoes at a fixed price, rated in proportion to the price of hides, and yet leave the tanner and leather-seller to make what sorts of leather he pleased; to

* This was written in 1775.

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charge

charge what price for his leather he should also please; the folly, the injustice, the absurdity of that Legislature would be glaring: and yet the absurdity and folly would not be greater, the injustice would be much less than that law which affizes and prices bread, and orders and directs the sorts of bread which shall be made, *and yet takes no care that the sorts of flour of which such bread can be made, may be had, and may be had at prices conformable to the price set on bread.* But the injustice ends not in the injury done to the baker, but becomes enormous with added oppression, to the labouring classes of the people, by leaving the price of their sustenance to be raised at the discretion and mercy of the mealman.

These absurd laws talk of specific sorts of bread, without ever describing, or a possibility of describing it, or knowing one sort from another. As there is no rule, so there is no end to this absurdity; and yet they go on, and say, that the baker shall mark, with a distinguishing mark, the distinct sorts: The baker may mark with what mark he pleases, any sort he pleases, *until the laws shall define the sort.*

Clamours from the people on one hand, and complaints from the bakers on the other, were the natural and almost necessary consequence of such a state of law,

In the year 1735, the Bakers Company at London presented a petition to the House of Commons, setting forth and alledging that the allowance which the affize made them, was not proportioned to their charges, and *the cost of the materials* (viz. the flour) whereof their bread was made. A Committee of the House of Commons reported,

reported, that they had proved the allegations of their petition; and in the genuine absurdity of the law of Queen Anne, instead of regulating the manufactured materials, the remedy which they proposed was to set an affize on the whole manufacture, according to the price of the flour. —This was too absurd to be ever practised, was too absurd even to get into a law, so the Bill brought into the House on that ground, dropt. The law therefore remained in its impracticable state; and the millers and mealmen went on in their practices. A very able and experienced magistrate of the city of London, finding that it was impossible to execute the law, as the practice of the trade run, being a Member of the House, endeavoured in the year 1758, to form another law, with such equitable provisions as might give some relief, by adapting the law to the state and practice of the trade in this article. He was led to understand, or to believe, that the flour was, or should be, so divided in general (with some exceptions of a small division for small white bread) *into two parts, as to make two sorts of bread only, namely wheaten and household; not the wheaten of old times under the old laws, such as was the supposed wheaten of Queen Anne's law, but a new supposed bread, made from a supposed division of a supposed sort of flour,* giving the finer half appropriated to this wheaten bread, and leaving a coarser half for the household.

This was introduced with the flattering promise of the bread made for sale and sold, being divided into two sorts, the one sort a wheaten somewhat inferior; but the other a more nutritious, better spending household bread than had been

been hitherto made for sale. But this law made no regulation as to the division or sorts of flour, of which these two promised sorts of bread should be made; it left that part of the manufacture, the making of the flour, just as it took it up, to stand on supposition. The consumers, the bulk of the people, had the price set to them for a dearer and a cheaper; yet, as the flour continued to be divided, one sort only, that is the dearer sort, was made for general sale and sold; and the consequence was that the mealman and baker became masters of the public supply. The baker indeed was in some measure relieved, because it became the mealman's interest so to deal with him as to keep him quiet.—But the poor labouring classes of the people, were still the more oppressed, and were obliged to buy *their bread at the rich man's price*, at two-pence in the shilling, or more, dearer than the wheaten, of old times as made under the law time immemorial. Upon the testimony of the bakers themselves, one may assert, that very little household bread was made, in fact very little could be made; and grounded in fact, as it came out in evidence, we may add further, that neither wheaten nor household bread, *such as the law supposed* either were or could be made. And thus the bulk of the people were brought by necessity, and led by habit, to the eating a dearer bread than they did of old times, and paying greatly dearer for it than their wages could afford whenever the price of wheat rose above forty-eight shillings.

The next Letter will state the remedy proposed.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

The Remedy explained and proposed as to the due making and prices of flour, so as to enable the Baker to make such sorts of bread as the law requires, and cheaper than he can at present.

SEPT. 15, 1795.

