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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

CORN BILL,

NOW

DEPENDING IN PARLIAMENT.

BY

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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

CORN BILL.

DURING the late recess I thought it my duty to pay a particular attention to the Corn Bill, which it was said must pass this session into a law. The more I considered it, the greater appeared to me the necessity of a full examination, not only of the bill itself, but of various other documents necessary to a due understanding of the subject proposed to be regulated by that bill.

Although not altogether unacquainted with the magnitude of that subject, yet, as I proceeded, it appeared to me still more

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difficult and extensive; and the alarming situation into which I could not help conceiving that we are gradually running, most forcibly impressed itself on my mind. From various information lately obtained, and from conversation with many different persons, I have found that the subject is not understood as it deserves to be; and having expressed that opinion, and spoken to some friends of the difficulties that had occurred, it has been suggested to me, that the immediate publication of the notes I had taken, preparatory to a discussion in Parliament, might possibly be useful, by promoting a fuller investigation of this interesting enquiry, particularly as they contained matter not so fit for a speech in Parliament, as for deliberate and attentive consideration. I was fully aware that, to do the subject ample justice demanded far better abilities than I could pretend to, especially the ability and habit of public speaking, and that the subject would even be difficult to a man possessing

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possessing those advantages; moreover, that it required a minute attention and consideration in the hearers, such as are not to be easily obtained in a parliamentary debate—I have therefore consented to submit to the publick at large my thoughts, intended to have been delivered in Parliament, consisting of the interleaved notes which I had made to the bill, almost verbatim; wishing to give an opportunity of refuting the arguments and opinions I may state, if they are unfounded, or of improving on them, if they should merit notice by those who are far more able than I really feel myself to do justice to the subject.

The Corn Bill now depending in Parliament, however it may in parts seem to encourage agriculture, is nevertheless highly unfavourable to it. It appears to be dictated by a policy which, neglecting other considerations, does not extend beyond providing for the immediate necessity of the

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consumer. The framers of that bill surely should have foreseen that the consequence of the system they mean to establish must be, that the consumer, now so much considered, will in the end become liable to extreme uncertainty as to a supply of corn, and in great measure dependant on foreign countries for subsistence.

The great object of the bill is evidently to keep down the price of corn *at all events*. Whether that is wise and just, whether it will not produce scarcity hereafter, whether other important considerations should not be taken into the account, is certainly well worthy of serious enquiry.

For the purpose of better examining this matter, it may be proper to make a few previous observations on the representation of the Committee of the Privy Council, which is avowedly the ground work of the bill. It contains the principles on which the bill proceeds,

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proceeds, and assigns reasons for adopting those principles.

I shall first notice a circumstance of the utmost importance, mentioned in that representation of Council, and which must strike very forcibly the commonest reader. It is there stated, that on an average of nineteen years, ending in 1765, the corn exported from this country produced a clear profit of not less than 651,000l.; but that on an average of eighteen years, ending in 1788, we have paid to foreigners for a supply of corn no less than 291,000l. yearly*. It is intimated in the same paper, that England must not in future think of supplying herself with corn; and further, that Europe is unable to supply itself when the crop fails in any degree; that therefore, in such a case, we must all look for a supply

* The sum paid to foreigners for corn during that period is undoubtedly much greater.

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to America. If this be true, it is the most alarming information that we of this country have ever heard; so alarming, that I cannot conceive the loss of all we have in Asia and America would be half so fatal, or so much to be apprehended; but I trust, that a dependance on other countries for subsistence will not of necessity be our situation. A perseverance in a bad system of corn laws, discouraging to agriculture, may in time bring about so lamentable a dependance; and such bad system will, I fear, be fatally established, if the Corn Bill should pass into a law in its present form.

If it be true that we are actually in a regular state of dependance on other countries for our subsistence, the bill ought, as it seems to me, to have been formed on totally different principles. Instead of a short-sighted and narrow attention to keep down the price of corn, merely by facilitating its importation, the object of the bill, as I conceive, should

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should rather have been to discourage a dangerous, wasteful, and uncertain dependance, by so effectual an encouragement of tillage, as should not only secure to us, at all times, a supply for ourselves in this island, but also for our dependencies.

The Committee of Council imputes the alarming change from an enriching export to a ruinous import of corn, to an increased population, an increased opulence, and consequently an increased consumption; and then adds, that there can be no reason to suppose, either that the agriculture of the country has of late declined, or that for so long a continuance of years the seasons can have been uniformly unfavourable. It must be obvious to every man, that it is of the utmost consequence to enquire into the cause of this change, in order to enable us to provide an adequate remedy for the mischief.

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I know, from personal experience during the whole period alluded to, that the supposed greater scarcity of corn than formerly has not arisen from continued bad seasons; and it seems to me, that there can be little doubt but that the change in question has been occasioned more by an increase of luxury, than by an increase of population; and is owing exceedingly to the inattention of the Legislature so to provide, that the increase of tillage might keep pace with the increase of consumption. Whether tillage has increased within the period of eighteen years, or even a longer time, is very doubtful. In some counties, particularly the Eastern, and a few of the southern, and also in the poor soils that are within reach of manures at a moderate expence, tillage may have increased*; but in the midland parts of England,

* The principal proof that is urged of an increased growth of corn is drawn from the increase of the quantity

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England, in the rich soils, much land, which was formerly under corn, is now within thirty years become excellent pasture. The increased expences that fall on tillage, the multitude of excises that in various shapes at last affect the land, the increase of tythe, or of the custom of taking in kind, that mischievous check to improvement, naturally turn many from tillage to grassland, by which they avoid a variety of expences, as well as the discouragement

quantity brought to market; but that may be accounted for by the change which has taken place in the country as to sending to the mill the corn which is used in families. Very few now send wheat to be ground, therefore more appears at the market. The millers now, almost universally mealmen, by mixing the qualities of wheat, contrive to sell flour cheaper than the farmer finds it costs him, if he sends his own wheat to be ground. At the same time he is relieved from apprehension as to an unfair decrease in measure, or a change of his corn; and is not liable to be told, that the fault of the flour arises from the badness of his own corn.

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arising from an uncertain price for corn, together with the mischiefs of a bad system of corn laws. Even if there were no other reason, the price of meat, butter, cheese, and hay, being allowed to find its proper and natural level at market, and the price of corn being depressed by importation below its natural and proportionate value, this alone is sufficient to divert many from tillage to pasture; and as the prices of the former articles increase, the practice will continue of exchanging arable land for pasture. These circumstances of themselves will sufficiently account for the decrease, or, at least, for the inadequate advance made in tillage for some years past in this island, compared with the increased consumption of corn. The prodigious increase in the demands for other kinds of corn, besides wheat in this kingdom, especially of oats, explains our not having exported so much corn of late years as heretofore; and shews how the extraordinary importation of oats in

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in particular is found to have happened. Large tracts of lands, which might otherwise have produced corn, are now required to provide hay and grass for the multitude of horses kept. Add to this, the luxury of the country is so much greater than it was, that the demand for butter and cheese exceeds, beyond all proportion, that of the former part of this century, which consequently contributes to divert the farmer from tillage; and although the private brewery is in great measure suppressed among the lower ranks of the people, the public breweries, perhaps, use double the quantity of barley they did. The demand of corn for distilleries was some years since comparatively a trifle; and half a century ago a great proportion of the lower classes of people, who now eat wheaten, were content with barley, rye, and oaten bread.

