ILLUSTRATION

OF

THEORY AND FACTS,

GIVING A SOLUTION OF

THE INTRICACIES OF THE CORN QUESTION,

WITH RESPECT TO

IMPORTATION AND RESTRICTION;

IN

FURTHER PROOF OF THE NECESSITY

FOR

THE REPEAL OF THE TITHE LAWS.

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Illustration of Corollary 6th, page 16, of the Theory in Proof.

It is said, in this corollary,—That "it is not "true, as is generally supposed, that prices "are high because lands of an inferior degree "of fertility are cultivated. But prices are "high because those lands are not cultivated, "and because, by the operation of the law of "tithe, farmers are discouraged from the cul-"tivation of them. There is consequently a "diminished produce, and, I need not say, as "a further consequence, that there is an in-"creased price."

If this corollary be just, it necessarily follows, that the select Committee of the House of Commons on the state of agriculture, in their report to parliament, on the 18th of June, 1821, committed a mistake, when it adopted the

maxim laid down in that report: "*That the "cost of growing corn in any country is re-"gulated by the amount of capital necessary "to produce it upon lands paying no rent, and "that it is the price of the portion of corn "which is so raised that determines the price "of all other corn.*"

The assertion of such an axiom is nothing more nor less, than the conversion of the paramount powers of a cause, into the subordinate qualities of an effect.

The amount of capital necessary to produce corn paying rent or no rent, cannot with propriety be said to regulate the cost of growing corn; for it is, in fact, the cost of growing corn, that regulates the necessary amount of capital.

By every theory of rent, it is the price that precedes and determines cultivation upon inferior lands. By the axiom of the report, it is the cultivation of inferior land that determines the price, which therefore follows after.

Our experience tells us, also, that it is price which precedes and causes the extension of cultivation upon inferior land.

Theory and fact are therefore equally opposed to the admission of the doctrine inculcated by that report.

It is essentially necessary to controvert a maxim which has been delivered from such high authority, if it be found erroneous; because the public opinion has been guided by it to the conclusion, That the high prices of corn have been occasioned by the extension of agriculture to lands of an inferior degree of fertility.

Concurrent with this notion, another equally erroneous, and, I may say, dangerous opinion appears to have been generated in the public mind,—That in the progressive extension of cultivation upon new land, each successive portion necessarily possessed less powers of fertility than that which preceded it in cultivation. The validity of such an opinion, can only rest upon the proof of the supposition, that the farmer always selected his best land for the extension of cultivation upon his farm.

With respect to this hypothesis, the probability is, that the farmer would select the worst pasture instead of the best; but his conduct in this instance, would no doubt be guided by the situation, and such circumstances of the land, which might, in his judgment, render each portion of it, more eligible for conversion into corn, or more convenient for preservation as pasture.

When mention is made of the extension of cultivation upon lands of an inferior degree of fertility; consideration must be had to the relation of land in cultivation, with land in pasture. The one, has had its powers of fertility brought forth and enlarged by the improvements of cultivation: the other, exists in a quiescent state, and in that state, it is positively land of an inferior degree of fertility; but it is prepared to receive and to recompence, all those improvements which the hands of industry can impart to it; and though in its dormant state it stands as No. 10, yet in its progress to maturity by the labours of man, it will take its station in proportion to the powers of improvable fertility assigned to it by nature, and it will mount in the scale of the cultivation table accordingly.

The doctrine of the report to parliament would also naturally lead the public to the belief, that the cost of cultivation of an acre of inferior land, exceeded the cost of cultivation of an acre of more fertile land. The least knowledge of agriculture, and the least exercise of reflection, would so manifestly lead to the subversion of such a thought, that it is needless to pursue the matter.

Mr. Malthus, in page 169 of his Principles of Political Economy, observes, "*That the last*

land taken into cultivation, in 1813, *did not require more labour to work it, than the last land improved in the year* 1790, *is incontrovertibly proved by the acknowledged fact, that the rate of interest and profits was higher in the later period than in the earlier.*"

The rate of interest and profits could not evidently have any tendency to increase nor to lessen the quantity of labour necessary to produce a given effect, though it might increase or lessen the cost of such labour; and we may be quite certain, that the last land taken into cultivation in 1913, will not require more labour to work it, than the last land of 1813. What the proportional cost of such labour may happen to be, we cannot say.

