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PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
IMPORTATION
OF
FOREIGN CORN,
UNDER
A GRADUATED SCALE OF DUTY.

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PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
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THERE being no longer any doubt of the intention of His Majesty's Ministers to propose a repeal of the present Laws relating to Corn, and allow, in future, on payment of an import duty, an unrestricted admission of foreign grain, it becomes imperative on those who are immediately interested in cultivating British corn, to take into their early consideration the effects likely to result from so important a revision of enactments appertaining to landed property, and, by means prompt and decisive, to avert the ruin which an inadequate duty would occasion to the occupiers and proprietors of the soil.

It is not intended to discuss the policy of measures to be adopted, or to compare the existing laws with those which it is expected will be substituted. My object is principally to take a short practical view of the subject, in order to establish data for determining the minimum price

at which corn can be produced in this country, and to assist in ascertaining the amount of duty requisite to enable British husbandmen to compete with foreigners.

It is assumed, that cultivators of land in these dominions are entitled to a protecting duty equal to expenses incurred beyond those attending the production of corn on the Continent, allowing, of course, for charges of freight, insurance, and other transit expenses. This conceded, the English farmer would be placed upon an equality with the foreign grower; to which, it is imagined, the most fastidious advocate for the importation of corn could not, at least with a shadow of equity, object.

Among impediments that exclusively attend the pursuit of agriculture in Britain, are direct and indirect taxes, tithes, poor, church, highway, and county rates, with a law preventing the free exercise of skill and capital in cultivating land to the most advantage. Why a duty should be imposed on the growth of hops, occasioning, in prolific seasons, a decided loss to many cultivators of that useful plant, causing the bounty of Heaven to be to them a source of regret instead of emolument, or why a heavy duty should attend the manufacture of malt (which is, virtually, a tax on barley), more than any other raw material, no good reason can be assigned; unless, indeed, their productiveness to the State be deemed a sufficient excuse for continuing those partial imposts; neither

can a law, preventing the growth of tobacco in a greater quantity than one rod or pole of ground will allow, on pain of losing the produce, be reconciled to the present system of free trade.

Parochial assessment, for the relief of the poor in this country, is a burthen of serious import; increasing, with fearful rapidity, in manufacturing districts, whenever trade is depressed, and bearing heaviest upon the farmer when the manufacturers are most clamorous in their demand for cheap bread. In districts entirely agricultural, poor rates are too often felt in an inverse ratio to the ability of people to pay; pressing painfully on occupiers in tracts of poor land, but with comparative lightness on those whose land is of better quality.

The aggregate of poor rate in England, for the last six years, appears, by Parliamentary documents, to have been seven millions of pounds sterling per annum; and, for cultivated land, it cannot be estimated at less than 4s. per acre. The mean amount of land-tax, highway rate, and duty, including church and county rates, may be taken at 4s. 6d., making a total of 8s. 6d. per acre.

But these serious imposts are not individually to be compared to the tithe, which causes the farmer's liability to extend to a loss of one-tenth of his annual produce; and although the tithe-owner does not obtain so much, on account of the expense and risk of harvesting, collect-

ing, marketing, amount paid for poor rates, and other incidental charges, yet the farmer is unavoidably a sufferer to that extent, whenever his tithe is taken in kind. In arranging a composition, in lieu of tithe*, the tenant bears all expenses, and he is usually assessed on the amount to the parochial rates. In either case, therefore, the farmer, in estimating the disbursements, would be entitled to take credit for the amount of his liability, were not the clergy and lay impropriators very generally disposed to accept an annual payment considerably below that which they might legally claim. And as the farmer, with the nine-tenths, could collect and market the other one-tenth at a trifling additional charge, the tithes and expenses will be estimated at 7s. per acre.

The indirect taxes will, of course, be included in the general estimate.

