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A
LETTER
TO THE
EARL OF LIVERPOOL,
SHEWING,
THAT THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE MADE
TO THE
ADMISSION OF FOREIGN CORN,

ARE EITHER
TOTALLY UNSOUND, OR MAY BE EASILY OBTIATED.

BY
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TO THE
RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL, K.G.
FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, &c. &c.

MY LORD,

THE vast importance of the subject on which I took the liberty of addressing your Lordship in a former letter, induces me to trouble you with a few additional observations, with a view to correct some prevailing errors on the subject:—errors which have taken such strong hold of a large portion of the people, and especially of a very powerful body amongst them, that unless they are removed, there would seem to be but little hope of the Country being relieved from its difficulties; but on the contrary, much reason to fear, they will be greatly aggravated. So strongly convinced are the land-owners, in general, that a repeal of the Corn Laws would be attended with great injury, if not with absolute ruin to them; and so many, even of the mercantile and manufacturing classes have a leaning in favour of the Corn Laws (*a*), that to convince them of

(*a*) One of the most considerable silk manufacturers in the kingdom, in a conversation I lately had with him about the silk trade and the corn laws, said:—he should be very sorry to see any alteration in the corn laws, as he was convinced the importation of foreign corn would

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their error, (for that they are in error, is too clear, I take it, to admit of doubt or question), is evidently a matter of the highest importance.

The land-owners, and those who concur in opinion with them, contend,—that they have heavy taxes to pay;—that they can only pay those taxes so long as they receive high prices for their corn and other agricultural produce;—that the foreign land-owner being comparatively lightly taxed (*a*), and raising his corn at a comparatively trifling expense (*b*), can afford to sell it at low prices, and there-

ruin the English land-owner, and thereby deprive the manufacturer of his principal market for his goods;—nor could I succeed in correcting his erroneous notions:—such notions, however, must be pretty generally corrected before the country can be relieved from its distress.

(*a*) In comparing the burden of our own taxation with that of other countries, most people, I believe, are apt to lose sight of the difference in the *value of money* in this country and in others. Perhaps, if the fact were ascertained, it might be found, that the difference in the burthen of taxation in this country and in others, is rather nominal than real; and that the Polish, the Prussian, and other foreign land-owners, *give as large a portion of the produce of their lands* (for this is the correct way of putting the thing) to their respective governments, under the denomination of taxes, as the English land-owner gives to his. Neither are the low prices of their agricultural produce to be ascribed, as many people seem to think, to the lightness of their taxes, but to the small amount of their circulating medium, compared with the amount of ours.

(*b*) How *this* is made out, they do not attempt to shew; but assuming the soil and climate of any two countries to be pretty much alike, and an equally skilful mode of agriculture to be pursued; the expense of raising corn in such countries must, or ought to be, nearly the same. In raising any given quantity in such countries, there must be the same labour employed in cultivation; in making agricultural implements,

fore, if he was allowed to send it here, they (the English land-owners) could not compete with him, but must be driven out of the market. These, I believe, are the principal objections, (though one or two minor ones will be afterwards noticed), urged against the importation of foreign corn; and if such consequences as the above (and especially the last) would really result from allowing its importation, there can be no question, but the English land-owner is greatly interested in opposing such a measure. It is clear, however, and that beyond all doubt, that the admission of foreign corn would pro-

&c.; and the labourers, agricultural implement makers, &c., must, or at least ought to have the same remuneration for their services in one country as in the other; that is, they ought, in each country, to receive in return for their services, an ample sufficiency of wholesome food, comfortable clothing, &c., for themselves and their families: and in countries where soil and climate are pretty much alike, (as in the case put), the people of each country must *require* these things in nearly the same quantities. From the different values of money in this country, and in Poland, Prussia, &c.; the expense, *in money*, of raising corn in Poland or Prussia, is, I dare say, much less than in England; but the question is—does the Polish or Prussian land-owner give a less portion of the produce of his lands to those who work them, make his agricultural implements, &c., (for this is the proper way of putting the thing), than the English land-owner gives? In fact, from the superior skill of the English agriculturist, corn is, perhaps, raised at a cheaper rate in England than in most other countries of similar soil and climate: or, to put the thing more correctly, the English-owner, after giving a portion of the produce of his lands to those who cultivate them, has a larger surplus of their produce *for his own use*, than the land-owner of any other country of similar soil and climate.