If these circumstances are thought to account for the change pointed out by the

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Committee of Council, it may be proper to enquire,

First, Whether this kingdom is of necessity dependant on other countries for its subsistence, or whether England can raise a sufficiency of corn to supply its own increased and increasing demand.

Second, Whether proper means have been used by the Legislature to promote a growth of corn equal to the consumption.

Thirdly, Whether the present Corn Bill provides, or what will be, the best means of rendering the growth of corn in Great Britain equal to the consumption.

As to the first head of enquiry, I cannot conceive any thing more alarming than the idea of the dependance of a kingdom like this on other countries for subsistence.—

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There is no exertion that should not be used to avoid it ; and I am satisfied it must be our own fault if such should continue to be our situation.

A decisive proof that this kingdom is not of necessity dependant for subsistence, is, that till lately it not only supplied itself, but exported largely. Perhaps this may be deemed proof sufficient. But that the growth of corn may be greatly increased in this kingdom, must be obvious to every one who observes the immense tracts of waste and half-cultivated lands in different parts of England. We sometimes, in the pride of exultation, are apt to call this an highly-cultivated country, but not one fourth of it is worthy of that description—much land which is now half waste, much which is very imperfectly cultivated, might and would produce large quantities of corn, if there were any probability

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bability of an adequate return for the great expence of good cultivation, by a steady sufficient price for corn, which cannot be expected while our ports are to be open for the importation of corn from fertile and comparatively untaxed and untithed countries, at what may be called moderate or low prices. Every man who travels over England, and more especially the midland counties, will observe, that the inclosed land, where alone the proprietor has the full power of using the mode of cultivation best suited to his interest, is far more generally in pasture than in tillage. A fair price for corn, proportioned to that which flesh is allowed to bring, would in a few years put a large proportion of these pastures under a regular course of crops, and without raising the price of meat. It is well known that a tract of land, under a good course of crops, which includes artificial grasses, turneps, &c., will maintain
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more cattle, and at a cheaper rate, than if the whole were under pasture*.

In addition to what is here hinted at, very efficacious means of encouraging tillage might be devised, as will appear more particularly under the third division which I have laid down for enquiry.

* An increased price of corn will make flesh cheaper, because corn, by that means, paying a larger proportion of the profit due on the capital used in farming, flesh will have less to pay.

Thus mutton is dearer, because wool is not allowed to be sold at its natural price; so says Adam Smith, whose argument is, that a man must be paid, or he would not breed sheep; if then the publick pays him more for his mutton than its real value, they may have his wool for less, as upon the whole they make it worth his while to keep the sheep. At present flesh helps to pay the deficiency in profit made by the deficiencies of corn—hence it has risen to the consumer so rapidly of late.

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As to the second question, whether proper means have hitherto been used to promote a growth of corn equal to the demand, I think it may be fairly said, that instead of any such salutary endeavours we have frittered away the spirit of our old corn laws, partly under the visionary expectation of attaining constant low prices, and partly under the idea of grasping at commercial advantages.

It is about eighteen years ago since we made our last great alteration in the corn laws. The act of the year 17~~73~~⁸⁹ has improved the law in one point, by regulating the opening of the ports according to an average of the prices of the district, instead of the prices at the several ports. All the ~~other~~ alterations made by the act of 1773 appear to have been much for the worse; and the additions introduced in that act are very objectionable. Without the appearance of any great change in the system of our corn laws,

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laws, a complete revolution in them has really taken place, as will be made to appear when I shall observe on the several tables which regulate the bounties, and the prices at which the high and low duties are to take place. The corn laws were originally intended solely and entirely for the encouragement of tillage, and were by no means framed with a view to commerce. But we have lost sight of this great and leading principle, and have departed from a system, which did not mean even to tolerate importation, except in case of great emergency, adopting in its stead a plan of commercial speculation.

One of our best writers on political œconomy says, that bad seasons may produce a dearth, but a famine can only be produced by bad laws. A famine has not yet taken place; but if we do not make some exertions, our dependance will increase by degrees to such an height that, in case of a

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generally bad season, or, perhaps, of a general war, we may not be able to procure from abroad what will have become our necessary supply. A neglect of tillage, or even a neglect of extending it in proportion to the increased consumption, might at last make an importation of an eighth; or suppose only a ninth of our whole consumption necessary, namely, a million of quarters of wheat*, which, exclusive of the difficulty of paying for it, would in many seasons be impossible for us to obtain. It has been the opinion of men who have considered that subject, and understood it, that such a quantity could not any where

* The common computation is a quarter of corn for each inhabitant, allowing something for waste, and other uses, besides food. As, according to a late very accurate enumeration of the inhabitants of Ireland, they appear to be upwards of four millions, I may be allowed to suppose the inhabitants of England seven millions and an half, and of Scotland to be one million and an half; together, nine millions at least.

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be had in common years; and if that opinion is founded, of course a famine must ensue.

The Representation of the Committee of Council tells us, Europe could not furnish us with the quantity in question, for she cannot always supply herself; far less should we depend on America—without mentioning how precarious any material supply from thence would be in time of war, she had never, at least before independence, sent a fifth of that quantity to Europe in any one year.

As the Representation of the Committee of Council supposes that neither this country nor Europe can supply themselves with wheat, but all must depend on the American State for wheat or flour, it may not be improper in a postscript to enquire what reliance there can be on that opinion.

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In respect to the third object of enquiry, what will be the best means of rendering the growth of corn in Great Britain equal to the consumption? The answer is simply, that the most effectual will be, to give, as far as we can, the monopoly of the home market to our farmers, not merely for their emolument, but for our own safety—no other means, I am persuaded, can answer the purpose so well, or preserve us so effectually from the calamitous situation of being dependant on other countries for subsistence.

Nothing surely can be more discouraging to the growth of corn in this country than that part of the bill which opens the ports to a glut of corn from all parts of the world the moment the smallest proportion of the usual consumption of this country is wanting, the moment its price becomes what is by no means extravagant, but on the contrary, while it is moderate, considering

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dering the increased expence of tillage—nor is that part of the bill much less discouraging, which prevents exportation, as soon as the price is such as to encourage the growth of it, and make the farmer amends for bad seasons at one time, and very low prices at another.