THE matter and case as above, being stated in the House of Commons, a Committee was ordered to consider it.

The Committee recommended the * *restoring again the wheaten bread* made of the whole flour according to the old laws and regulations of time immemorial. † A Bill was brought into the House for *this sole purpose*. The Gentlemen ordered to prepare and bring in this Bill were fully apprised that it did not go to the whole of the regulations which were necessary. But as the bakers had promised to bake the bread, *if they could get the flour*, the gentlemen were very desirous to put the matter on that issue; that if the millers and mealmen would of themselves regulate the practice in conformity to what the law

* The bakers themselves, by propositions delivered to the Chairman, agreed that this would be a remedy, and a relief to the consumer.

† This passed into a law—the act of 1773.

required,

required, more laws might not be made than were necessary: But if they would not, as it was pretty well and very early understood they did not intend to do, that then the matter, *on this experience of the fact*, proved to demonstration in the face of the people, should be once more brought before Parliament, that the REAL REMEDY, thus called out by experience, might be proposed and applied.

As any interfering with the arrangements of the supply of the community at the markets, however beneficial the remedy proposed may be if it succeeds, may yet in the application be attended with hazardous operations; the Committee, in order to avoid the least risking of any danger whatsoever, determined to proceed step by step, with a caution to risque nothing: accordingly when, and not before, the fact had brought out this truth, that the *whole of the defects of the laws made to regulate the due making of bread, and that the whole evil, lay in the leaving the practice of the millers and mealmen out of the regulations of the said laws, and out of the assize, while the law absurdly attempted to regulate the making, and to set an assize bread*, as above explained, a motion was made, and a * Committee was appointed "to consider of the methods practised in making flour from wheat; the

* The Gentlemen were, Governor Pownall, Chairman; Mr. Brett, Sir G. Yonge, Sir R. Sutton, Sir C. Bunbury, Sir Edward Ashley, Mr. Combe, Sir William Blacket, Mr. Bacon, Mr. Crofts, Sir J. Hinde Cotton, Mr. Skipworth, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Page, the Lord Mayor, Mr. Marsham, Sir Harbord Harbord, Mr. Elwes, Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Powis, Mr. Cruger, Sir Wm. Guise, Mr. Ongley, Mr. Stevens, Sir W. Hanmer, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, Mr. Drake, Mr. Pennant.

" prices

" prices thereof; and how far it may be expedient to put the same again under the regulations of an assize."

This Committee examined that matter of fact from the evidence of persons and record; they formed their opinion, and they reported. It was proposed to proceed no further at that time, but to move to have the report printed for the consideration of the Members of Parliament, and of the public at large; which was ordered.

Upon mature and deliberate consideration of this matter, a motion was made, in 1775, for leave to bring in a Bill "*For the due making of flour, and to regulate the sorts, goodness, and prices thereof, &c.*" Such was ordered; and the Bill was brought in; went through the examination and amendment of a Committee; and was reported. Upon the report, the person who had the honour of bringing forward the Bill and of reporting it, did, agreeable to the unanimous sense of the Committee, express a desire that no further proceedings might be had upon it that session; but that the business might stand over to the next; and that in the mean time the Bill might be printed, in order to be considered by the Members in the country consulting their constituents; and in order that being circulated, it might be submitted to public examination; that every objection which practice and experience could suggest, might be fairly made and duly considered, and that every improvement or amendment that should be proposed, might be received. And the Chairman was authorised, by the Gentlemen of the Committee, to announce, that if any gentleman, miller, mealman, or baker, could make any objection or suggest any

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any amendment to it, and would communicate the same to the Chairman, or to any of the gentlemen of the Committee, such would be carefully examined and duly considered, before the Bill was again brought forward the next session.

In the year 1776 the price of corn fell; the distress of the times was *relieved; the disquietude and clamours of the people ceased to alarm Government. Government therefore, no longer urged by their fears, ceased to continue its aid to these measures above stated, which were taken up on the ground of policy providing for a future case, when the present no longer urged them on the ground of necessity; so the measure stopt here: although such is the precise time, when regulations of this sort may be made with safety, without risking the danger of disturbing the supply. If such are not provided now, as soon as the country shall have got through its present difficulties on this article of bread, frequent such crises will, in the decided general deficiency of the home produce, return with repeated alarm and clamour, when perhaps the Government may not be so amply provided with force to repel the mischiefs of them.