In order to obtain a fair average of the expense of cultivation and produce of the kingdom, three systems of cropping, most commonly adopted on land applicable to the growth of wheat, are blended; namely, the four-course system of wheat, turnips, barley, or oats, and clover or pulse,—the

* Some idea may be formed of the importance of tithe property, by the quantity of land awarded under Bills of Inclosure, to exonerate the remainder of the parish from tithe, which frequently amounts to a *ninth* of the grass, and a *fifth* of the arable land.

five-course system, in which the land remains two years in grass,—and the heavy land system of two crops and a fallow.

Working these three systems may be supposed to occupy 12 acres, of which there will be—

Acres.	Producing, per Acre, Bushels.	per Qr.	£.	s.	d.
In Wheat - - 3	- - 24	- - at 64s.	28	16	0
Barley - - 1	- - 36	- - „ 33s.	7	4	0
Oats - - 1	- - 44	- - „ 24s.	6	12	0
Pulse - - 1	- - 32	- - „ 48s.	9	12	0
Clover - - 2	} including Fodder-Straw		25	10	0
2nd Year Ley 1	} and Turnips, &c. 2		0	0	0
Fallow - - 1	- - - - -	- - - - -	0	0	0
<u>12</u>			<u>£.77</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>0</u>

or, taking the 12th part for the average PRODUCE of one acre, the proportion will be—

		£.	s.	d.	
Of Wheat	6 bushels, at 8s. per bush.	2	8	0	
Barley	3 ditto „ 4s. ditto	0	12	0	
Oats	3½ ditto „ 3s. ditto	0	11	0	
Pulse	2½ ditto „ 6s. ditto	0	16	0	
Clover	} and Fodder-Straw		2	2	6
2nd Year Ley	} Turnips		-	-	-
		<u>£.6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	

the total average produce per acre for one year, requiring a capital of not less than £.8 per acre;

which is indeed barely sufficient; a larger capital, judiciously applied, would be more beneficial to the individual and the public.

Deduct average EXPENSES for one year, as follow:—

	£.	s.	d.
Manual Labour - - - - -	1	4	0
Animal Labour - - - - -	1	3	0
Seed - - - - -	0	15	0
One-twelfth of the Expense of Folding one Acre for Wheat - - - - -	0	2	6
Land Tax, Poor, Highway, Church, and County Rates - - - - -	0	8	6
Tithe - - - - -	0	7	0
Wear and Tear of Horses, Implements, and incidental Expenses - - - - -	0	5	0
15 per Cent. on Capital employed, for Interest, Risk, and Personal Attention - - - - -	1	4	0
	<hr/>		
	£.5	9	0

The expenses £.5 9s., deducted from £.6 9s. 6d., the acreable produce, leaves a surplus of only 20s. 6d. per acre, for rent. The true principle of obtaining the annual value of landed property is here exemplified, namely, after noticing the localities, to determine the rotation of crops to which the land immediately under consideration is applicable, and having deducted the expense of cultivation, the tenant's profit, and every contingent charge from the estimated produce, the surplus only is to be assigned to the proprietor, which, in the present instance of a combination of rotations, on an average quality

of land, does not exceed 20s. 6d. per acre. Yet exorbitant rents are quoted as a primary cause of the high price of provision; and their immediate reduction is stated to be the only legitimate means to save the manufacturing interest.

Rents thus obtained cannot be materially reduced, nor can the price of produce be permanently diminished, so long as existing burthens remain upon the land. To prove this, it will only be necessary to show the difference a reduction, say of 16s. per quarter in the cost of wheat, would make, supposing a corresponding alteration to take place in the value of other descriptions of corn. The relative prices of grain, according to the regulations for importation, are, of barley, half that of wheat,—oats, one-third less than barley,—and beans and peas, about double the price of oats. The following deductions are made agreeably to those proportions, supposing the green crops to maintain their stated value.

