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A  
SKETCH OF A PLAN  
FOR  
REDUCING  
THE  
Present High Price of Corn  
AND  
OTHER PROVISIONS,  
AND FOR  
Securing PLENTY of Both  
FOR THE TIME TO COME.

In a LETTER to  
A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

From S. DICKINSON.

L O N D O N.  
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THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE POST OFFICE

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE HOME DEPARTMENT

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVAL DEPARTMENT

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE INDIAN DEPARTMENT

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE RAILWAYS

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE LIAISON DEPARTMENT

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE CHANCERY DEPARTMENT

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE EXCHEQUER

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE EXERCISES

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

AND THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR

A

# LETTER

TO A

Member of Parliament.

S I R,

**I**T was, I believe, the general hope and expectation, that, by this time, my fellow-citizens might have been felicitated on their relief from that pressure of dearth and scarcity, under which they have frequently groaned for several years

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past;

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past; and which, but for the vigilance and seasonable interposition of the legislative power, would have been quite insupportable. But tho' the time is fully come when we might have seen the completion of our wishes, in the reduction of the price of every species of Provision, the article of Corn more especially, this pleasing hope has hitherto proved delusive, the general wish is still unaccomplished, and the expectation even of moderate plenty, if not totally abortive, seems likely to be protracted, to the injury, and great discouragement of our manufactures, consequently to the consumption of them---and ultimately to the inconvenience of government itself, from a deficiency in the revenue arising from those branches of trade which are most immediately affected.

For

## [ 3 ]

For notwithstanding the many favorable appearances, and the flattering accounts with which we have been amused for several years past, the present state of the Corn-markets does but too plainly shew that the event is in no degree answerable to these kindly prognostics.

How then are we to hope for moderate plenty? where are we to seek relief?---We are to hope for plenty, at least for the prevention of want---we are to seek for present relief, and (as far as human prudence can suggest) for the means of future security, from the wisdom and attentive care of parliament; which I trust will be employed in getting the best information from impartial and disinterested persons; and thereupon found such measures,

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as

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as may best promote the general good of this country. And here, Sir, by the bye, I avoid making use of a too-common mode of expression; viz. Landed and commercial *Interests*---because I cannot view these disjunctively---but I consider them as concomitant branches of the general interest, neither of which ought to be cramped in complaisance to the other, because such complaisance will eventually operate to the destruction of both.

I shall here be asked what measures can be devised which may so operate, as to promote each branch of the general interest in conjunction, without a risque of such clashing as may possibly endanger both the one and the other alternately?

With

[ 5 ]

With an intention to answer this question, rather than employ myself merely in investigating the causes of the high Price of Provisions, as several writers have ineffectively done, I have thrown together some hints, which I intended for a *Treatise* <sup>heads of</sup> on this subject; but not having leisure to expatiate on them agreeable to my first intention, I shall therefore present them to you in their original simplicity; with only a few of the most striking observations and inferences, and leave it to your better judgment to enlarge upon them.

In general, high prices, both of Corn and other Provisions, proceed, in great measure, from the same causes---are highly influential on each other---therefore the same remedies

[ 6 ]

medies will probably cure both.--  
But some of these causes are out of  
the reach of human prudence to  
prevent, being entirely providential:  
and these causes I consider as the  
most effective to produce the scar-  
city and dearness so universally la-  
mented.

For instance, Unkindly seasons  
have several times, within a few  
years past, occasioned scarcity of  
Corn of all sorts--- Unexpected floods  
have also rotted and drowned great  
numbers of sheep. Such causes of  
scarcity as these cannot be pre-  
vented by any human prescience---  
Their effects may, nevertheless, be  
considerably alleviated by human  
prudence.