If the price of sugar rises ever so high, the ports are never open to foreign sugars; but if the value of corn rises to any thing like a considerable price, not only the ports are opened, but importation is encouraged by admitting corn for three months certain from untaxed countries, paying scarce a nominal duty.

In the case of other great native commodities, except where a monopoly is given of a raw material to a manufacture, the ports are always open for exportation; and if there is any danger in our own markets from foreign competition, the article is protected

ted by prohibitory or high duties; and whatever revenue is raised on that article, or paid by those employed in it, can be demanded from the consumer, as always should be the case. But in respect to corn, the moment the price rises to that which cannot afford much encouragement, but barely pay the expence of growing it, the farmer is checked, and, by the opening of the ports as already described, he is prevented from receiving a just return for his anxious labour and risk of capital.

The ill-judged measure of forcing a low price of bread corn is the less necessary in a country where the poor receives relief whenever the price exceeds what is moderate—and it should be recollected, that almost the whole of that heavy tax levied for the poor, amounting to more than two millions yearly, is paid by the very land which is so oppressed by our injudicious corn laws.

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It is far, however, from certain, that a low price for corn is advantageous to our manufactures; on the contrary, it appears that they are afflicted by somewhat of a high price, and that high-priced provisions and industry are in general constant companions, at least in Europe. Those who will give themselves the trouble of enquiry will find, that most work is done when corn is dear. Every body knows, that, in this kingdom, if the manufacturer can gain as much in three or four days as will maintain him for a week, he will be idle the two or three first days of the week—But one day's extra labour will amply pay the difference between what is deemed by our laws a moderate or high price; or one hour's work per day for a week would amount to the same thing.

The Committee of Council admits there is more regularity of conduct, and productive industry, when the price of corn is
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not unusually low, yet says it is necessary for the country labourer that provisions should be low. It would certainly be better, however undesirable, to raise the price of labour, than to ruin agriculture; but those who are acquainted with the real state of the country, and know the relief that is given to the poor and large families whenever the price of corn exceeds what is moderate, will probably think it better to suffer the price of labour to find its level, than to raise that price indiscriminately, beyond what is necessary for a small family, to what may be necessary for a large one.

It is a steady price that is to be wished for, not a low price; and that regular price can only be obtained by our growing more corn than we can consume, and by encouraging the export of the surplus. I must further add, that the landed interest being pledged by the poor laws to supply
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all deficiencies, have thence the best claim to fix the prices at which the ports should be open or shut in respect to corn.

The people of England must be always supplied with bread corn; but if they should have it at present at a price inferior to that at which, climate and taxes combined, their own country can afford to produce it, in the end they will be subjected to great distress, because the growth of corn will be discouraged.

Perhaps some men will think more favourably of agriculture, and of the necessity of encouraging tillage, if they consider it as a manufacture, which it is in reality almost as much as that of woollens—It furnishes the materials of, and supports other manufactures—More industry is employed in it than in any among the many which help to enrich this country, or in the producing of any other commodity—

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It would be better to depend on other countries for cloathing, than for bread, meat, and drink. Why should we give a monopoly of the supply to the manufacturers of wool, and not to the manufacturers or tillers of land? We have only to do in respect to corn, what is done in respect to all other considerable commodities; that is, secure the home market to the farmer. He has a right to it on every principle of equity, reason, and good policy — for that purpose little more is required than the simple operation of raising the prices and duties to what they were, and by returning to the old spirit of encouraging agriculture. In this would be no revolution, no change that could excite a just apprehension to the least enterprising, or most timid minister; there would be no reliance on doubtful speculation; and there can be little question but that the restoration of our old law, with a little addition, would in a short time manifest that we are not necessarily dependant

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dant on other countries for subsistence, and prove that we can raise an ample supply, not only for our increased consumption, but also for that of our dependencies. I am not in general a friend to forcing any thing by bounties and prohibitions, except in the case of new establishments, and then it should be done only for a limited time; but the case of agriculture is totally different from those that are merely commercial; and unless we enable our surplus corn to go in competition to a foreign market, we have not a chance of raising near enough for our own consumption in unfavourable seasons. No man would risk the expence of sowing more corn than will answer the demand in a favourable year, unless he is sure to dispose of the surplus at a reasonable price, by carrying it with fair advantage to markets.

One of the objections to monopolies, bounties, and duties, is, that they turn to-

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wards particular articles a greater share of labour and capital than would have otherwise gone to them and that they often divert men from a more advantageous employment to one that is less so. There can be no such apprehension in respect to agriculture, from which we have turned too much of our capital; and of that measure we are now feeling the bad effects.

The same arguments apply in favour of a preference to agriculture, which do in regard to our famous navigation laws. The monopolies, the bounties, and prohibitions of the latter, are necessary to enable us to defend our empire, our properties, and our liberties: the monopolies, bounties, and duties, which I argue for in favour of agriculture, are calculated to prevent our being dependant on other countries for subsistence, which has gradually become our case, and will be so in a much greater degree, if we even do not do something more than

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than maintain the greater part of our old system in favour of tillage.

It seems difficult, on any plain principle of reason, to account for the alteration of the corn laws of Charles the Second and William the Third, which took place in the year 1773, and particularly for the reduction then made of the prices at which the ports were to be open for exportation and importation, and shut against the latter, and that those prices should be put below what was thought reasonable above one hundred years ago, especially when we consider how much the value of money has decreased, and the expence of tillage had increased during that period. This nation had flourished and done well under their system of corn bounties and prices during almost a century. Our tillage was greatly improved, and our exportation of corn had become a great trade.

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We learn from the Representation of the Committee of Council how considerable the change has been in the last twenty years—I do not mean to assert that this alarming change has arisen entirely from the alteration of the corn laws; other causes certainly have contributed to it; but I wish the alteration had never been made. Its tendency, undoubtedly, is to keep down the price of corn, and consequently to discourage tillage: but a due encouragement of that which is of more real consequence to us than all other considerations whatever, will not only bring much land, now unprofitable, into tillage, but may restore to the plough great quantities of excellent corn land, which, on its enclosure, has been turned to pasture.

For the purpose of observing accurately on the bounties and prices, it may be better to examine them in the order in which they stand in the bill.

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The first table, A, shews the prices under which certain bounties are allowed on exportation of the several sorts of corn, and they are the same to which they were reduced by the act of 1773, viz. 5s. per quarter on wheat when under 44s.; 3s. on rye under 28s.; 2s. 6d. on barley and big under 22s.; and 2s. on oats under 14s.