There is no doubt that the cost of labour in 1813 was greater than in 1790, and if an increase of prices had not preceded the increase of the cost of labour, we may be very certain, not only that the lands taken into cultivation, between 1790 and 1813, would not have been cultivated, but that many of the lands cultivated in 1790 must have been thrown out of cultivation.

It is the proportion of the cost of labour to the price, that determines the limit or the extreme point of possible cultivation. Whatever

may have the effect to increase the cost of labour in proportion to the price will circumscribe that limit; and, on the contrary, whatever may reduce the cost of labour in relation to the price, will enlarge the limit of cultivation.

Price must evidently take precedence of cost, in regulating the series of cultivation; and it stands to reason, that in a series of effects dependent upon each other, that which comes last in order, cannot govern, but must be the consequence of that which preceded it.

The price of corn, therefore, which is raised upon land paying rent or no rent, and which is the last in order, can never be said to determine the price of corn which is raised upon the lands of superior degree of fertility, which preceded it.

The cultivation of lands of an inferior degree of fertility, so far from imposing the necessity of a high price of corn, is, in fact, the only remedy within the power of the society itself, to counteract a continued advance in the price of corn; and it is the tendency towards such advance, which determines the necessity of the cultivation of lands of inferior fertility, by indicating that the supply from existing cultivation is inadequate to the demand.

The same average prices of corn may con-

tinue, even supposing that land is cultivated through all the gradations, from the highest fertility to the extreme point of possible cultivation. The wages of labour may be the same, and the average price the same, from the first step to the last; but the profits will of course be less, as the land decreases in fertility. But such decrease of profits, will be made manifest by the gradations of rent; not by deduction from the necessary profits of the farmer, nor by raising the price to the consumer.

If corn be at an average of years at 48*s.* the quarter, land can be cultivated through the the gradations of high and low fertility, equally the same as it could though the average of years were 80*s.* If this be not the case, it would be impossible to admit the argument of Mr. Malthus, in his Principles of Political Economy, page 147: That an excess of the value of the produce of land, above the value of the labour employed in obtaining it, "*can only be created by the qualities of the soil.*"

The quality of the soil, exists independent of the price; and the excess arising from fertility, will be the same in quantity at 48*s.* as it could be at 80*s.* The value of such excess will of course be determined by price.

If land of an inferior degree of fertility,

being brought into cultivation, is sown with two bushels, and it yields a produce of twenty bushels; it will yield the same produce, whatever may be the price. If the excess of the produce above the cost of cultivation be such as to yield a profit of five bushels at a period of high price; it will yield the same profit of five bushels, at a period of a low price; and the money-value of such excess in either case, will be in exact proportion to the money price. For the rent of the new land taken into cultivation, is the same in both instances of price, at 48 or 80, being its natural produce or minimum rent: the quantity of seed is the same; the quantity of feed for horses is the same; the quantity of labour is the same; and the value of all these items of cost bear the same relative proportion to the prices, and consequently afford the same proportions in the result. And this truth is confirmed by Mr. Malthus, p. 166, wherein he says, "that *their permanent value* (the productions of the land) *in the command of labour is nearly proportioned to their quantity.*"

It is the fertility of the land, not the price, which yields the excess; and the only concern of price, is to give the value of that excess in money.

This argument is perfectly substantiated by another position of Mr. Malthus, p. 148, that "*the price of produce cannot by any possi-*
"*bility exceed the value of the labour which it*
"*can maintain; and the excess of its price*
"*above the cost of production, is subject to a*
"*limit as impassable. This limit is strictly*
"*dependent upon the natural and acquired*
"*fertility of the soil.*"

I shall be asked, in what manner then does price operate to the improvement and extension of cultivation. I reply, that price is the barometer of agriculture; and that advancing prices denote an increase of demand, and afford assurance, that an increased produce will not create a fall of price below the usual average.