By the preceding calculation (page 9), the proportionate average produce of one acre would be—

	£.	s.	d.
Of Wheat 6 Bushels, at a reduction of 16s. per Quarter, or 2s. 0d. per Bushel, is	0	12	0
Barley 3 ditto ditto, at 1s. 0d. per Bushel	0	3	0
Oats 3½ ditto ditto, „ 0s. 8d. „ „	0	2	5
Pulse 2½ ditto ditto, „ 1s. 4d. „ „	0	3	7
	<hr/>		
	£.1	1	0

being a decrease in the value of land, equal to the rent. On inferior soils, where the produce is less, though the expenses are nearly as great, there would be no return, in many cases, either for the proprietor or the tenant; and lands of that description must, of necessity, go out of cultivation. We have witnessed agriculture linger for a time under a ruinous depression in prices, but it is a state of things that will not admit of being permanent; for, unless the farmer can obtain a fair interest for his capital, he will withdraw it from so unprofitable a concern. If the landlord is deprived of an equitable rent, he will be prevented from sustaining his rank in society, and rendered incapable of contributing his due proportion to the necessities of the State; and if the peasant cannot obtain a remunerating price for his labour, his very existence, as well as that of his family, will be at stake. The latter class, although the most numerous, yet being the most dependent, have been the first to suffer from a depreciation, and the last to participate in any benefits that result from the increased value of corn.

In these calculations, the wages of the labourer are estimated according to the average proportion they have borne to the price of wheat during the last century; and it would be politic in the farmer, and only an act of justice to the labourer, to regulate the wages of the latter in proportion to the price of corn, assigning the value of a given quantity of

wheat in consideration for the labour of an able-bodied man; and, as a matter of economy, the farmer should, on all practicable occasions, have his work done by the piece instead of the day: the industrious labourer would earn better wages, and the work would be executed at a cheaper rate.

The following is a statement of the average expense of cultivating WHEAT, according to the three systems above specified, showing the lowest price it can be afforded at in this country:—

THREE ACRES.		£. s. d.					
Ploughing 9 times, at 10s. per Acre,	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Once for the 4 course</td> <td rowspan="3">}</td> <td rowspan="3">4 10 0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 times ,, 5 ditto</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 ,, ,, 3 ditto</td> </tr> </table>	Once for the 4 course	}	4 10 0	3 times ,, 5 ditto	5 ,, ,, 3 ditto	
Once for the 4 course	}	4 10 0					
3 times ,, 5 ditto							
5 ,, ,, 3 ditto							
Seed, per Acre, 30s.		4 10 0					
Harrowing, sowing, weeding, rolling, harvesting, threshing, cleaning, and marketing, per Acre, 32s. 6d.		4 17 6					
Expenses of turning, carting, and spreading manure on One Acre, 22s. 6d. and folding One Acre, 30s.		2 12 6					
Wear and Tear, and incidental Expenses, per Acre, 5s.		0 15 0					
Tithe, per Acre, 14s.		2 2 0					
Land Tax, Poor, Church, Highway, and County Rate, per Acre, 8s. 6d.		1 5 6					
Rent, Three Years, 20s. 6d. per Acre		3 1 6					
Profit on Three Acres of Wheat, per Acre, 34s.		5 2 0					
Divide by Acres—3		£.28 16 0					
Divide by Quarters—3		£.9 12 0					
The Price, per Quarter		£.3 4 0					

The expense of tilling and manuring the summer fallow, being charged to the wheat; the rent and taxes of the fallow, to be placed to the debit of the succeeding crop.

Thirty-four shillings per acre is calculated as the profit on wheat, instead of the average of 24s., the gain on some of the crops being below the average, and the acre in fallow not yielding any advantage. The same observation applies to the charge for tithe.

Having, by the preceding detailed estimates, shown the lowest value of wheat produced in this country, I shall borrow a statement from Mr. Jacob's Report, of the smallest expense at which the best wheat might be imported from Dantzic, viz.—

	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
Sale Price, 3s. per Bush. or per Qr.	1	4	0			
Loss, estimated at 20 per Cent.	-	0	4	9		
Allowance for Rent, one-tenth of gross Produce		0	2	3		
				1	11	0
Add—						
Shipping Charges, or Merchant's Commission or Profit		0	2	9		
Freight, Poundage, and Insurance to London		0	8	0		
Lighterage, Landing Charges, and Commission in England		0	1	3		
				0	12	0
				£.2	3	0

How the 31s. per quarter arises, does not very clearly appear.