For the reasons already given, I would raise the prices under which the bounty should be allowed to what they were at the Revolution, namely, of wheat to 48s., rye to 32s., barley and big to 24s., oats to 15s.—the bounties on flour, meal, and malt, to be in proportion. Perhaps it might be better to regulate the bounties somewhat differently; for example: on wheat, 7s. 6d. under 44s., and 3s. 6d. between 44 and 48s.—by which means tillage would be most encouraged, when some encouragement was most wanted; that is, when the price is lowest; and the expence to the country,

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country, in respect to bounty, probably would be less than it would be if always kept at 5s. : but however reasonable this may be, bounties are not the point on which I should make the greatest struggle, because many object to the expence of bounties; and there are other points on which it seems much more necessary to make exertions.

The table B. shews the prices at, or above, which exportation is to be prohibited. It is essential, in my view of this subject, that they also should be, at least, restored to what they were before the 13th of George the Third. The present bill has the merit of going half the way I would propose, in respect to all corn, except barley and big; and I suppose the consideration of the advantage to be gained by the malthouse has occasioned this difference. If there is to be a distinction made between grain and flour, or meal or malt, it

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it is not unreasonable; but then I think it should be general. We might, with equal propriety, check the export of all corn until it is manufactured into flour or bread, as of barley, before it becomes malt.

The prohibition price of the export of wheat, for near a century, had been at 48s.; rye, pease, and beans, at 32s.; barley and big at 28s.; oats at 16s. These prices were reduced, by the 13th of George the Third, to 44s. wheat, 28s. rye, 22s. barley, and 14s. oats. The present bill restores half that was taken off, and seems to admit that there should have been no reduction, except on barley, and on that it advances only one shilling: surely it cannot be too much to desire that the prices should be what were deemed reasonable 128 years ago, for it is so long since that they were fixed.

But it would surely be adviseable to allow
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the export of corn to continue, when the price of corn is something higher than that at which the bounty ceases; and the Committee of Council seems to be of the same opinion.

It would be an encouragement to agriculture if the ports were open for exportation, till the price of wheat is at 53s. and 4d., which, under the table D, will be proposed as the price at which the high duties should cease.

The table C. shews the quantities of corn, flour, and biscuit, which may be exported to particular dependencies of the British empire. I should like this table better if it allowed an export from this country equal to their consumption, especially to the West-India Colonies, which cannot raise sufficient for themselves; and it should be, as I conceive, without the necessity of applying to the Privy Council. We know
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with the utmost exactness how much it would amount to; and instead of declining it at any time, we ought to assert, at all times, the monopoly of their supply in every article we can furnish, otherwise we lose the advantage of colonies, in the return they should make for the monopoly of our markets, and the expence of protecting them.

The Planters cannot object to our having their entire supply, without depriving themselves of the only argument worth attention, in case a proposition should be made to import foreign sugars—and this country need not dread the export at any time of the quantity of flour which the British West Indies require—the whole annual supply, on an average of three years, ending 1789, being 162,506 barrels—about as much as is consumed in Great Britain in four days. It will be recollected how few comparatively the number of Whites are in the
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British West Indies, and that wheaten flour is not the food of the Negroes.

The table D, which shews the prices according to which high or low duties are to be paid on importation, is of still more consequence than any of the other tables. And here I must repeat the complaint against the alteration of the prices fixed in Charles the Second's reign. If any alteration was to be made, the decrease of the value of money naturally required, that instead of reducing the importation prices they should have been raised, as one of the best means of encouraging tillage.

I would propose, therefore, that the high duty should not cease until wheat was at 53s. and 4d.; rye, beans, and pease, at 40s.; and barley at 32s.; which only brings the prices back to what they were before the 13th of George the Third; at least we ought to try the experiment, whether

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ther these prices will be sufficient to encourage a growth of corn equal to our consumption; and as they were reckoned moderate 120 years ago, till they amounted to the above sums, surely they may be now deemed so, especially as I must repeat it, when we consider the great additional expences that have since fallen on tillage. In respect to wheat, I should add, that the Committee of Council seems to admit the price to be moderate till it amounts to 48s.; but as a very small deficiency of crop will raise the price greatly, and as the next price to a moderate is not a very high one, the ports should not be immediately opened on the low duties just where the moderate price is supposed to cease, and where the bounty on export used to cease. The restoration, therefore, of the old price at which the low duties should commence, viz. 53s. and 4d. will give the space which seems proper between the price at which the bounty

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bounty is no longer allowed, and that which is deemed an high one.

And as an argument against the import of wheat until the average price of the kingdom, amounts to 53s. and 4d., it should be observed, that the permission to import into particular districts, namely, the northern, when the price there is at 48s. per quarter, operates on the southern corn counties nearly the same as an importation at 43 or 44s. The corn counties depend on the northern districts for a market. The expence of carrying coastwise, including freight, insurance, and all charges, amounting to 4 or 5s. per quarter, must therefore be deducted from 48s.; and thus foreign wheat, inferior in quality, often unwholesome and unfit for bread, is, in fact, admitted, when the price in the counties where corn is grown is at 43 or 44s., and the grower of corn has not the encouragement the Legislature intended. But above
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all, I am anxious to maintain the low duties of our old law, namely, 8s. per quarter on wheat till the price is 4l. It will be a substantial encouragement to the growth of wheat; and as the country was able to pay it 120 years ago, surely it may do so now. I should add, that the great increase of tillage which took place, and enabled us to send so much corn abroad, has been almost universally attributed to the regulation which I propose to restore.

If, however, the Legislature think it necessary to yield to prejudices, and sacrifice the interests of tillage to those of the consumer, and is determined to keep down the price of bread corn at all events; at least it may attend to the true interest of the country, so far as relates to other species of corn, and may admit any proposition in respect to it, that can encourage tillage. Every man who knows any thing of agriculture is aware, that by encourag-
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ing one particular kind you promote the growth of other kinds of corn, and that a course of crops is necessary in most soils to secure a tolerable produce; it is indifferent to the farmer which of those crops pays his expences. There is no kind of corn, the growth of which at present seems to require encouragement more than oats. The importation is become prodigious; it increases, and is likely to increase greatly, unless the discouragements to tillage are removed. Our ports are almost perpetually open to the importation of them, because the price at which they may be entered, paying only 3d. per quarter, is so low as 16s. It must be obvious, that the admission of foreign oats, (which are generally, except the best from the Low Countries, 20 per cent. cheaper than British) as soon as the price in our markets reach to 16s., cannot fail to discourage the growth of that article, especially when we consider that the farmer may not get more than 14s.,
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the waste and the expence of carrying coastwise to our principal markets, only from our eastern coasts, amounting, at least, to 2s. per quarter at a medium. So low a price holds out no advantage to the grower; and he certainly will not put himself to any extraordinary expence to raise an article, the proper value of which is perpetually liable to be debased by admitting it from all countries, the most fertile, and the least taxed. Much land, which from its poverty, or distance from manures, or on account of the expence of draining and cultivation, will not now make a sufficient return to the farmer, would, if he could be sure of an adequate price in return for the cultivation, produce large quantities of oats.— We depress agriculture in favour of the Dutch, and other nations—we pay for draining their lands, while many hundred thousands of our acres lye waste; and this will ever be the case, if we do not protect our agriculture either by an equalizing
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duty, which should never be lower than five shillings per quarter on oats, or by not opening the ports on the low duty until the price is at least 21s.