duce no such consequences; at least, not necessarily and unavoidably. It is, indeed, readily admitted, that the importation of foreign corn, would (if such a consequence was not guarded against by increasing the amount of the circulating medium) depress the prices of English corn, and by means of such depression, would diminish the English land-owner's income; and if he was compelled, notwithstanding the diminution of his income, to pay the same amount of taxes he at present pays; (I mean as many hundreds or as many thousands of pounds as he now pays (*a*)), the burden of his taxes would undoubtedly be increased (*b*). If, therefore, the importation of foreign corn would *unavoidably* produce this consequence, no doubt, the English land-owner would have serious cause of objection to such a measure. It is, however, clear (as is shewn in my former Letter to your Lordship) that no

(*a*) If the land-owner's pecuniary income was lessened by reason of a reduction in the prices of agricultural produce; in that case, in order to avoid any addition to the burden of his taxes, the *pecuniary* amount of them should be so far reduced, that he could raise them by the sale of the same quantity of corn and other produce, as enabled him to pay his former amount of taxes.

b) Suppose (for the sake of illustration) I am a land-owner with an income of 5000*l.* a year, and that my present taxes are 1000*l.* a year; and suppose, that in consequence of reduced prices, my rents are reduced from 5000*l.* a year to 3000*l.* a year; and that, notwithstanding my lessened income, I am still called upon to pay 1000*l.* a year in taxes:—in this case, taxation, instead of taking from me only one-fifth of my income, as it previously did, would take one-third of it; and consequently vastly increase the burden of my taxes.

such consequence is necessarily connected with the importation of foreign corn. On the contrary, the importation of foreign corn, so far from necessarily *increasing* the burden of the English land-owner's taxes, might be made the means (as shewn in my former Letter to your Lordship) of actually *lessening* it; so that, in fact, the burden of the land-owner's taxes, instead of affording an argument *against* the importation of foreign corn, affords a strong argument in *favour* of it (*a*). The objection, therefore,

(*a*) The English land-owners make the payment of tithes another ground of objection to the admission of foreign corn. But it must be difficult, I think, to shew, that the circumstance of their estates being liable to the payment of tithes, taxes, or any other impost or burden, has any thing to do with the question; except so far as the currency question (or value of the currency) is mixed up with it. Suppose a man has an estate which produces him 100,000 quarters of corn, but has 20,000 quarters taken from him in tithes, taxes, &c. This deduction from his 100,000 quarters, reduces him to the situation of a man with an estate which produces only 80,000 quarters, but which is exempt from the payment of tithes and taxes. The former, however, is still as rich a man (or in other words, has as large an income for his own benefit) as the latter; and what more, let us ask, has the former to fear from the importation of foreign corn than the latter? Clearly nothing; unless, indeed, the importation of foreign corn depressed the prices of his own, and thereby lessened his rents or income; and he was still called upon to pay, notwithstanding his lessened income, the same pecuniary amount of taxes, and the same amount of composition for his tithes, (supposing he had entered into a composition for them), as he previously paid. But it is clear, (as is shewn in my former Letter to your Lordship) that the importation of foreign corn will not *necessarily* cause a *depression* of the prices of English corn; and that any diminution of the English land-owner's present rents or income, or any augmentation of his present burdens may be easily guarded against.

we have been just considering, has clearly no weight in it.