The rent of 2s. 3d. per quarter, should, it is presumed, be included in the 24s., and ought not to have been made a separate item; and a charge of 20 per cent. on the amount for loss, appears excessive.

The price of wheat, in our markets, generally varies in the same day from 10s. to 15s. per quarter in quality; and although it is not expected that the most inferior foreign wheat would be sent, yet it is believed a certain description of corn might come in competition with our average crops; that could be afforded several shillings per quarter below the best Dantzic. But not being prepared to show that this is substantially correct, I am bound to admit the authenticity of Mr. Jacob's statement, and consider 43s. per quarter as the import price, exclusive of the merchant's profit, for which, adding 3s. per quarter, will make 46s. the lowest price, by his computation, that foreign corn can be sold at in our markets. And, if that sum be deducted from 64s., the lowest average value of British wheat, the difference (18s. per quarter) will be the amount of duty required to place the English farmer and foreign grower on equal terms*.

Should the Legislature adopt a fixed duty, this is submitted as being the lowest that could afford protection to British agriculture. A fixed duty would seldom be equitable; for, if it were calcu-

* See graduated Scale of Duty.

lated to meet a given price, any deviation therefrom must necessarily render its application inefficient; and, as recent events have taught the farmer not to expect, under the present system, to derive any advantage in price on a deficient crop, to counter-balance the reduction in price he would sustain in years of abundance, it becomes a question—whether, instead of adopting any fixed duty, it would not be more advisable to permit the importation of foreign grain at all times, on payment of duty upon an equitably-adjusted graduated scale?

The average price of British corn might be taken monthly, or even weekly, and the duty payable upon the arrival of foreign corn in a British port might be regulated by the average price for the preceding week. It is true, this would perpetuate the average system, but not without depriving it of its present incentive to fraud; for the only difference occasioned by a variation in the average price would then be, to increase or diminish the amount of duty, and not, as at present, to decide whether foreign corn should be admitted or excluded from our markets. If the averages were taken weekly, or even monthly, instead of only quarterly, the frauds that have been committed would not be repeated; and, by allowing importation to take place at all times, the bonding system, which is nearly as exceptionable as the original average system, might be got rid of.

The annexed graduated scale is constructed agreeably to the foregoing calculations.

GRADUATED SCALE OF DUTY,

By which the Duty on Importation, and the Price obtained for Foreign Corn, would be equal to the Price of Wheat in the British Market.

Average Price per Qr. of Wheat in the British Market.	Import Duty per Qr.	Nett Price per Qr. obtained for Foreign Wheat, after Paying Duty.
41 - -	- - 41 - -	- - 0
42 - -	- - 40 - -	- - 2
43 - -	- - 39 - -	- - 4
44 - -	- - 38 - -	- - 6
45 - -	- - 37 - -	- - 8
46 - -	- - 36 - -	- - 10
47 - -	- - 35 - -	- - 12
48 - -	- - 34 - -	- - 14
49 - -	- - 33 - -	- - 16
50 - -	- - 32 - -	- - 18
51 - -	- - 31 - -	- - 20
52 - -	- - 30 - -	- - 22
53 - -	- - 29 - -	- - 24
54 - -	- - 28 - -	- - 26
55 - -	- - 27 - -	- - 28
56 - -	- - 26 - -	- - 30
57 - -	- - 25 - -	- - 32
58 - -	- - 24 - -	- - 34
59 - -	- - 23 - -	- - 36
60 - -	- - 22 - -	- - 38
61 - -	- - 21 - -	- - 40
62 - -	- - 20 - -	- - 42
63 - -	- - 19 - -	- - 44
(P. 15.) 64 - -	- - 18 - -	- - 46
65 - -	- - 17 - -	- - 48
66 - -	- - 16 - -	- - 50
67 - -	- - 15 - -	- - 52
68 - -	- - 14 - -	- - 54
69 - -	- - 13 - -	- - 56
70 - -	- - 12 - -	- - 58
71 - -	- - 11 - -	- - 60
72 - -	- - 10 - -	- - 62
73 - -	- - 9 - -	- - 64
74 - -	- - 8 - -	- - 66
75 - -	- - 7 - -	- - 68
76 - -	- - 6 - -	- - 70
77 - -	- - 5 - -	- - 72
78 - -	- - 4 - -	- - 74
79 - -	- - 3 - -	- - 76
80 - -	- - 2 - -	- - 78
81 - -	- - 1 - -	- - 80
82 - -	- - 0 - -	- - 82