The measure above proposed is the only remedy; the only substantial ground of relief to the labouring classes in the article of bread; the only measure which can render the proportioning *the price of bread to the rate of the labourer's wages* practicable. All other attempts will prove delusive; can be only palliative to serve the turn of

* This fact appears particularly by this circumstance, that although it was necessary in 1775 to import 560,988 quarters of wheat in aid of the supply, yet in the year 1776 there were only 20,578 quarters imported.

a time;

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a time; and must in the end, deceiving the people by false pretences, while they find themselves subjected to repeated distresses, render them less and less disposed to submit quietly to their difficulties.

The next letter will give the assize table for flour, with an explanation of the principle on which it is calculated, by which the public may see and judge how the baker may be enabled to make such bread, and such sorts thereof, as the law requires, and how far it may give relief in respect of the prices thereof.

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LETTER

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LETTER IX.

The Assize Table for Flour.

SEPT. 22, 1795.

THE Bill before referred to, as printed and circulated by order of the House of Commons in 1775, in the first clause ascertains the mode of establishing a *legal assay* of wheaten flour made for sale, such as the former laws *supposed, and that Bill required*, under its respective sorts.

The second clause proceeds to the restoring of the operation of the Assize (whenever and wherever the magistrate shall set an assize on bread) to the flour whereof it should be made. The rule by which it proceeds in doing this, is that, which the law from time immemorial doth, on one hand, require; and which, on the other, actual experiments made in the years 1773, 1774, and 1775, do confirm. *The Rule* is that, which the * miller and mealman hath himself set, for the price which answers to his labour, charges, livelihood and profit: and finally it is that, which suits the price of the grain on one hand, considering the Miller's and Mealman's labour, charges, livelihood, and profit, and, on the other, is suited to the price of the bread, having respect

* See a Tract intituled "Observations and Examples to assist the magistrate, &c." written by Charles Smith, Esq; one of the greatest Mealmen in his time, Author of the Tracts on the Corn Laws.

also

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also to the Baker's labour, charges, livelihood and profit.

It *assizes* the whole flour to that of the wheat in the proportion of three to four; and it *sets the price* of the flour to that of the wheat as four to three: Upon the supposition that several sorts of wheat on an average produce but 42 pounds of flour to the bushel, whereas the average is nearer to 45 pounds, and gives an average to the miller and mealman, to be divided between them, of more than six per cent. over and above the fourth quarter, which is deemed to be *bran*, but which they grind into *four sorts of pollards*, besides a small residue of bran.

When the whole flour is so divided (as the laws have hitherto *supposed but now direct*) so as to make Best wheaten flour, and Household wheaten flour, it sets the respective prices of these as followeth; The best wheaten flour at one eighth part higher than the whole flour. And the household wheaten flour one eighth lower than the whole or standard wheaten flour; so as that the price of both together make up the price of the whole. This is what the law hath always supposed, and what the miller and the mealman allow to be just.

The next clause directs, that whenever and wherever the magistrate shall set an assize on bread he shall also at the same time set an assize on flour, otherwise the assize on bread to be null and void, and of none effect.—The Table is as follows;

A TABLE

A TABLE, shewing the prices that Standard Wheaten Flour, and the best Wheaten Flour and Household Wheaten Flour, ought respectively to bear to the average Market price of wheat (exclusive of the Magistrate's allowance for baking) from Two Shillings and Nine Pence to Fourteen Shillings and Sixpence per Bushel, Winchester measure: Computing 42 pounds of standard wheaten flour to be equal in price to a bushel of wheat, as that quantity of the said flour will make as much bread as the law requires from a bushel of wheat; and calculating the best wheaten flour to be one eighth more in price, and the household wheaten flour one eighth less in price, than the standard wheaten.