The next objection to allowing the importation of foreign corn, is,—that the foreign land-owner could greatly undersell the English land-owner;—that therefore, the English land-owner could not compete with him, and would be driven out of the market. When, however, we consider, that the price at which the foreign land-owner's corn may sell in the country in which it is raised, principally depends upon the amount of the circulating medium of such country; and that the price at which it will sell when brought here, will principally depend upon the amount of our circulating medium:—when we consider this, and consider too, that by means of an augmented amount of our currency we may make the price of foreign corn, when it gets here, almost what we please, (though to make prices higher than at present would derange contracts entered into under existing prices, and would therefore be unjust (a))—when we consider these things, it must be clear, that the low price of foreign corn in the country in which it is produced, would not, as a necessary consequence, cause the importation of it to depress the price of our own; therefore any objection to the admission of foreign corn

(a) Prices, from increased and diminished quantities of money, have been so moved about for some years past, that any measure respecting the currency which might be productive of injustice to one, might, very possibly, have just a contrary effect with respect to another. It is, however, high time to put an end to these fluctuations in the value of our currency.

which rests merely on *that* ground, is clearly untenable. The English land-owner, therefore, need have no fear, that the foreign land-owner would deprive him of a market for his corn, by reason of the price of foreign corn being lower in the country in which it is produced than the price of English corn is in this (a). But

(a) All the writers I have read on the subject under consideration, are constantly mixing up their matter with "*prices*." All their reasoning (if that can be called reasoning, which for the greater part consists of what is totally unintelligible, and where intelligible rests on unsound principle) has something or other to do with "*prices*"—or is referred to this "*standard*," as they call it. If "*prices*" could, under any circumstances, be regarded as affording a sound ground of argument on a subject like that under consideration, it certainly could only be so, where prices were *steady*. In that case, "*price*," might be a kind of *standard*, by which to measure things. But to talk of *price* as a *standard* in a country with a paper-money currency, where prices are constantly *moving about* by means of increased or diminished quantities of the circulating medium,—to speak of price as a "*standard*," in a country where this is the case, is puerile in the extreme. In a country with a paper currency, unrestrained in its amount, prices depend not upon the amount of the supply, (either of Corn, or any other commodity), as compared with the demand,* but upon the supply of Bank

* The price of an article in universal use, like that of corn, does not, I conceive, depend, as generally supposed, upon the demand as compared with the supply; (as may be the case with articles of limited use), but upon the supply, (or quantity in the market), as compared with the amount of the circulating medium. Suppose there is a community consisting of 10,000 people, who have an average supply of 10,000 quarters of corn, and their circulating medium consists of 10,000*l.*; and suppose this community to be suddenly doubled in numbers, but without any increase either of their corn or money. This increased number of the community would, in a certain sense, *increase the demand* for the 10,000 quarters of corn, yet such increased number of the community would not be the means of *increasing its price*; for though there is now twice the number of people to feed there previously was, yet there being only the former quantity of corn, the consequence is; that each person must be satisfied with only half the quantity

though there is no fear of the English land-owner being deprived of a market for his corn from any such cause as this; yet there, certainly, is one way in which he might be deprived of it, or at least partially deprived of it; viz.

Notes. *The issuers of paper money are the regulators of prices.* They can move them about at pleasure; and no one can say to day, what will be the price of any article a month hence. *That, therefore, can never be called a standard, which is perpetually changing.* The difficulties which have hitherto beset the question of the Corn Laws, and the obscurity in which it has been involved by all who have attempted to elucidate it, are, I have little doubt, principally ascribable to this same "standard" being constantly placed before their eyes; and which has prevented their seeing, clearly, any other object. In the question under consideration, (viz. whether the importation of foreign corn ought to be allowed or not), *prices* have, in fact, nothing at all to do with it. In determining the question, the only thing to inquire into is--whether we have corn, and other kinds of human sustenance of our own growth *sufficient* for

he could consume; and to pay for this reduced quantity, each person has only just half the money he before had. The demand and the money of two persons are now, in fact, only equal to the previous demand and money of one. The owner, therefore, of the corn, now only sells as much of it to two as he previously sold to one; and he receives from the two only the same sum he previously received from one. The two persons, in fact, constitute, as it were, but one; the seller, therefore, of the corn, clearly receives no greater price for it, by reason of the supposed *increased demand for it*:—the fact, however, is, there is no *increased demand*; for, as every one of the community must be satisfied with one half of what he previously had, the demand of two persons is now only equal to the previous demand of one. In short, in the article of corn, I consider it to be quite clear, that "*price*" must altogether depend upon the quantity of the article, and the amount of the currency. An increased quantity of the former, without any augmentation in the amount of the latter, will *reduce* prices: an increased amount of money without any increase in the quantity of corn, will *raise* prices: and an increase of both, in rateable proportions, will *keep prices at what they previously were*. I am aware the prices of agricultural produce are liable to be affected by such circumstances, as the fear of a short crop, or the prospect of an abundant one, or by the speculation of the corn merchant; but their liability to be affected by such circumstances as these, in no wise affects the soundness of the above principle; as the effect produced by such causes is only temporary.