There

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There are likewise other causes  
which arise out of the circumstances  
of the times---as,

1st, The increase of monied pro-  
perty among us. This cause, though  
it must be considered as an increase  
of national strength, is certainly pro-  
ductive of internal partial poverty  
for a season: Because it necessarily  
occasions a proportionable decrease  
of the specific value of money.---For,

2dly, The necessity our manu-  
facturers are under of making goods  
for foreign markets as cheap as the  
manufacturers in other countries,  
where money is not so plenty, con-  
strains them to give low wages to  
the laborers they employ in the  
several branches of manufacture:  
But low wages will not maintain  
those

[ 8 ]

those laborers in dear times---  
 Hence arises a continual altercation between merchants, manufacturers, and laborers---The consequences of which are, debasement of the staple and workmanship, and depreciation at foreign markets---  
 Hence a stagnation of trade; the result of which, it is very obvious, must be very injurious to (I had almost said the destruction of) every branch of the common interest---  
 This principally concerns the article of bread-corn, and household Provisions.

I would in the next place observe, that the manufacturers of Corn for home consumption, especially the two great branches (brewery and distillery), are influenced in like manner---for if the prices of grain  
 be

[ 9 ]

be enormous, maltster, brewer, and distiller, are alike discouraged; and it may reasonably be feared that the manufactures will be debased, consumption lessened, and government suffer by loss of revenue.

Seeing then that, by the increase of money, the price of every article of family expence is unavoidably enhanced, every attempt to reduce the prices to such as were known twenty or thirty years ago, would be vain and futile. For although every article be not advanced in the same degree, yet something approaching very near to equality will easily be discovered by every attentive observer. Nor can any measure be devised for stopping the progress of dearth, I do not say scarcity (for this cause alone will  
 C occasion

[ 10 ]

occasion dearth, without the aid of scarcity) except a total suppression of every branch of foreign commerce where the balance is in favor of Great Britain---an idea which surely cannot find harbor in the breast of any man.

Sensible and practicable remedies must therefore be sought for till found----expedients which will so comport with our commercial interest as at once to support the landed interest, by enabling farmers, laborers, manufacturers and merchants to accommodate themselves to the times, since the times will not bend to their convenience.

Now, Sir, as my declared intention is, rather to suggest such remedies than to tread the beaten tract  
of

[ 11 ]

of clamor and complaint, I will beg leave to point out some such measures as seem best to promise redress of those clamors and complaints---And first with respect to Corn. Suppose, by parliamentary interposition, such a modus of bounty on exportation should be established as may at once encourage the growth, and preserve mediocrity of Prices. The utility of such a modus is to me very obvious; and I own I do not see any impediments to the practicability of it: which I hope will strike yourself, and every member of the house of commons, in the same way, on a few minutes reflexion.---For I would propose, Sir, that the present fixed bounty of five shillings *per* quarter on exportation, which I think by far too indefinite, and therefore inadequate to the present state of things,  
C 2 should

should be, by authority of Parliament, entirely abrogated---And, instead thereof, another modus of bounty shall be established which will operate as a counterpoize to the prices. For instance---the following table is presented to you, which will better illustrate my meaning, and shew, in a more concise view, the propriety of such a plan than a prolix and labored explanation.

Wheat

Wheat under 30s. *per Quarter* to receive Bounty 8s. *per Quarter*.  
 from 30s. to 32s. 6s.  
 from 32s. to 36s. 4s.  
 from 36s. to 40s. 2s.  
 from 40s. to 44s. No Bounty.  
 when above 44s. No Exportation.  
 at or above 48s. Free Importation.

Thus,

So likewise,

Barley under 15s. *per Quarter* to receive Bounty 4s. *per Quarter*.  
 from 15s. to 16s. 3s.  
 from 16s. to 18s. 1s. 6d.  
 from 18s. to 19s. 1s.  
 from 19s. to 21s. No Bounty.  
 above 21s. No Exportation.  
 at or above 23s. Free Importation.