As oats are bread corn in Scotland, the gentlemen of that country will propose what they think proper in respect to that kingdom. But it may here be observed, that they have had the good sense not to open their ports to the importation until its price is equal to 19s. and 2½d. our quarter.

It is of little consequence what we pay for oats, compared to the encouragement of agriculture. Stablekeepers, although they have a profit of 50 per cent., at the least, on oats, even when at high prices, will object to my proposal; and also some others who may have an advantage from the importation: but surely the wishes of these persons will not be put in competition with
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the publick good, especially as they have little right to complain; since it is in their power to redress themselves, if the price should be really high, by charging an advance to the consumer. The farmer has not the same power. When the ports and immense warehouses of foreign corn are suddenly opened on him, while the price is only moderate, he cannot make himself amends for a damaged or a half crop; he must go to market; corn is of a perishable nature. There can be no combination among the growers of corn in England. The article is in too many hands: we are therefore sure there can be no monopoly of it: the farmer must sell it at 6s. per bushel, although, in consequence of bad seasons and bad crops, he is not able to afford it so low. The consequence of this must be, that he will not sow, unless, in case of losing a part of his crop, he can make himself some amends, by selling the remaining part at a better price. But al-

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though there can be no combination among the farmers of Great Britain, there may be monopolies and combinations among those who warehouse foreign corn.

It will, perhaps, be objected, that the raising the low duty on oats to 5s., or not opening the ports till the price is at 21s., will raise the price until a sufficient quantity of land has been brought into tillage to supply the consumption. To this it may be answered, that the price is now generally about 21s.; and that, independent of the necessary encouragement to supply ourselves, we had better pay 5s. per quarter for British than for foreign labour; that when we have reached the desired point, of raising sufficient for our consumption, the competition at market will bring the price to its proper level. In the mean time a duty of 5s. per quarter will produce some revenue—it will amply pay the bounty on the exportation of other corn.

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Such a tax on the consumption of oats would gratify many who are fond of taxes on luxury; for on whom will it fall? On none but those who can redress themselves, or can best afford to pay it. The farmer raises the oats he wants; but if he should feel the expence so much as to turn him from the use of horses to that of oxen, which require no oats, it would be better for himself, and for the community. The daily increased expence to the carrier would not be considerable. It would not be felt by the manufacturer, more especially as the greater part of his goods are carried by water. Whether we are to pay one penny, or even two-pence a day more, for each coach or saddle horse, while we reside in this town, is not of quite so much consequence as the encouragement of agriculture.

But the whole of the reasoning which may be supposed to be urged against the measure

measure turns upon the idea of a species of land product becoming dearer by the encouraging the growth of it, a notion which all experience controverts; for a few years the price would rise; but this rise would be a direct premium upon the culture of our wastes, particularly our moors and fens, on which soils oats are the principal crop; and such increased cultivation would gradually counteract such rise of price, and tend strongly to reduce it nearly to the present rates: but in the mean time the national interest would be powerfully promoted. The experiment would prove, in this instance, as in so many others, that raising the price of any commodity is, of all other means, the surest to command plenty; and that, on the contrary, the ill policy of aiming, with some crooked or sinister view, at sinking prices, is the sure method to work a disappointment: such a policy discourages production, and a rise of price must be the consequence, as the farmers

measures of the new bill may probably find to be the case in wheat.

All other grain, which is not bread-corn, should have the same equalizing duties, or, at least, the prices at which the low duties are to be paid, should be raised, as already proposed, to what they were in Charles the Second's time.

Under this head it should be observed, that the Committee of Council, in the representation to the King, has proposed, that wheat should be allowed to be imported into this kingdom from Ireland on the low duties when the price is at or above 46s., and other sorts of corn when the prices shall be in like proportion; and that this regulation shall take place whenever the Parliament of Ireland shall make a like regulation in favour of British corn. The principle of this proposition might be accepted by the landed interest of Great Britain,

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tain, if the import prices should be raised as had been proposed. For example; when the ports are open on the low duties for wheat from foreign countries at 53s. and 4d., it might be admitted from Ireland on the same duties at 48s. On this plan the landed interest will gain, at least, a better security than they now have; for no corn will be brought in sooner than by the present law, and foreign corn will be excluded considerably longer. The import will be gradual, and only in proportion to the want; and speculists in the corn of the Baltick and of the American States will not have the power of pouring in such quantities as can glut the market, or reduce the price of British corn far below the standard fixed for the farmer's encouragement.

According to the present law, the whole world may pour in corn upon the British grower at 48s.; and under the regulation proposed, all corn, except Irish, will be excluded

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cluded till it rises to 53s. and 4d. Corn may be at 48s. per quarter when we do not want a great quantity; and we may in such case, and especially through the system of warehousing, be so overglutted instantly by a general import as to have the price reduced far below 48s.; whereas, by a partial import, we shall avoid the danger of such an overflow; and if Ireland can supply our wants at such a time, they will be answered without creating a sudden and injurious fall of prices. At the same time corn would not be importable from Ireland at lower prices than it has been during the last eighteen years; and if the equalizing duties which are proposed to take place at all times should be adopted, they will be a great protection to the British grower of corn, although these equalizing duties should be put somewhat lower on Irish than on foreign corn—at the same time the quantity of wheat or flour Ireland can spare could not ruin our market—perhaps it may

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appear of some moment to the manufacturing part of Great Britain, that such a regulation tends to bring the price of corn to a level in both kingdoms, when it is dear in Britain, and has no effect when it is cheap.

This regulation may also be a good compromise between those who think it necessary to encourage importation in favour of manufactures, and those who object to it, as ruinous to tillage.

On the same principle other kinds of corn might be admitted from Ireland on proportionate duties.

But amongst all the provisions of this bill, there is none which appears to me more objectionable than that which promotes the storing of foreign corn at the publick expence. It would be difficult to propose any measure more injurious to our own tillage,

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lage, and more advantageous to the corn trade of other countries.

On a slight view of the subject, there seems to be something captivating in the words, "make Britain the emporium, the "magazine for foreign wheat;" but if the publick are to pay for storing large magazines of foreign corn, to be poured out upon our farmers at a moment's warning, thereby depreciating the stock which they have in hand, and disappointing their reasonable hopes of advantage, we shall have little cause for congratulating ourselves on Britain's becoming the *depot* or market for foreign wheat. The privilege will be a ruinous one to British agriculture*.