It was very justly urged by the Earl of Liverpool, in the course of debate a few years ago, that a (fixed) protecting duty was quite inapplicable; for, if the duty were low, it would be of no use whatever, and, if high, it would be utterly impossible to execute the measure in periods of great and general scarcity. To obviate the objections inseparable to a fixed duty, it will be found expedient to adopt one, containing within itself an executory principle, exacting a payment, amounting to a prohibition, on the importation of foreign grain, when the prices in our markets are low, but if high, to allow importation on payment of a low duty; and, in times of scarcity, to permit a free importation of foreign corn. For instance, by the proposed graduated scale, if wheat in this country were 42s. per quarter, the import duty would be 40s., leaving only 2s. per quarter for the foreign wheat, which would act as a prohibition to importation, at a time when, it must be confessed, the admission of foreign corn would be extremely impolitic; but, when the price had risen to 70s., the duty would be only 12s. per quarter, and, as soon as it reached 82s. (a price that might be supposed to indicate a scarcity), the duty would cease altogether, and an unrestricted importation would continue, until the supply had so far exceeded the demand as to reduce the price below that at which it would be admitted free of duty. This mode of adjustment would, at all times, accommodate itself to existing circum-

stances, upon simple and unerring principles, and afford protection to those who became fairly entitled to it.

Separate scales should be calculated for each description of corn, seeds, and other articles of home produce, and a system of duties established to supersede frequent legislative interference in the prices of provision.

It has been contended, that this country is incapable of producing corn sufficient for its consumption; and this assertion was lately repeated by a writer of some eminence, in an Address to his constituents; he being nevertheless aware, that, for the last six years, this kingdom has, in that respect, depended wholly upon its own resources, no foreign wheat having been allowed in our markets, and the prices of British corn, during that period, having been very considerably below those at which foreign corn was admissible.

Instead, therefore, of acceding to this author's hypothesis, is it not fair to infer, that improvements in cultivation have kept pace with the demands of an increased population, and that these islands can afford an ample supply of grain for their inhabitants? There is little doubt that, if security and encouragement were given to induce capitalists to embark their property in the cultivation of land, but agricultural produce would be progressively and sufficiently augmented to maintain any increase that may take place in the population.

Supposing the average quantity of wheat grown to be three quarters per acre, it would require, according to the usual calculation of one quarter per annum for each person, 4,200,000 acres to supply England and Wales, and 600,000 acres for seed, making a total of 4,800,000 acres to be sown every year with wheat. Granting a fourth part of the arable land, upon an average, to be annually thus appropriated, there will be nineteen millions of acres consigned to the purposes of aration. As England and Wales alone contain thirty-seven millions of acres, it may be reckoned, that something more than half the land is under the plough; and as better culture and proper application of manure have never failed to effect an increase of corn, a judicious expenditure of capital upon land now arable, would insure an augmentation in produce far beyond the quantity that has been imported.

The average quantity of wheat imported, during the last twenty years, did not exceed one bushel an acre on the land, in this country, annually sown with wheat. And it is, to some, a matter of surprise, that the introduction of a quantity so small should have produced such great, and, to the farmers, such ruinous effects.