[ 14 ]

Thus, when Corn is cheap, the farmer will be encouraged to sell, and will be largely compensated out of the public stock---for the rest, his plentiful crop, (the cause of cheapness) may reasonably be presumed sufficient compensation.----*E contra*---when the price of Corn shall grow dearer, enormous prices may be prevented, by endeavoring to keep it at home; insomuch that the manufacturer will be relieved from the fears of losing by his manufactures, and from the temptation of debasing the quality of them; the merchant may export goods to foreign markets, on as good terms *at least* as our rivals in commerce, and the laborer be freed from every probable danger of distress. Especially,

If,

[ 15 ]

If, in aid of this plan, some other salutary provisions be made by parliament, for encouraging the produce and elevation of cattle, sheep, and the smaller articles of sustenance; as pigs, geese, poultry, &c. These smaller articles having been greatly discouraged by two sorts of improvement, lately become very much in vogue among us; viz. the consolidating small farms into large ones, and inclosing commons---a word or two on each of these heads with your leave.

1st, The uniting several small farms in order to compose very large ones, though by many considered in the light of an improvement, has conduced not a little to enhance the price of Provisions---because although (as the owners of such lands contend)

[ 16 ]

contend) there should be hopes of a more plentiful produce of *Corn*, by the occupiers of such farms, than by farmers of lower rank and ability (which by the way is *gratis dictum*) yet the production of all the species of lesser Provisions, usually raised by small farmers; viz. pigs, geese, poultry, eggs, and butter, is in great measure, if not totally neglected by the great farmers; whose attention being engrossed by their grand object, *Corn*, either have not leisure to advert to these smaller matters, or else consider them as of little or no importance to themselves. Hence arises a scarcity of these smaller articles---and a great scarcity of any one sort will undoubtedly affect the price of every other sort. It must however, be confessed, that *very* small farms do not seem calculated to produce  
any

[ 17 ]

any thing else beside the smaller articles.

Both these extremes, I think, may be easily shewn to be injurious to commerce and to the perfection of Agriculture---and consequently to the landed interest. But a reform in these points is not perhaps an object of parliamentary concern; but only of personal prudence in the land-owners. These gentlemen would therefore, do well to consider, what evils have already arisen from this practice---what farther and still greater may arise---and where they will terminate.

2d. The inclosing large tracts of commonable land---Though this may produce good effects in future, seems for the present to operate in a quite  
D                      contrary

contrary way, for want of some restrictions and limitations, in the acts of parliament passed for that purpose. For if, as one may fairly suppose, the lands in the vicinity of any city, or manufacturing town, were formerly destined and occupied, so as to produce the several species of sustenance chiefly in request for the support of the inhabitants:--- Then it follows that the conversion of any considerable portion of such land to the production of any thing else beside, must for the present, occasion a scarcity of something more useful and important to that neighborhood. Land, for example, heretofore in pasturage, may be converted to tillage, and *vice versa*. In either case that particular neighborhood may be in some degree affected, even in time of moderate plenty, but will probably suffer greatly in scarce times.

But

But this is not all---this evil is likely to increase, and be perpetuated, unless the practice of inclosing be restrained by some cautionary clauses, to be inserted in all such-like acts of parliament for the future. I have been credibly informed that, in some countries, larger tracts of common field land heretofore in *tillage*, but now by inclosing converted *to pasturage*, do not *at present* produce any thing serviceable to the neighboring towns: Because the owners of such inclosed commons do not choose either to feed sheep, or suckle lambs, on those grounds, for some years, in order to gain time for the growth of hedges: By which means the public is deprived of some considerable quantity of sustenance, without any equivalent at all.