by means of the *excessive* importation of foreign corn; but against this danger it would be very easy to provide. I am inclined, however, to think, that the danger is so slight and remote, that it is not worth a moment's consideration. However, to guard the land-owner against all

the *proper* support of the whole of the people? If we have, then it is quite clear we stand in no need of foreign corn: And not only do we stand in no need of foreign corn, but to allow its importation would be an act of injustice to the English land-owner and farmer; for if foreign corn is brought into the country when we have sufficient of our own for the proper support of the *whole* of the people, the inevitable consequence must be, that there will be *more* human sustenance in the country than can be consumed; and from this the following consequence would inevitably arise, viz., that the English land-owner would be *deprived of a part*, (at least to all beneficial purposes) *of his income*. A few words will demonstrate this: The foreign land-owner who sends his corn here, receives in exchange for it English manufactures, or colonial produce. These things he obtains by means of manufacturers, sailors, ship-carpenters, and others, who are employed in manufacturing, producing, and conveying them to him. All these sailors, manufacturers, &c., are fed with his corn. Being therefore employed and fed by the foreign land-owner, for his (the foreign land-owner's) benefit, the English land-owner can derive no benefit from their services, as he would have done, had not the foreign land-owner stepped in and deprived him of them. I say, as he would have done; for the English land-owner, *possessing the means* of employing and supporting them, (for it will be recollected, that the case put is,—that the English land-owner *does* possess the means of employing and supporting them, by reason of his producing a sufficiency of human sustenance for the *whole* of the people), he would, as a thing of course, have supported and employed them; and being prevented from doing so, by their being employed and supported by the foreign land-owner, he (the English land-owner) loses the advantages he would have derived from their services. If, therefore, the importation of foreign corn would deprive

fears on this head, the admission of foreign corn might be limited to what was necessary for the support of *such a portion* of the people, as the English land-owner could not himself support in a proper manner. I should, however, be much inclined to think that such a restriction might safely be dispensed with; for by making a proper use of our vast colonies and foreign possessions, (which

the English land-owner of the services of any portion of the people which he possessed the means of properly supporting, in that case, *(but in no other)*, he would have well-founded reason to object to such a measure. One of the principal objects, however, of my former Letter to your Lordship, was to shew *that the English land-owners do not possess the means of supporting, in a proper manner, the whole of the people*; but on the contrary, that the country contains a *much GREATER number of people* than the land-owners have the means of providing with food; and that this being the case, the English land-owner may, or indeed clearly ought, to allow *such a portion* of the people as he has not himself the means of supporting, to be supported and employed by the foreign land-owner; and that so far from being injured by doing so, he will be positively benefited. To this extent, (but no further), allow the foreign land-owner to send us his corn, and any other kind of human sustenance he pleases. By doing so the happiest consequences will arise to the whole country; and let this be done without giving one moment's attention to *prices*, (except so far as to keep them steady), for if there is only an *ample sufficiency* of food in the country for the *whole* of the people, the country *must* be flourishing, and the people happy; and this must be the case, without at all regarding whether prices may be *high or low*; for that will principally depend upon the amount of the circulating medium; and whether that may be great or little, is not, abstractedly, (provided it is only kept steady), of the least consequence; not even with reference to commercial intercourse with foreign countries whose circulating medium may be of a different nature, or of a different value with our own.