WHEAT.		FLOUR.							
per bushel, exclusive of allowance for baking.		Standard Wheaten		Best Wheat.		Household.			
		per bush.	per sack	per sack	per sack	per sack	per sack	per sack	per sack
		50lb.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.
s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
1	9	3	8	18	4	20	11 1/4	25	8 3/4
3	0	4	0	20	0	22	10 1/4	17	1 3/4
3	3	4	4	21	8	24	9	18	7
3	6	4	8	23	4	26	8	20	0
3	9	4	0	25	0	28	6 3/4	21	5 1/4
4	0	5	4	26	8	30	5 1/2	22	10 1/2
4	3	5	8	28	4	32	4 1/2	24	3 1/2
4	6	6	0	30	0	34	3 1/4	25	8 3/4
4	9	6	4	31	8	36	2 1/4	27	1 3/4
5	0	6	8	33	4	38	1	28	7
5	3	7	0	35	0	40	0	30	0
5	6	7	4	36	8	41	10 3/4	31	5 3/4
5	9	7	8	38	4	43	9 1/2	32	10 1/2
6	0	8	0	40	0	45	8 1/2	34	3 1/2
6	3	8	4	41	8	47	7 1/4	35	8 3/4
6	6	8	8	43	4	49	6 1/4	37	1 3/4
6	9	9	0	45	0	51	5	38	7
7	0	9	4	46	8	53	4	40	0

WHEAT.		FLOUR.							
per bushel, exclusive of allowance for baking.		Standard Wheaten.		Best Wheat.		Household.			
		per bush.	per sack	per sack	per sack	per sack	per sack	per sack	per sack
		50lb.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.	280lbs.
s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
7	3	9	8	48	4	55	2 3/4	41	5 1/4
7	6	10	0	50	0	57	1 1/2	42	10 1/2
7	9	10	4	51	8	59	0 1/2	44	3 1/2
8	0	10	8	53	4	60	11 1/4	45	8 1/4
8	3	11	0	55	0	62	10 1/4	47	1 1/4
8	6	11	4	56	8	64	9	48	7
8	9	11	8	58	4	66	8	50	0
9	0	12	0	60	0	68	6 3/4	51	5 1/2
9	3	12	4	64	8	70	5 1/2	52	10 3/2
9	6	12	8	63	4	72	4 1/2	54	3 1/2
9	9	13	0	65	0	74	3 1/4	55	8 3/4
10	0	13	4	66	8	76	2 1/4	57	1 1/4
10	3	13	8	68	4	78	1	58	7
10	6	14	0	70	0	80	0	60	0
10	9	14	4	71	8	81	10 3/4	61	5 1/4
11	0	14	8	73	4	83	9 1/2	62	10 1/2
11	3	15	0	75	0	85	8 1/2	64	3 1/2
11	6	15	4	76	8	87	7 1/4	65	8 3/4
11	9	15	8	78	4	89	6 1/4	67	1 3/4
12	0	16	0	80	0	91	5	68	7
12	3	16	4	81	8	93	4	70	0
12	6	16	8	83	4	95	2 3/4	71	5 1/4
12	9	17	0	85	0	97	1 1/2	72	10 1/2
13	0	17	4	86	8	99	0 1/2	74	3 1/2
13	3	17	8	88	4	100	11 1/4	75	8 3/4
13	6	18	0	90	0	102	10 1/4	77	1 1/4
13	9	18	4	91	8	104	9	78	7
14	0	18	8	93	4	106	8	80	0
14	3	19	0	95	0	108	6 3/4	81	5 1/4
14	6	19	4	96	8	110	5 1/2	82	10 1/2

LETTER X.

Recapitulation of the foregoing letters, marking how they combine in a series of measures which form a system of remedy. This letter then states, that all these measures, and even more, is doing of nothing, unless a stop can be put to the MONOPOLY of the Corn, and the ARTIFICIAL ENHANCING OF THE PRICES thereof: It then points several proposed measures, whereon it expresses its doubts: and finally recommends the real and effectual remedy, of A FREE MART FOR CORN.

SEPT. 29, 1795.