I shall suppose, that at a period of agriculture, when its progress is not interrupted by impolitic laws, there exists a vibration of prices between 38 and 42; the average of such period will of course be 40. By the gradual increase of population, occasioning a gradual increase of demand, the vibration advances, so as to give an increase of average to 41 or 42. The farmers, guided by the simplest experience, are encouraged by such continued advance, to extend cultivation upon new land, or to expend capital upon the improvement of the old. The

profits they may have acquired by the advance of prices, in addition to their ordinary savings, have afforded to them the capital necessary for such purposes. The additional produce derived from such improvements and extension of cultivation, create, in the first instance, an excess of supply, which causes price to retrograde to the former average of vibration, 40. The increase of population again produces a rise in the barometer of price, when similar causes proceed in operation to induce corresponding effects as above represented.

There can be no question in my opinion, but that the extension of cultivation upon new lands, is absolutely and indispensably necessary as a preventive to high prices, and so far I consider my corollary fully supported.

Let me now turn to a period of agriculture, with the same average of vibration of 40; but under the untoward circumstances of the infliction of tithe upon additional produce, created by cultivation upon new land.

When the farmer contemplates the breaking up of pasture for conversion into corn; the very first thing that stares him in the face, is the monster tithe, who declares, that the instant he applies the plough, his appetite will require a contribution of ten shillings instead of one, with

which he was before satisfied for the tithe of pasture. The farmer at once revolts at such an imposition, and defers his purpose. An advance of two shillings, which was sufficient encouragement to him when his operations were unclouded by such a visitor, is now considered by him no sort of equivalent for the subjection of himself to such a burthen. He considers that with an advance even to 47, that he would be employing his capital and labour more to the advantage of him, whom he considers his enemy, than it would be beneficial to himself. He still delays, until the intensity of demand, created by the unnatural delay of correspondent supply, produces the high price of 50 or upwards. The farmer no longer hesitates; the profits he assures to himself, overcome his repugnance to comply with the exaction, and he launches the plough into the bosom of the earth.

Now mark the consequences of the effect of tithe to create such ruinous delay of that timely extension of cultivation which would otherwise have checked such an extravagant rise of price. The farmer goes from the extreme of inactivity to the extreme of excitement. He has no longer the barometer to guide his operations. Cultivation is extended beyond bounds; and an extreme depression succeeds to that extreme ele-

vation of price, which, in the mean time, has necessitated an importation from foreign countries, to alleviate the distress it occasioned; and this importation tends to aggravate that evil to the farmer, which has been brought on by his own very natural, and to the public, even necessary, but certainly to himself, improvident conduct.

I appeal to the common sense and common feeling of mankind, that I have not overcharged these the "direful and calamitous effects of the "laws for the imposition of tithes upon the "lands of England."

I appeal to the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, on the 18th of June, 1821, for a confirmation of my argument. That report says,

"Your Committee feel it an important part "of their duty to recall to the recollection of the "House, and the country, that in the years 1804 "and 1814, a depression of prices,—principally "caused by abundant harvests, and a *great* "*extension of tillage, excited by the extra-*"*ordinary high prices of antecedent years,—*"*appears to have produced a temporary pres-*"*sure* and uneasiness among the owners and "occupiers of land, and a corresponding diffi-"culty in the payment of rents, and the letting

"of farms, *in some degree similar to the ap-*"*prehensions and embarrassments which now* "*prevail;* and also, that in *many earlier pe-*"*riods similar complaints may be traced in* "*the history of our agriculture.*

"Among *numerous instances* of these com-"plaints which may be found in other publica-"tions between the middle of the seventeenth "century and the beginning of the late reign, "two have been pointed out by one of the wit-"nesses, in which the House *will not fail to* "*remark* the *great similarity* between the "arguments and alarms which were then cur-"rent, with those which prevail in many quar-"ters at this period.