owing to our not seeing the advantages to be derived from them have hitherto been of very little benefit to us), our population would increase so rapidly, that I feel little doubt there would be a population quite large enough to consume all that could be produced by the English land-owner, and also as much as could be sent us by the foreign land-owner; and if so, no limits need be imposed to importation. By freeing commerce from all shackles, by giving a proper direction to the industry, skill, and talent of the people, and by calling forth our vast resources, less than a century would, probably, give Great Britain and Ireland a population of 80 or 100 millions; well fed, well clothed, and living in comfortable residences; and would make her the most powerful state the world ever saw; and would make her too (a consideration of no slight importance) the means of greatly promoting the happiness and prosperity of, perhaps, every other part of the world; and thereby unite herself to every other part of it in the bonds of peace and amity. It will be proper however, that I should proceed to consider some other of the objections which have been made to the importation of foreign corn; one of which is:—"that it would be the means of throwing all our inferior lands out of cultivation." How it would produce this effect is not explained. It is clear, however, that the objection is an untenable one. No man, at least no man of sound judgment, cultivates lands, unless he can obtain from them in a cultivated

state, a greater quantity of produce (after paying the expense of cultivation) than he obtained from them in their uncultivated state. If it seems probable, that *this* or *that* piece of poor land will produce more human sustenance in a state of cultivation (after deducting the expenses of cultivation) than it afforded in its uncultivated state; the prospect of obtaining this increased quantity of human sustenance, forms the *inducement* to its cultivation; and with this inducement, the owner cultivates it accordingly; and he does so without stopping to ascertain, (as Political Economists seem to suppose), whether all the lands in the kingdom of a better quality have been already brought into cultivation or not. And if the owner of poor lands has *now*, when foreign corn is excluded, this inducement to cultivate them; can there, possibly, be any thing in the importation of foreign corn which can take away the inducement? It may be safely said, that nothing could take it away, except some measure (if there could possibly be such) which would have the effect of making the *produce* of the lands *less* than it previously was. But that the importation of foreign corn would have the effect of *lessening the produce* of inferior lands, is, I should suppose, what no one will venture to assert. If, then, the produce of inferior lands will not be *lessened* in quantity by reason of the importation of foreign corn—if the owner of such lands will, after paying the expenses of cultivation, just have as large a surplus of their produce for his own consumption, for

the consumption of his family and servants, and to give to the manufacturer in exchange for cloths, cottons, linens, &c., he will surely have as strong an inducement to cultivate his poor lands, notwithstanding the admission of foreign corn, as he now has. I am aware, that if the owner of poor lands can get them cultivated at a very trifling expense, (that is, by giving very low wages to his labourers; or, in other words, by giving them a very small portion of the produce of such lands), he may be induced to cultivate lands which he would not think of cultivating, in case he was obliged to give a larger portion of their produce to those who are employed in their cultivation. But such lands *as these* are clearly lands which ought not to be cultivated; for who will say that lands *ought* to be cultivated, which can only be cultivated with advantage to the owner, by giving the labourer who cultivates them, an insufficiency of their produce for the proper support of himself and his family? Would this be acting agreeably to the precept implied in the words, "the labourer is worthy of his hire"? I should think not. I take it, however, to be clear, that there can be nothing attending the importation of foreign corn, which can throw a single acre of land out of cultivation *that ought to be cultivated*. I have seen no reason assigned in support of the contrary opinion, nor can I discover one; but just the reverse. I am aware the importation of foreign corn will have the effect of increasing the wages of the labouring

classes ; that is, of increasing the quantity of their food, &c., (the great and salutary object to be derived from the measure) ; and consequently, that the labourers employed in the cultivation of inferior lands will receive a larger quantity of their produce, in return for their services, than they now receive ; but this, in fact, will be no prejudice to the owner of such lands ; for he will be able to give them this larger quantity, by reason that a less quantity of their produce will be taken from him in taxes and poor's rates than was previously taken.—The fear, that the importation of foreign corn will have the effect of throwing inferior lands out of cultivation may clearly be dismissed as a groundless one.