Mr.

* The accumulations of wheat stored at Liverpool amounted, at one period, to 40,030 quarters, the produce (at twenty bushels an acre) of 16,012 acres of land. This quantity, for the purchase of which 30,000l, at the least, must have been paid to foreign-

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Mr. Smith, who published some tracts on corn above thirty years ago (1758), and is esteemed one of our best writers on the subject, speaking of forming magazines of corn, says, "it would become a very great discouragement to tillage, and in the end make corn dearer than before, as the farmer, seeing large quantities collected together, might imagine corn would never bear a price for the future; and the fear of the market being spoiled by the magazines being opened, would prevent all private persons from keeping a sufficient quantity by them to carry on their busi-

ers, was, by a return of the Quarter Sessions, let loose at once upon the market in the middle of July; the very time when the British farmer begins to look forward to reap the fruits of his industry, and receive payment for the expence of tilling his land. Average the quantity at 500 quarters a vessel, and it will appear that eighty sail of such vessels must arrive in one day to produce the same effect on the British market.

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" nefs with profit, and consequently tillage would decrease, the trade would be in a manner abandoned, and many ill consequences, at present impossible to be foreseen, would follow."

But the objections to immense magazines of corn, *entirely foreign*, are infinitely stronger than the publick magazines to which Mr. Smith alluded. Every body knows the arts that are used, and the frauds that are committed respecting the corn trade; and that dealers, by selling and reselling to each other large quantities of corn in a fallacious manner, have hitherto opened and shut the ports of a district for importation or exportation as best suited their purposes. The ports may be opened through bad information, through ill-founded apprehension: in short, they may, according to this bill, be opened very improperly. If the crops fail not more than the 500th part of the necessary supply of the people, the ports must

must be opened, and remain so for three months; or even when there is not an actual scarcity. It is well known, that the mere apprehension of want, without absolute want, will raise the price of corn; and if any part of the usual consumption is wanting, the price will rise more than proportionably to the quantity wanted. The ports once opened, the great opportunities afforded by the extensive canals which communicate with our ports will allow immense quantities of foreign corn to be sent suddenly from the magazines, proposed to be established in all our ports by this bill, into the interior parts of the country, greatly to the prejudice of the farmer, of the landed interest, and of the agriculture of the kingdom.

Although, perhaps, it may seldom happen that any one particular country can throw in corn enough utterly to ruin our home market, yet the ports being always
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open to store wheat and flour, our character for riches and high prices will induce all countries to send their corn and flour to wait the opportunity of pouring it into the heart of the kingdom. The spirit of commerce will at times induce all countries, and possibly all at once, to send their corn here, and often to a cheaper market. It was the case, in some respects, in 1789; while America made an effort to send corn hither, wheat was considerably dearer at Philadelphia than in London.

Previous to the last opening of the port of Liverpool to corn on the low duties, above eighty places of deposit were occupied in that town, and some part of the corn had been upwards of eighteen months warehoused. When once landed and stored, it will often answer better to the merchant to send it at prime cost, or even lower, to our home market, than to reship, insure, and pay freight, to carry it farther. These
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circumstances will depress our market below what may be at the time a reasonable price, considering the harvest.

It is obvious that great mischief may arise from too great a reduction of the price of grain in a year of scarcity; for whenever there is a great check given to any branch of industry, those employed in it may be induced to abandon it, greatly to the prejudice of the community. It should be repeated, the farmer, *on such occasions*, has no means to make himself amends for the low price of corn; but when a low price proceeds from plenty, he has an additional quantity to pay his expences. In short, the price should not be reduced but in proportion to the crop in the country, and the quantity wanted; and the more that is wanted, the less should the price be reduced. The diminution of price should be in proportion to the plenty of the year. That wheat should be as cheap in

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bad harvests as in good, surely can never be expected, nor is it just: but the tendency of the bill is clearly to oblige us to sell wheat at a cheaper rate than that at which we can fairly grow it.

Compared to other objections, the mere expence of storing, now meant to be thrown on the publick, may appear of no great consequence; yet the amount of that expence for the whole kingdom would be very considerable. Liverpool had at one time 147 warehouse rooms wherein flour and corn were stored; the expence of which, and of the officers to attend and air and turn the corn, was certainly no small object. From January to April, 1790, 70,786 quarters of oats were imported into that town from Ireland. Had that quantity been warehoused at the publick charge, it would have caused an expence of at least 140l. per week, or near 7300l. per annum, only for that quantity, and for that one place.

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It is well known, that the power of importing and warehousing corn did not exist in this country till the 13th of the present King, and that such a power was not in the bill at first offered to the house by Mr. Pownall, but that it was far advanced before he introduced it, at the suggestion of Mr. Dobson, a corn merchant in Liverpool; and that that power was only intended to be exercised under certain limitations. He was aware, as I have been told, as well as many others, that the warehousing corn in general would have a very bad effect on the agriculture of the country.

It seems to me, I confess, as if none but a corn dealer had been considered or consulted in framing this part of the bill.— Now, though the man who trades in corn may be very respectable, yet he has, as to the corn laws, but a temporary and selfish interest in them, compared with the man of landed property, the farmer, and the publick
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at large: not that I think any number of men will be hurt by the omission of the clause in question, even as to their private interest, but that the advantage they may lose at present by unseasonable importations, they will more than regain by an increased exportation hereafter. Our merchants may trade in corn from the Baltick to the Mediterranean without landing it in this country: they may carry corn from Ireland, whose ports are now likely to be always open for exportation, to Spain, Portugal, or the Mediterranean: but this I am sure of, that if the clause in question should pass into a law, they will in future have very little or no corn to carry from this country.

It may here be remarked, that the spirit of commerce should not be indulged, wherever it can in the least prejudice agriculture, and that we ought not to suffer local circumstances, nor the particular advantage of ports, to interfere with the general interest

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of the country, and especially with the growth of corn, the object by far of the greatest consequence, whether we consider it in respect to population, or dependance on other countries for subsistence.

If we are to benefit by example, we may see that agriculture has been favoured beyond manufactures or trade in those countries that have been most populous and richest.

In return for the great revenue paid by land, in return for the enormous taxes paid for the poor of all trades, the landed interest, including landowner as well as landholder, is entitled to the supply of the home market; at the same time it should be observed, that the supply of the home market, and the interest of tillage, are much more effectually promoted by the prosperity of the inland, than by the importation and exportation trade: and in
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so strong a light do I see the ill consequence of warehousing, that, notwithstanding the bounties on export seem necessary to encourage tillage, and give us any chance of a market for our corn in foreign countries, yet I should much rather give up those bounties entirely than admit the clause in question.