If that quantity had been uniformly distributed throughout the kingdom, it could not have been very sensibly observed; but the principal part having been poured into the London market,

each year, in the course of a few weeks, the supply at Mark Lane, at those periods, greatly exceeded the demand; an immediate depression in price was the consequence, and to an extent infinitely beyond all reasonable calculation:—this produced a corresponding decline in the price of corn in the districts under the influence of the London markets, which, sooner or later, extended to every part of the kingdom.

In countries where due encouragement is afforded to the cultivation of the soil, a real scarcity seldom or never exists; though it may sometimes have happened, that the ears of corn have been plucked before they were ripe. The apprehension of famine, on account of an extended population, is also at variance with the experience of the past and present ages; for, in every country, the greatest abundance of provision has been during the period of its greatest population.

Land, ever grateful, generously repays favours conferred upon it; and, like a block of marble in the hands of the sculptor, is rendered of infinitely more value, by due application of labour, to what, in its original and uncultivated state, it possibly could have been. "The earth," says Columella, "is not become old, but it is neglected, and from that cause alone is it become sterile."

An able writer on rural economy, now no more, has demonstrated, that, in a country situated as this is, every inch of soil, which is not actually in a

state of uncommon fertility, may, by industry and judicious management, be annually rendered more productive still; and, eventually, to that degree of which we cannot, perhaps, at this time, form an idea. In every country the increased production has kept pace with the increased population. Whether we look to Greece, to Egypt, to Palestine, to Sicily, or to Rome, in the time of their most extensive population, an abundance of corn was always remarked; but when the number of inhabitants in those states had declined, in some instances, to one-tenth of their former amount, the greatest difficulty was invariably experienced to produce a sufficiency.

While Spain was in the possession of the Moors, a civilized people enjoying the comforts of social life, the population of the Southern provinces augmented in an extraordinary degree, and brought with it an abundance of every thing that was necessary for the convenience and comforts of life. From a population of upwards of thirty millions, it has become only eight millions; and there is every reason to believe that, on account of this decrease, is in danger of being still further diminished. The best account we have, at the present time, of the population and produce of China, also corroborates this position.

The surest means to secure a permanent supply of corn, at steady and moderate prices, would be, to limit importation to periods of real scarcity, to

induce an extended application of capital to the cultivation of the soil, to give constant productive employment to the peasantry, and thus to effect a general improvement of the land: this accomplished, the fashionable theories for limiting the extent of population might be wholly dispensed with.

A visionary scheme for supplying corn from abroad, instead of raising it by British capital and industry, has long been a favourite topic with some of the leading professors of political economy. In furtherance of the idea, it has been proposed to lay down to permanent grass the land now arable, for the purposes of dairying, and furnishing hay for horses in towns, and, generally, for the support of domestic animals.

The portion of arable land applicable to the business of the dairy, if profit be the object, is very small. In the next place, the price of hay, even in London, is not sufficient to induce its removal from any great distance by land. And, lastly, the attempt to lay down to grass the principal part of the land now arable, and to continue it so, would prove abortive; for, in the course of a few years, the produce of two or three acres could not sustain one animal.

An alternation of corn and green crops is the legitimate purpose to which the bulk of the soil of this kingdom must be applied. Mixed husbandry is the only efficient system; it affords constant employment to labourers, and regular

work for the teams ; plants furnishing the best food are cultivated ; and cattle, possessing aptitude to fatten, are selected ; whereby land becomes adapted to the production of abundant crops : one moiety of the soil bearing grain, while from the other is obtained animal food ; and both in greater quantity than could be derived, if the whole of the land were directed to one species of occupation.