THE foregoing letters have examined and stated the complicated case of the scarcity of bread-corn; and the causes of the high price of bread, beyond any proportion to the price of the grain; beyond what it ought to be, according to the miller-mealman's labour, charges, and due profit; beyond the reach of the wages of the labouring man. These letters state the remedies, not such as are meant to amuse and finally deceive the people; not such as are partial to serve a temporary purpose; but such as in a series of measures form a system, which, when faithfully applied, will prove the real and effectual remedy.

Now

Now to state these in the series of their system. Although such regulations in and such encouragements of agriculture were introduced, as would tend to create an home-produce more abundant than the ordinary consumption could take off, as was formerly the case; yet, if such home-produce was permitted to be exported, beyond what the country could spare, the people might still experience the distress of a scarcity. Further, although regulations were made by law which would prevent such undue exportation; yet this would not be sufficient to maintaining a quantity equal to the supply of the consumption, if a waste of the bread-flour was permitted to take place, especially in times approaching to scarcity, by diverting great part of it to other uses than the food of man. But still if all this was prevented by proper laws, yet all this would not come up to a sufficient effect of remedy, if the * miller-mealman be still permitted to continue, for the purpose of enhancing his profits, the perversion of the meal by undue divisions of it into flour, as described in these letters; and if the baker be permitted to make from the flour so divided, only two sorts of bread for sale, neither of them being what they ought to be, or what they purport to be: but one sort a brown bread not sufficient in its nature for the nourishment of a labouring man, nor

* Every miller who buys corn with intent to put the same to sale in meal or flour, as also every mealman, ought to be obliged to take out a licence, and to be put under the regulations of the Excise, as well as an Assize. See an Act passed in 1650, in the time of Oliver Cromwell, which obliged them to take out a licence.

in quantity (was it of sufficient nourishment) sufficient for general consumption; the other sort a dearer bread although not a better, than ought to be made for sale to the bulk of the people. By which management the people are deceived and led, or rather forced, into the habit of eating the white, or wheaten bread, as it is called, at a higher price than their wages can afford.

This letter repeats, that if this be permitted to go on, and government does not bring forward some regulations of law to prevent or remedy it, the distress of an high price of bread must at all times be felt, and clamours always ready to break out, in a certain degree; but upon every rise of the price of corn, will be excited repeatedly to such insurgent demands of redress, as have been experienced of late. Which disposition, however, repeatedly repressed by force may yet, like steel, be hammered into a temper of resistance and recoil, which will not and cannot by any force be kept down.

But further; were even these measures regulated by an assize going over the whole manufacture of bread, over the Miller's part as well as over the Baker's, so as that bread, such as it was formerly, should be again reduced to a proportion with the price of the grain on one hand, and to the rate of wages on the other, which is the real and only remedy thus far; yet if some measures are not taken to break the practice of forestalling; to dissolve the monopoly of the grain; and to counteract the command of the market, which is * now supposed to be at the mercy of

* This monopolizing operation is now, since the most abundant harvest, going on in every market in England.

the

the great Farmers, the Cornfactors, and Mealmen; every other regulation made will be merely deluding the people, and can have no effect but the bad one of rendering them less and less disposed to submit to promised remedies in future.

To assert facts without the means of investigating them on sufficient evidence, so as to state the real case, may lead to mischief and disturbance, but can never be a ground whereon to found practical measures of effectual remedy. This letter therefore will only state the opinions which are impressed and dwell on the minds of the people, so far as to show that Government hath sufficient ground and reason for inquiring into this matter, and that either the Administrative or Legislative branch of it ought to institute an enquiry into the grievance, and to prepare regulations of effectual remedy.

The people at large think (*and the people sometimes think right*) that they see the truth in the fact; not that they reason up to it, but that they feel it. They think and say that by the country being divided into *Great Farms*, and by the lesser farmers who used to be the regular suppliers of the country market, being driven off the land and the market, the produce has got into few hands: That the great farmers and wholesale dealers (whether cornfactors or mealmen) are in a situation to forestall and monopolize the corn; and to command the markets both as to the manner in which they manage the supply, and as to the prices which a few dealers set, not according to any rate which their due profits should demand, but, according to the highest price which