The importation of foreign corn has been objected to, “because the land-owner is to be regarded in the light of a merchant or a manufacturer ; and as the merchant and manufacturer are protected against foreign competition, so ought the land-owner in his character of an agriculturist.” It will be seen, however, upon inquiry, that the English land-owner, as an agriculturist, and the English merchant or manufacturer, are very differently circumstanced. The former (the land-owner) has *not a sufficiency* (for I take it to be clear, that such is the fact) of corn and other articles, the produce of his lands, *to supply the demand* ;—in other words, that he cannot feed or support the *whole* of the people ; therefore, to allow the

foreign land-owner to support such a portion of them as the English land-owner has not the means of supporting, can do the latter no possible injury ; because, in the *residue* of the people he will have a market, or find a demand, for the *whole* of his produce. But with respect to the merchant and manufacturer, they *HAVE a sufficiency*, or perhaps more than a sufficiency, of the articles they deal in, to supply the demand ; therefore, to allow the foreign merchant or manufacturer to send sugars, silks, &c., to this country, would have the effect of depriving the English merchant and manufacturer of a part of their customers ; or, in other words, to lessen the demand for the articles they deal in ; and would, consequently, be injurious to them (*a*). The above view of the subject under consideration, and which it is conceived is a sound one, will shew how little resemblance there is between the case of the English land-owner, and that of the English merchant or manufacturer. But not only is there no parallel between

(*a*) This, however, under a system of free trade would soon set itself to rights ; for though the foreign merchant, or manufacturer, might, for a short time, send his merchandize or manufactures here and take back money in return, yet this could not go on long ; for he would soon find, either that he must cease to send his goods here, or that he must take something in return for them which is the produce of our colonies, skill, or industry : and as soon as ever he did the latter, (which, no doubt, is what he would do), the English merchant, or manufacturer, (though he might, by the admission of foreign merchandize or manufactures, be deprived, or partially deprived, of his *old* branch of trade) would find some new one created, equally beneficial with his old one.

the case of the English land-owner and that of the English merchant or manufacturer, as a ground on which to rest the claim of the former to protection against foreign competition; but, as shewn in my former Letter to your Lordship, nothing that can, properly speaking, be called "*competition*," can possibly take place between the English land-owner and the foreign land-owner: or, at least, there cannot, so long as the latter sends us his corn, only in such quantities as are necessary to support and employ such a portion of the labouring classes as the English land-owner has not the means of supporting and employing; or, in other words, so long as the foreign land-owner only supplies the deficiency in the quantity of our own corn. The English land-owner clearly requires no protection against foreign competition *except to this extent*; and this protection (should it ever be really necessary) he may easily have, by closing the ports against importation beyond the limits I have mentioned.

The importation of foreign corn has also been objected to, "because it would lessen the *profits* of the English land-owner, and thereby lessen his means of paying his taxes and other outgoings." There are two ways (and I conceive only two) in which the importation of foreign corn *might* (as already admitted) lessen the profits (*a*), or, more properly speaking, the income, or available

(*a*). The term "profits," seems to be scarcely applicable to the case of the land-owner; at least, not in its common acceptation. His situa-

income, of the land-owner;—the one, by causing a depression in the prices of his own corn and other agricultural produce, without his having a corresponding reduction in his taxes and other burdens; and the other, by lessening the demand for his corn, (by reason of the market being overstocked) and thereby causing him to have *a part* left upon his hands, and consequently depriving him of the advantages which such part would otherwise have. In this respect, seems to bear little resemblance to that of a merchant or trader. Can it be said, that the idea of profit presents itself in the case of the land-owner whose estates were acquired by his ancestor at the Conquest? And, perhaps, it no more does so, in the case of the land-owner who purchased his estates only the other day, with money acquired in trade. The profits of a land-owner (if they must be called profits) are, in fact, *the whole of the corn, mutton, and other things which his lands produce*; except such portion of them as he gives to those who are employed in raising them: And his profits, too, *must always be the same in amount*, except so far as they may be more or less, by reason of the better or worse management of his lands, or better or worse seasons. The *whole* of the produce of his lands, except the portion given to the farmer and others employed in raising it, would, therefore, seem to constitute *his profits*; for, except the portion I have mentioned, *he has the whole for his own benefit*—a part of which is consumed by himself; another part by his family and domestic servants; another part (if a great land-owner) he gives to his steward, to the painter who paints his pictures, to the coach-builder who builds his carriages, to the manufacturer who manufactures the silks, cottons, hardware, &c.; which are in part made use of by himself and his family, and the remainder of which he sends abroad; in exchange for wines and other foreign luxuries. It is in these, and the like ways, in which the land-owner distributes the profits, or produce, of his lands; and though the distribution is through the medium of money, yet the result is the same as if he distributed their produce in kind.