The anxiety of manufacturers to acquire a market for their productions has induced them to hope that foreigners would take articles of British fabric in payment for corn. The hope is delusive, for it could scarcely be expected that the serfs of Poland and Russia would require the luxuries of life essential only to those who have arrived at a high state of civilization. If, in their past dealings with us, foreigners had taken our manufactured goods in return for corn, there might have been some reason for believing them inclined to cultivate a mutual interchange of commodities ; but, having hitherto received cash for the amount, it is not probable they would in future be satisfied with any other mode of negotiation.

The following extract (from the celebrated Letter from the Right Hon. W. Huskisson to his Constituents) corroborates the foregoing observations, and enables us to form some idea of the blessings attendant on a dependence upon foreigners for a supply of bread corn :—

“ In the first 18 years of the war, we were

found to pay 60 millions of money (to nations, every one of whom has, in the course of it, been our enemy) for a scanty and inadequate supply of foreign corn ; and when, for this purpose, we had parted with all our gold, and even our silver currency, combined Europe shut its ports against us, and America, co-operating, first laid an embargo, and then went to war.”

This is a clear statement of what has already occurred, and what we might occasionally expect to be repeated, if we depended on foreign supply for the main article of food ; and it presents a practical illustration, more conclusive than all the protestations to the contrary, that cash is the only article foreigners would accept in exchange for their corn.

The British manufacturers have, by the aid of powerful machinery, produced an immense quantity of goods for which there is no adequate consumption. The natural activity of this class of society prompting them to pursue with vigour whatever they may consider to be to their advantage, regardless of the consequences to others, persist in the vain attempt to force a trade by proposing to accept corn in payment instead of money, and assign, though wrongfully, their inability to contest in the foreign market to the high price of grain in England.

It is obvious, since manual labour has been superseded by machinery, that the value of corn

can very little affect the charges attending the making of goods; the two systems of manufacture not admitting of comparison in regard to price, and the latter requiring but a very moderate proportion indeed of the essential article of life to keep it in action. When as much can now be worked by machinery as would be equal to the labour of twenty-four millions of artisans, the clamour against the landed interest must be totally void of foundation; and not only so, for, while this powerful machinery continues in activity, were the proprietors of estates to reduce their rents 50 per cent. the difference it could make to the consumer in the price of goods so produced, would be scarcely perceptible.

The advocates of a free trade in corn contend, that the restrictive laws are the cause of the great fluctuation in prices, and attempt to prove this by a statement of the variation in the averages for a number of years past; but those documents do not furnish evidence of their assumption. In their zeal for low prices, and free trade in corn, they pass, without observation, the immense protection afforded to the commercial and manufacturing interests, and omit even to hint at the terrible revulsions that have taken place in them. The wild speculations of the first, and the excessive amount of the latter to force an unnatural trade, have had a much more powerful effect on the price of agricultural produce than any Parlia-

mentary protection that has been given to it. In proof of which, there has invariably been more activity in manufactures and commerce, when corn has been moderately high, than when unreasonably cheap, which clearly shows, that the excess, and consequent depression in manufactures and commerce, has been both the cause and the effect of those ruinous fluctuations in agricultural produce which have been falsely ascribed to regulations in its favour.

Let it be admitted, that all the grain to be hereafter consumed shall be imported for the whole of our population, more than one-third of whom, be it remembered, depend upon the culture of the land for their subsistence. By this measure, provided the whole country be laid down to grass, which does not afford a twentieth of the food that can be produced on an equal quantity of arable, one-fifth of the labourers would suffice; and the remainder of the agricultural population being, in England and Wales alone, upwards of four millions, would be destitute of employment. Assuming the earnings of the four millions are £.10 per annum each, forty millions per annum, created from the best mine, the soil, would be out of circulation; and the most valuable raw material, the land, rendered nearly useless. But when these, the main supporters of the Empire, are actively employed, they promptly diffuse their earnings amongst the petty chapmen, which soon ascend to invigorate the manufacturers and the

merchants. And it is thus, by labour applied to land, that the wealth of nations is created.