"That in these earlier and more remote ages "of our agriculture these alarms were only tem-"porary, and that the fears of those who rea-"soned upon their continuance and increase "were ere long dissipated by the natural course "of seasons and events, is now matter of his-"tory. And *it is impossible to look back* to "the discussions of the years 1804 and 1814, "and more especially to the evidence taken "before the Committee appointed by the House "on the latter occasion, *without being forcibly* "*struck with the conformity of the statements*

"*and opinions then produced respecting the*
"*ruinous operation* and expected continuance
"of low prices, with those which will be found
"in the evidence now collected."

Again—"Your Committee trust *that this*
"*reference to past experience will not be alto-*
"*gether useless and unavailing;* . . . . . .
"*that the reflections which such a retrospect*
"*is calculated to excite, may lead the occu-*
"*piers of the soil,* as it has led your Com-
"mittee, *to infer, that in agriculture,* as in all
"other pursuits in which capital can be em-
"barked, *there have been, and there will be,*
"*periods of re-action; that such re-action is*
"*the more to be expected, in proportion to the*
"long continued prosperity of the pursuit, and
"to the *degree of excitement and exertion*
"*which that prosperity had called forth.*"

This speaks volumes. I admit the re-action in other pursuits connected with foreign commerce, I deny that it would exist with agriculture freed from check and external competition.

We can be at no loss now, whence to trace the origin of the extreme fluctuations which are complained of in the prices of agricultural produce. It is placed beyond a doubt, that the unjust and impolitic system of the tithe laws is

the cause of the whole evil. Knowing the cause, we can form just conclusions from certain principles.

We have seen that the extension of agriculture upon lands of inferior degree of fertility, can, when no checks are interposed, proceed in a smooth and unruffled current to supply the wants of the society, without any excess of price beyond the ordinary averages. In such a case, the admission of foreign importation could only have an injurious tendency; by disturbing the balance of supply and demand; by displacing the farmer from all controul over his operations; by impeding the progress of agriculture; and by destroying that necessary connexion which ought to subsist between agriculture and every other interest of the community. In such a case, therefore, prohibitory laws against importation would not only be just, but indispensably necessary, for the protection of the welfare of the society, and to guard the natural progress of its population.

Under the system of check upon production occasioned by the tithe laws, it follows, that in order to prevent excessive fluctuation, we must admit the importation of foreign corn; and the consequence will be, that agriculture can

make no advances, until the agriculture of foreign countries is brought to our own level. The question then becomes, how can an increasing population be reconciled with a declining or a stationary agriculture? The difficulties of such a question only more forcibly mark the necessity of removing the check which involves us in such a dilemma.

If we continue to make the Corn Laws a system of measures of expediency for allowing importation at one time, and for restriction at another, according as the circumstances of price may appear to dictate; we shall oppress agriculture by the uncertainty of the law, in addition to the positive check from tithe; and we must expose the society, alternately at one time, to the clamours of the population for food; and at another, to the representations of distress from the agriculturists.

It has now, I trust, by fair and correct demonstration, been clearly and unequivocally proved; that the only remedy for existing evils, and the only possible method of reducing the Corn Laws into an uniform and permanent system of legislation; consists in relieving the country from "*one of the most unrelenting "scourges that ever afflicted a nation;*" by a

repeal of that most impolitic, most indefensible, and most destructive law for the imposition of tithes upon the lands of England.

I have now closed my undertaking, but I will not presume to say that it is perfected. My desire has been; not to indulge controversy, but to reveal the truth. My object has been; not to write a book, but to heal the wounds of my country. I stand firm on the rock of honesty of purpose, with a heart emboldened by a consciousness of no guile; and I fearlessly submit this most momentous and most weighty subject to the consideration and decision of the public; but more especially of those, who from the influence of exalted station, high rank, and commanding talents, are most capable to appreciate, and are best empowered to act according to its merits.

I have done my duty. And

"England expects that every man will do his duty."

Castlemans, Hare Hatch, Berks,
Nov. 6, 1826.

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