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which

which the country can be brought by distress, to submit to.*

The people think that this has been a growing practice for some time; and that it is at length brought to a regular system. They think that they see the first steps of this monopolizing system in the various ways by which the wholesale dealers (whether great farmers, cornfactors, or mealmen) get possession of the year's produce, is by a forestalling purchase, or agreement for it in the great, before it comes to market in retail: nay even making agreements, at high prices, *real or artificial*, for the crops on the ground: that being thus in possession of the bulk of the supply; being from their great capitals able to withhold it from the market, they feed the market scantily; are thus enabled to keep the price, at all times, above its fair level; and if there be any lesser farmers who, not in the secret, bring their corn to market and offer it at a lower price than these supposed Monopolists think it should be, such

* In confirmation of this opinion which the people entertain of the command of the market being in few hands, the writer of this letter will venture to assert, that this was the fact in the London market of Marklane in the years 1773, 1774, 1775. The supply of that market was directed by about seven great dealers, who arranged what corn, and how much, such and such sellers, as they from market day to market day prescribed, should bring to the next market; thus not only keeping the supply scant, but feeding it from fortnight to fortnight. This he asserts, on the best authority, having the information from themselves. If it be asked how they came to tell him so? it was to shew, that without some such proceeding, some such management, the supply of the great city of London could not be kept up uniformly and regularly adequate to the consumption—Be that as it may—so stood the fact. Now if one may reason from like effects to like causes, one may judge that the case of the market of Marklane is similar at the present time; and that it is not very different in other large markets of other great towns, and perhaps throughout the country markets also.

farmers

farmers find no buyers. This is said to have been the case in many markets in the country since the beginning of the harvest: That having thus acquired the command of the market, and of its prices, the Monopolists can create an artificial scarcity, whenever occasion offers; or can aggravate the evil, whenever a real scarcity approaches, so as to *raise the price on the distress of the people*, beyond all bounds of the scale of profit or wages; and the people at large will not be persuaded, but that this has been the case under the circumstances of the late alarm and distress.

Finally, the people at large throughout the country are impressed with an opinion that this is an evil which requires redress; which may be redressed; and that, if those, who are to protect and govern them, do not redress it, distress and necessity will drive them to the extremity of attempts to redress themselves, and justify them, in their own eyes, in doing so, for the people in their hunger will not perceive that they are doing wrong.

These matters are here stated as opinions which universally prevail; as reports, not as facts; but yet as matters which ought not to rest on opinion, or be left to float at random; as a case which calls for inquiry, and lays the ground for such.

The remaining part of this letter considers some measures, which, it hath been supposed, might prove remedies to this evil; and, as it entertains some doubts on these, it suggests others.

It occurs naturally and gets readily into opinion, without sufficient examination*, that, as

* There was inserted in the Cambridge Chronicle of September 5th, a very sensible letter, stating this opinion, and suggesting a remedy.

great

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great farms are one cause of the monopoly, the dividing these into lesser farms would be a proper remedy. This requires examination under great caution.

It has been said before, and is here repeated, that more work and cheaper (i. e. cheaper to the farmer) and with fewer hands, may be done by great farms on which ample capitals are employed, than by small ones worked by farmers who have but little or no capital. But if *this cheapness* of the culture goes to enhancing only the farmer's profit, and *not to the rendering of the produce cheaper to the consumer*, the people are not the better but the worse for it. So far as these great farms eat out the lesser farmers, who are the proper sellers to supply the country market; and so far as the great farmer becomes an wholesale cornfactor; so far is the produce thrown into few hands, and so far is a ground laid for a monopoly and the command of the market against the consumer; yet, on the other hand, if this monopoly and this command of the market should be, as it has been some years past, in the hands of a few commanding dealers (cornfactors and mealmen), the great farmers, becoming wholesale dealers and cornfactors also, produces at least this effect, that so far as they encrease the number of sellers, so far it tends to loosen the combination of monopoly.

Under these doubts, this letter will not venture to decide how far great farms are beneficial, or how far mischievous to this point. They certainly are *not so in their own nature*; but yet *they have the power of being so*. The remedy of dividing great farms, could it be done, were it decidedly right to be done, and would it have the effect

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effect of a remedy when done, must yet be a work of time, and *whilst the grass grows, the seed would starve*. This idea therefore of remedy must be admitted with great caution, must be examined by very extensive investigation of facts, and carried into execution on thorough experience only of its operations.