given him, in procuring him the services of an additional number of the labouring classes; and by means of their services increasing the amount of his comforts and enjoyments. The first of the above consequences of importation, might, as already observed, be easily prevented by increasing the amount of the circulating medium; or, if this should not be approved of, then (and which in effect, or in substance would come to the same thing), by reducing the English land-owner's taxes and other burdens in the same proportion in which prices are reduced. And with respect to the other of the above-mentioned consequences of importation, (viz., lessening the demand or market for the land-owner's own corn), what has been already said on this subject, must satisfy him, that he has very little to fear on this account; and, at any rate, that it would be an easy matter to prevent any such consequence, by closing the ports as soon as there was a supply in the country (in English and foreign corns together) equal to the demand. With a view therefore to secure to the land-owner his present profits, or income, there is clearly no necessity for the prohibition of importation, except beyond the extent just mentioned; and it is evident, that a large quantity of foreign corn might be admitted before it reached this extent. In short, (as I hope is satisfactorily proved in my former letter to your Lordship), the importation of foreign corn (confined within the limits before mentioned) may be evidently made the means of *increasing*, and not of lessening,

the English land-owner's income or profits. We may therefore safely treat the last noticed objection as an untenable one.

The above, I believe, are the only objections (at least the only one's that deserve the slightest notice) which have been urged in favour of totally prohibiting the importation of foreign corn; and it must be admitted, it is conceived, that each and every of them is utterly untenable.

Assuming it then to be clear, that there is no well-founded objection, on the part of the land-owner, to the importation of foreign corn, but rather the reverse, (except when carried beyond the limits I have mentioned); and considering it to be clear, that there are the strongest reasons in favour of such a measure on the part of all the rest of the community; all, perhaps, that remains to be considered is,—whether foreign imported-corn ought, or ought not, to be subjected to an *import duty*. To enable the English land-owner to bear the present burden of taxation—to pay his tithes and poor's-rates—and to protect him from foreign competition, are all severally urged as reasons *in favour of a duty*; and which, by its advocates, is generally called a "*protecting duty*;" as it would be the means, they suppose, of protecting, or preserving to him, the present prices of his own corn; and thereby keep up the present amount of his rents or income; and by keeping up his rents or income, would enable him to bear his pre-

sent burdens. These are the advantages which its advocates suppose would arise from a protecting, or import duty. What they urge in favour of it, may be answered by the single assertion, (for assertion in such a case may be very safely made), *that no import duty, however large, would, in the slightest degree, have the effect of keeping up the present prices of English-grown corn.* It is surprising that such a measure, in order to gain such an end, should ever have been thought of; considering, it is well known, that any material increase in the quantity of any article in the market, (and especially of such an article as corn), without any increase in the amount of the circulating medium, necessarily *reduces* the price of it; and such is the case, whatever such additional quantity may have cost those who bring it into the market. If, for instance, our own corn was selling at 60s. a quarter, and the corn merchant imported a large quantity of foreign corn, which, in original price, freight, duty, &c. cost him 100s. a quarter; he would, notwithstanding the high price it had cost him, be under the necessity of selling it (supposing he sold it at all) *for less than sixty (a)*. Seeing, therefore, that an import duty would not accomplish the proposed object; and believing, it may be safely

(a) Though the object proposed to be obtained by means of an import, or protecting duty, (viz., keeping up the present prices of English-grown corn), could not possibly be obtained by any such means; yet the attainment of this object may clearly be effected by

asserted, that there is no one ground on which it can be shewn that such a duty would be productive of the slightest benefit, either to the English land-owner or the English farmer; my own opinion is, that it will be more wise and politic to allow importation without any duty whatever. An import duty would, *in effect*, be nothing less than taking a portion of the foreign land-owner's corn, *without giving him any thing in return for it*; and if such a duty was a heavy one, it would certainly prevent our obtaining those extensive advantages from the importation of foreign corn, which it may, clearly, be made the means of procuring us; and which advantages, there is no doubt, would be thrown into the hands of some other country. If, therefore, we should wish to enjoy those advantages, and would avoid driving the Pole, the Prussian, &c., to America, or some other country, for sugars, cottons, silks, &c.; we must allow him to have these articles in return for the *whole* of his corn; or, at any rate, in return for nearly the whole of it, and not merely in return for a part of it (a).