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Although

Although the high price of Corn has, of late been the chief object of tumultuous clamor, I cannot, for my own part, conceive that complaints on this head could possibly have arisen to any very inconvenient height, were it not for the concurrence and co-operation of the dearth of every other article of household expence---It seems highly expedient, therefore to employ effectual care to secure plenty *in general*: Not of Corn only, but of every species of sustenance whatsoever. One means of which (after having sufficiently provided for the article of Corn, by some such-like modus as has been already suggested) I think may be, to preserve a quantity of commonable land in the circuit of towns and villages, for the sake of producing pigs, geese, poultry, eggs, butter, &c.---

&c.---This lesser sort of produce has heretofore been the customary attention and employment of cottagers and small farmers: And these articles have been greatly diminished, and seem in great danger of being entirely lost to the community, by the present mode of inclosing. Moreover the commissioners appointed to parcel out and make allotment of such grounds when inclosed, should be expressly enjoined to secure some immediate produce, either of Corn, cattle, or the lesser articles of Provision.

A regulation of this sort I think will be extremely beneficial---nor can it reasonably be objected to by the petitioners for such bills: For, in a national view, it appears perfectly right and fit that the proprietors of such lands as are desirous of inclosing

inclosing (whose motive thereto may be supposed to be of a private nature) should be limited in some degree, and even *cramped* for a season, rather than the public good should be sacrificed to their particular convenience. For unless every article of sustenance shall be attended to, as well as Corn, a scarcity of any one sort, will undoubtedly influence the price of all the rest.

A parallel is much to be desired, between the price of Corn and flesh meat, as well as between one species of Corn and another---As therefore it was thought expedient, formerly to allow a large bounty on exportation of Corn, in order to encourage the produce; why may not the same policy be adopted, and applied (*pro re nata*) to the produce of other articles

articles likewise? And this in a way of premium to those who shall breed and elevate the greatest numbers of pigs, geese, poultry, &c? Which articles, inconsiderable as they may appear to some people, are really of important use in every market both in town and country.

Some persons are of opinion that temporary remedies are all that the present exigency requires---If by temporary they intend remedies of short duration, I fear such will be found to be of very uncertain operation also, and therefore inadequate to the present distress and the impending danger. But if they mean such remedies as will act gently and with moderation, and which may hereafter be improved; it is very obvious that, unless money shall remain at its

[ 24 ]

its present value, no other but such remedies can possibly be devised. I therefore crave leave to offer to your notice the preceding plan, as, in my apprehension, the most permanent---and the most easy to be modelled and reduced to such proportions as may also suit the next generation. For could the very best plan be immediately adopted, and instituted for a series of years; it is evident, from the foregoing consideration, that the effect of it would soon wear out; and that (unless Great Britain shall hereafter be obliged to carry on a losing trade abroad) some farther alterations will become necessary, in accommodation of succeeding times.

The policy instituted at the close of the last century, has been proved  
by

[ 25 ]

by experience truly wise in its degree, as it was adapted to the *then* exigency of the nation. What then can be more discrete than to pursue the same policy *now*, with such variation, both in the degree and toward the objects, as may best suit the state and circumstances of the present day.

The then object of parliamentary care and concern was the produce of Corn, and it was thought necessary and proper to allow a bounty on exportation of wheat, till the price should exceed six shillings *per* bushel, which Provision was indeed highly expedient at a time when agriculture claimed an uncommon degree of vigorous aid and encouragement. In our day, it has been found necessary to prohibit the exportation (of wheat especially) several

[ 26 ]

ral times within a few years past, even before it was sold for the utmost price entitled to bounty. And this, as I conceive because by providential occurrences, to say nothing of occasional artifices, the price of every other article of Provision is so much increased, that every advance of the Corn-market is too severely felt.--- But however desirable it may seem that the price of Provisions should be kept low, it cannot surely be proper to press them down too low. Experience has abundantly proved that extreme cheapness is equally injurious to the manufacturer and the farmer: Seeing that great multitudes of laborers, will not, in such cheap times, work more days in a week, than will procure them even a scanty Provision for their several families, and will waste the rest of their

[ 27 ]

their (I should say the public's) time in idleness and debauchery.

I remain,

S I R,

Your most obedient,

Humble Servant,

PAMPHILUS.

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and the day of the week, the  
 month and day of the year.

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1. 1. 2.

1. 1. 2.

1. 1. 2.

1. 1. 2.