In short, if the bill passes as it is now framed, I shall consider it as little better than allowing a direct importation. In truth, it would be much worse, in every respect, than repealing all our laws relative to corn; for, according to the present bill, we shall be liable to all the disadvantages of restrictions on trade, without enjoying any of the advantages which generally result from a freedom from such restraints.

Under the head of storing corn, should be noticed a power permitted by the bill, of taking corn out of the warehouses in order
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to be ground, and then exported. If the warehousing clause should not pass, this of course will fall; but if that should be received, this will be still objectionable. It can answer little purpose, except to encourage frauds. The advantage of grinding the quantity likely to be re-exported is a very trifling object, and those particularly who do not like that the corn or flour of this country should go out of it, will be apprehensive that any rubbish or bad corn may be introduced under the pretence of grinding; that bad or unwholesome flour from that corn will be sold to our people, and that our good flour will be exported in its place. It is ridiculous to suppose we can secure, by any law whatever, the re-exportation of the very same corn that was taken from the warehouses.

The clause may have been suggested by a miller; but there are those who think it would be a much more reasonable desire on his

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his part, and much more proper for the Legislature, to enact, that no flour should be imported into this kingdom, and that all corn, when the ports are open, should be admitted only in the state of grain, except from Ireland. That country has wisely prohibited the import of flour, except from Great Britain. Preserving the reciprocal preference, the example is worthy of imitation; by which means the manufacture and advantage will be reserved for our own mills, in respect to corn, from all other countries.

To this, however, it is objected, that in times of scarcity it might be a means of throwing a dangerous monopoly into the hands of our great millers, or might produce a dearth, if the scarcity should commence with a hard frost, or a dry season, and if there should be no flour, except in the hands of the millers. This supposes Irish flour under the same prohibitory duty

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as foreign, which is not intended. However, I find there are very respectable opinions, that one shilling per cwt. on the import of flour will be too high, and that 6d. per cwt. will be sufficient.

The bill is announced as intended to form a permanent law ; and every man who attends to the subject, will acknowledge how highly necessary it is that it should be so. Great, therefore, must be the surprise to find a suspending power given to the Privy Council, which destroys all permanency of system, all confidence in the steadiness of settled laws, and consequently all spirit of speculation in the growth, the manufacture, and the trade, of corn. That Government should wish to have such a power, is somewhat unaccountable : it exposes them to be harassed by solicitations, direct and indirect, and to be practised on by every artifice and misrepresentation that can be devised to mislead them. At the

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same time the necessity of allowing a suspending power is by no means shewn in the Representation of the Committee of Council, which affects to assign reasons for each head of the bill.

I particularly object to trusting them with the power in question, as in the Representation of the Committee of Council the words, " Popular commotion and tumults," occur often enough to shew too great an apprehension and a disposition to give way to the effects of ignorance and prejudice. When such a disposition appears, it must be obvious that there will not be wanting those who will attempt to make an impression, and that it will not be very difficult to promote a tumult or commotion in a port or market town.

It may here be observed, that great warehouses of corn, instead of preventing, are likely to promote popular tumult, On va-

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rious mistaken notions, to which the lower ranks are very liable, they will be a provoking temptation to plunder.

I shall on this head make only one more observation, namely, that to cite precedents from the reigns of Richard II., Henry VI., Philip and Mary, and Elizabeth, does not of course reconcile us to the idea of a dispensing power.

The bill contains other matter very objectionable, the detail of which would only embarrass those parts which may, in some degree, be considered as general heads. I cannot but dislike the whole system of inspection, as the erection of an office of inquisition into the private concerns of individuals, equally inimical to the spirit of commerce as to general liberty. Even if it were proved, which is by no means the case, that the regulations provided by the present law for opening and shutting the ports, are
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so deficient as not to be capable of amendment: nothing but absolute necessity, and an object of the greatest moment, could justify the introduction of such a new system as that proposed. The present bill requires a weekly account of every transaction in trade, so far as it respects the purchase of corn. Next year the grazier, the clothier, the dealer in any article, may be put under the same trammels, and no argument will be admitted against the principle, because it is established in the corn laws.

Under the excise laws confiscations of ships were introduced. This principle, bad as it is, was extended to the laws, and since to the manifest act; and no objection to the principle will now be allowed as valid, because there are precedents for it.

Every day's experience shews the severe hardships to which the innocent owners of

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ships are exposed from the ignorance or villainy of persons, over whom they have no controul, and by transactions to which they cannot be privy: they are liable to the confiscation of their ships for acts which they could not prevent by any possible care of their own, or precaution in the choice of their captain or officers. A pound of biscuit, or an ounce of flour, may, under the bill, confiscate a ship of any value—and the clause, limiting the tonnage of the ships above which the Commissioners should have a discretionary power to set aside the penalties of the act, will not be considered as obviating the objection. Even if the vessel is restored, the detention of her, or the loss of a voyage, is very prejudicial to commerce in general, and the expence and anxiety attending the recovery, are very serious evils to the ship owners. Instead of discouraging, every thing should be done to encourage our principal merchants to be ship owners; and it must be obvious, that
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heavy pecuniary penalties, for which, in most instances, the real offender might be made responsible, would answer every purpose of prevention, just as much as the exorbitant confiscation of a very valuable ship belonging to a man by no means culpable, but who employs his capital in the manner which the Legislature should encourage by all means possible, as that which is most beneficial to the empire.

Notwithstanding I see so much difficulty in the consideration of the bill, what I have suggested, by way of alteration or improvement, is perfectly simple. On a subject of such deep concern, I should think it blameable to obtrude merely speculative opinions. I do not expect from those who have the principal guidance of this important bill, that they should undertake any great revolution in the system of the corn laws; neither should I recommend to them so great a change as has been proposed by some
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men, very respectable for their abilities and writings. The complicated state of Europe, and, indeed of the world at large, will not admit of so simple a system as a perfectly unlimited free trade in corn; and it would, perhaps, be particularly objectionable on our part, lest it should in the end render us dependant on foreign countries for subsistence. What I venture to propose will not be a revolution, but rather a restoration of the old principle of the corn laws; and I trust that, however specious opinions may be to the contrary, it will be thought fit and necessary to maintain prohibitory duties on the import of corn, until there is a real scarcity, and an equalizing duty at all times on corn coming from untaxed and untythed countries, into one that is heavily taxed and tythed; and further, that it will appear expedient to give a bounty on exportation, in order to enable the farmer to dispose of his surplus on reasonable terms;

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terms; the only means, in my judgement, of securing an abundant growth of corn.