I may conclude this subject of "protecting duty," by observing,—that it is not protection against the conse-

increasing the amount of the circulating medium: and *this*, it is conceived, is the *only* means by which it can be effected.

(a) So far as it may be wished to make the importation of foreign corn a source of revenue, this object (as is clearly shewn, I hope, in my former letter to your Lordship), would be obtained, (and,

quences of the importation of foreign corn which the English land-owner and farmer stand in need of; for these consequences would be clearly beneficial both to the one and the other:—There is, however, a PROTECTION which they, and indeed every individual in the kingdom, stand in need of; which is,—*protection against fluctuation in the value of the currency*; for fluctuation in the value of the currency must ever occasion the most serious evils to land-owners, to farmers, and to all others (a). These evils I am convinced might be easily guarded against, even if the amount of our paper money was much greater than it is;—

if the importation was large, to a considerable extent), by reason that the consumers of such corn will be the consumers of various articles which are subjected to taxes or duties. This, it is true, would be an indirect means of taking a part of the foreign land-owner's corn, without giving him any thing in return for it; but what would be taken in this way, would not, perhaps, be much more than what would be taken in a similar way, by the government of any other country to which he sent his corn. Besides, if an *import duty* should be imposed on the foreign land-owner's corn, what was taken from him by means of such duty, would be *in addition* to what was taken by the indirect means above mentioned.

(a) I am aware these fluctuations, though attended with injury to one party are attended with benefit to the other; but can any one deem it right that one man should be a loser in order that another may be a gainer? And with respect to the gainer, it soon becomes his turn to be the loser; and can the advantages he has for a while derived at the expense of his neighbour, at all compensate him for the inconveniences he must experience when he comes to be the loser? An idea may be formed of the ruinous changes which have, from time to time, for several years past, taken place in the value of our currency, by looking at the changes which took place during the same period, in the prices of corn,

no one, however, appears to have thought of the means by which to effect this object. *To give perfect steadiness in value to a paper-money currency; to secure it against shocks and convulsions; and to procure for it the entire confidence of the country, are, I am satisfied, all matters of easy attainment*: but till attained, the currency of the country, so long as it consists principally of paper, will be productive of evils; and neither the measure, commonly called Mr. Peel's Bill, nor those of the last session of parliament, will keep away those evils. The state of the currency is clearly a subject which requires the most serious attention, and the whole community is deeply interested in having it placed upon a steady, fixed, settled footing; and well guarded, as it easily might be, against fluctuations in its value.

I may conclude my observations upon the great and all-important subject on which I have thus, a second time, taken the liberty of addressing your Lordship, by observing, that the two following questions would seem to furnish a clue, both to the better understanding of the subject, and also to our coming at sound and correct conclusions upon it; viz., first,—will the importation of foreign corn, neces-

and other agricultural produce. From a table of the average prices of wheat, from the year 1817 to the year 1822, contained in Mr. Whitmore's late pamphlet, it appears, that the price, in the first of those years was near 95s. a quarter, whilst in the latter it was little more than 43s.—To the gentleman just mentioned, the country is under great obligations for his efforts to procure a repeal of the Corn Laws.

sarily and unavoidably, cause a larger quantity of the produce of the English land-owner's lands, to be taken from him, in taxes and other burdens, than is now taken; or, in other words,—will the importation of foreign corn unavoidably cause a diminution of his present income? Assuming that this question may be safely answered in the *negative*; the next question is,—will the English landowner's income, if the importation of foreign corn is permitted, be *equally beneficial* to him as it is at present; that is, will it procure him as many of the necessaries, the comforts, the elegancies, and the luxuries of life, as it now procures him? By guarding against *excessive* importation, (though I should think there is no reason to fear such a thing), this question, it is conceived, may be safely answered in the *affirmative*.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

E. G. ATHERLEY.

*York-place, Portman-square,
16th October, 1826.*