Others imagine, and it is a pretty general opinion, that laws ought to be made and strictly carried into execution, against Forestallers, Regraters, &c. &c. This was a very old opinion, and laws were made on the ground of it, to this purpose: they were evaded; were never put into effectual execution; became obsolete; and were finally repealed. Thus far experience is against the use of this remedy. One may venture to assert, that were such laws again made, be the provisions of them never so well guarded, they would again be evaded; would have no effect; and the means by which they would be evaded would encrease and aggravate the evil instead of becoming a cure to it.

The only way to meet this monopoly of the supply, and this monopolizing command of the market, *is by regulations of police*. Great cities, and great towns, such as London, Exeter, Bristol, Liverpool, &c. and districts wherein great manufactories are established, such as Leeds, Halifax, Wakefield*, Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham, the Devizes, and the manufacturing districts of the West, should, as a measure of political œconomy, establish magazines so as to be enabled to meet an approaching scarcity and

* Something of this sort was done and proved effectual at Sheffield.

enhancing

enhancing price, whether real or artificial, with corn, at all times *in sufficient quantity*, to prevent such scarcity; and at prices, proportioned to a due profit on one hand, and to the scale of the wages of labour on the other.

The writer of this letter know very well that the establishing these magazines as *depôts lying dead*, is not so good a measure, as the *circulating ones*, the stores of the dealers; for by these latter ones, the supply *may* be best served: but when these go into a few hands, become the ground and means of a monopoly against the consumer, instead of being a due supply, which is supposed to be the case at present, they must either be met at market, by such magazines as are here recommended, or Government must go into a total change of our corn-trade and corn-laws, so as to *establish in Great Britain the corn-market which Holland has lost*: and this must be done *by new regulations of importation, as to the entries and duties, and the warehousing of foreign corn*, so as to *render our market a FREE MART*.

The present system of our corn-laws was grounded on a relation, which the home-produce bore to the consumption, totally different to the state in which it now stands. There had been for many years a great surplus of corn and grain, which was annually exported at the period in which the system was in contemplation, this surplus began to diminish, and an alternate importation became necessary at times. The present system of our corn-laws was framed upon a plan to accommodate this oscillation between a surplus and a deficiency, so as first to secure within the country, a sufficiency, for the home-consumption; and yet so to encourage the agricul-

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ture of the country, as that the grower might always be sure of a market, at home or abroad, for any surplus which he might raise.

The case has been now for seventeen or eighteen years quite changed. The consumption has forced every year to seek aid from a foreign importation.

He therefore, although he framed the present system of our corn-laws, is free to declare, that this system, formed for other circumstances can no longer answer its purpose under the present. Cobbling and mending will only add confusion and obstruction to imperfection: No half-measure will do. The system must be totally changed. Nothing now but a FREE MART of corn and grain can give an assured, uniform, adequate supply of bread-corn and bread to the country.

An objection to this measure will be raised on this ground—that it would discourage, depress, and injure our own agriculture. If our agriculture, after all the encouragements given to it, and all the boasted improvements in it, is still so deficient that it cannot assuredly supply the market without risque of a scarcity at times; that it cannot be carried on without a monopoly of the market; if it comes to the market so charged with artificial and exorbitant prices, as that it cannot meet foreign corn there, which comes loaded with the charges of commission, with the expences of long carriage and freight, with insurance, duties, and warehouse rent; the country is still in the situation in which it was before these encouragements and improvements took place; and will be still liable to repeated scarcities, and enhanced prices. And hence it appears that no objection can be made to this

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measure but what recoils upon itself, and from the very premises whereon the objection is grounded, proves the necessity of it.

Such a grand measure would prove as well a political as an economical system. Let Government be aware, that if we do not do this *at this crisis*, now it is in our power, now that there are merchants in a situation to engage in it; let Government, I say, take heed that our rivals, the French, do not seize this golden opportunity. — *Dictum est; sat sapienti;* and thus the writer of these letters takes his leave for the present.