Why allow foreign peasantry to furnish bread to Britain,—to feed, not only the merchant and manufacturers, but also the husbandmen? Who is to pay for it? and how, if paid for, will the money be applied, but to improve continental husbandry to the destruction of British agriculture, and to establish and extend foreign manufactures eventually to exclude our own.

The writer of the article on the Corn Laws, in a late number of the *Edinburgh Review**, very generously tells the land-owners, “they must neither murmur or repine, should every shilling of their rents be ultimately required for the support of workhouses and beggars.” This is very considerate in him, to inform the proprietors of the soil, that they must build workhouses for the abandoned factory artisans, whose masters have no compunctious visitings for the misery created by the mischievous system of removing the poor weaver and his family from his humble cottage (where the labours of the loom were exercised in free and wholesome air) to immense factories, erected for immuring hundreds of human beings in one great receptacle of vice, misery, and sickness; where the poor wretches either end prematurely a life of slavish poverty, or draw out a suffering

* For September, 1826.

existence in a workhouse, which, according to this philosophic writer, is to be provided in future by the land-owners; for the half million of agricultural labourers he proposes to throw out of employment, by abandoning the poor lands, are not to be permitted even to obtain that refuge;—no: they, he says, are to go and do something else; but what, he does not condescend to tell us: it is enough for this author, that he gets rid of them by any means. Are the energies of England to be paralyzed by these sophistries; and the most useful part of the population destroyed, to secure this author's system of equality of price over all Europe? Does he forget there is no equality of taxation,—no equality of population per square mile,—no equality of wealth or civilization? Yet he seems inclined to sacrifice the comforts, the riches, and the independence of Britain, to his desire for a visionary equality in the price of bread.

The time is arrived for the proprietors and occupiers of the land to emulate the energy of the manufacturers; and, by respecting their own interest, which is, in fact, that of the community, no longer suffer themselves to be the dupes to the artifices and calumnies of their active rivals.

Can it be possible, that more than one-third of the population of Great Britain, engaged in and dependant on the production of food,—employing a capital amounting to not less than 300 millions,

exclusive of the value of the soil,—who contribute largely to the civil and religious institutions, and mainly to the support of the poor; should suffer from any enactments, unless the leading individuals of their own body be supine and disunited?

I call upon the Members of the two Houses of Parliament to support the most vigorous class of society, and determine whether Britain shall be depopulated, and sink in the scale of nations; or our numerous villages and rural occupations shall flourish, and agriculture, the main stay of the empire, be protected.

If the condition of Ireland be considered (and I presume few will think it unimportant), the importation of corn into England, from the Continent, will be destructive to the small dawn of improvement that has appeared in that ill-fated country.

The importation of wheat from Ireland has been, on an average of the last twenty-five years, 187,438 quarters per annum, and on an average of the last ten years, 303,286 quarters per annum. And of all sorts of corn, the average of the last twenty-five years, is 865,968 quarters per annum; the average of the last ten years, 1,341,855 quarters per annum; and for the year 1825, alone, 2,203,962 quarters.

Is this positive benefit to the sister country to be put to hazard for the *chance* of exporting more manufactures to the Continent, and realizing the visionary scheme of an equality of prices of bread corn over the whole Continent of Europe?

Shall the cupidity of the manufacturers, who are possessed of machinery equal to the amount of twenty-four millions of labourers (as has been already stated), be allowed to crush the exertions of four millions of industrious individuals, dependent for subsistence on agriculture?

The soil already contributes, annually, many millions to the parochial rates; a considerable portion of which is for the support of the manufacturing poor; the produce of whose labour having been obtained by their employers, they abandon them, and transfer those wretched beings to the farmer for future support.

It is not possible the Legislature should listen to the complaints that emanate from so questionable a source, without first considering the true situation of the country; and, having given to this important subject the attention it demands, they will not suffer the foundation that supports the national superstructure to be destroyed, but, by wise enactments, give protection to agriculture, not merely for the benefit of the land-owner, but also for the manufacturer, and every other branch of the community.

THE END.

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