There are able men who think there should be no other shutting of the ports, in respect to exportation, than that which will naturally take place when an extraordinary scarcity raises the price of corn. That scarcity would rarely, possibly never, happen, if the cultivation of the island was carried any thing like as far as it would bear, and to which it might be brought by encouragement; but if it should happen, the consequent price of corn would soon produce such inconsiderable supplies as we might want from other countries, and this argument is urged not only in favour of tillage, but also to prevent our being thrown out of the trade of corn, and the turning it into other hands by the frequent and continued stops to exportation; but as a necessary attention to the encouragement of agriculture should not allow the ports always to be

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be open to importation, it, perhaps, will not be thought reasonable that they should be always open for exportation.

It will be observed, that the objections I have offered, are not so much pointed to that which is new in the bill now under consideration, as to the act of the 13th of the present King. But I cannot help expressing some degree of surprize, that those who drew up the Representation of the Committee of Council, and stated therein so strongly the present dependance of this kingdom on foreign countries for subsistence, should have adopted that act almost entirely. Yet when I object to the proceedings of that Committee, it is not without deference, because I am satisfied that a noble Lord who presides there, of whose extraordinary information and maturity of reason I have an high opinion, has paid that attention to the subject which deserves the best thanks of the community. An intimate

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intimate acquaintance with the interior circumstances of the country, and a knowledge of agriculture, seem necessary to a complete investigation of the question under consideration; and even with those advantages, it will still be attended with difficulty.

The Representation of the Committee is a good historical essay on the corn laws, and contains many excellent maxims and opinions, which support almost every thing I have presumed to recommend to the attention of the publick, except that part which relates to warehousing foreign corn, and to giving a dispensing power.

We are surprized that those principles which naturally arise from such maxims and opinions are not to be traced in the bill. We are induced to think those principles really exist in the persons who framed the bill, but that a fruitless disposition to obviate

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every interested murmur renders the whole ineffectual or pernicious.

The points to which I particularly wish to direct the attention of the publick are these :

1st. That we are gradually becoming, in a most alarming degree, dependant on foreign countries for subsistence, and that this country's independance, of all others in that respect, is of the utmost importance.

2dly. That England is capable of raising corn sufficient for its own consumption.

3dly. That the means of rendering it independant should be by removing every discouragement, and holding out every encouragement to the growth of corn.

4thly. That the laws respecting corn, in consequence of the change they have undergone,

dergone, are no longer encouragements, but great discouragements, to agriculture, particularly the system of establishing warehouses of foreign corn, and that through the want of encouragement, the increase of corn in this kingdom, if any has taken place since the Corn Bill of 1773 passed into a law, has not kept pace with the demand.

5thly. That it is a fallacious idea that corn can possibly be grown in this country, under all the circumstances of taxes, &c. &c. &c., at a lower price than it was in the last century.

6thly. That the attempt at reducing the price of corn below its proper level, considering the foregoing circumstances, must eventually produce the very scarcity it is intended to prevent.

7thly. That this kingdom cannot carry
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agriculture to its wished-for extension, while an idea is cherished of making the agriculture of the country subservient to a trade in foreign corn.

I hope these points are made sufficiently evident. There may be those who will doubt, whether this country can raise sufficient corn for its own supply; and it must be difficult to satisfy them by positive proofs. Let them consider what has been done in Ireland, within a short period, by a spirited encouragement of tillage. Before the year 1774 that kingdom regularly imported corn, and generally largely. The state of the Irish trade in corn, since the operation of their present corn law commenced, shews the progress of their agriculture; and that Great Britain might have been wholly supplied by Ireland in the late year of scarcity, viz. 1789 — a most extraordinary and encouraging change!

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The production of corn is the first and most important occupation of the subjects of every country, and on its success rest the main support and prosperity of every other trade. The interest of the grower is the interest of the consumer, as in the end it produces a steady subsistence by promoting tillage; therefore, for the sake of the consumer, the most liberal encouragement and protection should be given to the grower of corn.

Downing Street,
17th February, 1791.

POSTSCRIPT.

P O S T S C R I P T.

AMERICA, that country on which, according to the opinion of the Committee of Council, all this quarter of the world is to depend for subsistence, never in one year sent to Europe sufficient for one day's supply—not even one meal for its inhabitants. I have taken an average of the export of wheat and flour from all North America, including the remaining Colonies, for three years, ending in 1771, choosing a medium time between the two wars—I find the average export of wheat and flour to Europe, including the Mediterranean, was 175,502 quarters* ; scarce

* The remainder of the wheat and flour exported from America went to the British and foreign West Indies, where they must continue to go, unless they are supplied from Europe.

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one week's supply even for Great Britain, according to the common rate of calculating a quarter of corn yearly for each inhabitant. What has been the export from that country since the last peace we cannot tell, but probably not more than it was before. The wheat countries of North America, on this side the Apalachean mountains, are not so extensive as is generally imagined. The province of Quebec has sometimes had a surplus of near 40,000 quarters, and, perhaps, next year did not produce near enough for its own consumption. The crop in those parts is very precarious. In the American States little wheat is raised north of New York, or south of Virginia. The small quantity raised in New England and the Carolinas is subject to a black rust, and is in general of a very indifferent quality, except a district of Connecticut, which lies between Connecticut river and the boundaries of New York. The country between the old provinces of New York and
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Pennsylvania, &c., and the lake Ontario, whenever completely settled, will be found best adapted to the growth of hemp; and that article will find a more steady and better market than wheat. The provinces of New York, the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, and parts of Virginia and Maryland, are those that produce any quantity of wheat. As their land loses the advantage of being fresh, they are not likely to produce more than they did. Their crops in general are inferior, both in quality and quantity, to those which are obtained from good land in Europe. They are liable to mischiefs to which ours are not, particularly to be ruined by the weevil and by the Hessian fly, even while growing. At the same time it has not proved a profitable article of traffick to the American merchant. More of them have been ruined in that line than in any other; very few, indeed, have prospered by it. Europe has been, and will be, an uncertain market as long as her inhabitants are actu-

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ated by common sense. The distance of America is a disadvantage. She cannot avail herself of a sudden rise of price in particular markets. What quantities of wheat may be raised hereafter on the other side of the Apalachean mountains, or the banks of the Ohio, I cannot say; but the transport of corn from the interior part of America, and along the incommodious navigation of the Mississippi, will be too expensive to enable America to send from thence such quantities of corn as may ruin the agriculture of Europe.

The chief settlements on the Ohio are at Fort Pitt, and one hundred miles down the river. That country might produce wheat, but it can have none but a home market. Small quantities may be carried across the Apalachean mountains to Alexandria on the Potomach; but in general it will not bear the expence of land carriage. In respect to the conveyance by the Ohio
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and Mississippi, the distance from Fort Pitt to the junction of those rivers is 1164, and from thence to New Orleans, where it should be shipped, is about 1300 miles. The carriage down might be effected; but it is almost impracticable for the persons employed to return against a strong current of near 2500 miles.

THE END.

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