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THE
HIGH PRICE OF BREAD

SHOWN TO BE

THE RESULT OF COMMERCIAL PROSPERITY,

NOT

THE CAUSE OF NATIONAL DISTRESS;

AND THE DANGERS OF A FREE TRADE IN CORN
POINTED OUT.

BY A WARNING VOICE.

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1827.

THE
HIGH PRICE OF BREAD,

&c.

Few subjects have ever engrossed the public mind more completely than those disputed points on questions of political economy, which have been so warmly discussed within these last ten years. The first abilities of the country have been engaged in the defence of the most opposite opinions, and in exact proportion to the depth and research displayed in the investigation, a sense of all its difficulties, and of its various and intricate bearings has prevailed. But the great bulk of those who are little qualified to form a correct judgment upon the matter in debate, have rushed eagerly into the arena and mingled in the contest. All have felt the subject to be one affecting the general welfare of society; and almost all have conceived their own immediate interests, real or imaginary, to be involved in it; and passion and vehemence have supplied the place of reason and argument.

Among the few who have stood aloof and examined the subject with cooler feelings, there has been seen a marked and decided preference to what are termed the new and liberal doctrines of free trade. That distinguishing feature of the present day, a spirit of free inquiry, has here manifested itself. An utter contempt for the trammels of antiquated usage, more enlarged and philosophical principles upon all questions of domestic and foreign policy; an increased and increasing attachment to liberty and to all those institutions that are calculated to accelerate civilization, education, and industry, have pre-disposed every reflecting and generous mind to embrace with peculiar eagerness a system, which, by throwing off ancient restraints, appeared to open a wider field to human activity, and to the happiness and improvement of mankind. The passing events of the world have fortified this feeling in every English heart. The very name of exclusive privilege has become hateful; and it has been sufficient to represent the Corn Laws as instituted in the interests of the landed aristocracy, and as injurious to those of trade, to marshal against them every bold and ardent spirit; and when the sufferings of the poor man who, it is said; is obliged to pay a tax for his food to gratify the avarice of the landowner, have been put into the scale, the proprietors themselves have become ashamed or

afraid of defending their own cause. Who is it that, in England, will dare to say he wishes to see bread dear, and that he does not consider it as an evil that its price should be higher there than in any other country of the world? Who, that is possessed of property, would wish to be considered as the greedy oppressor, willing to tear the just recompense of industry away from the poor to swell his own luxurious enjoyments? Who is there that, possessing nothing, would sink himself in the opinion of his fellow citizens by becoming the bare supporter of the interests of the powerful few against the injured multitude? Who would willingly encounter the scorn of the upright and the invectives of the generous, to worship at the shrine of selfish wealth, and follow in the train of the narrow-minded supporters of inveterate abuses?

I feel how arduous a task it is to attempt to controvert doctrines backed by so much popularity; but convinced, as I am, of its importance, I shall boldly declare my own opinion. I will shelter myself under no subterfuge; under no hypocritical pretext of a wish to see bread at a low price. I will fearlessly avow that I consider the high price of bread, if not caused by scarcity, not only as a concomitant, but as the certain effect of national prosperity: that every attempt to reduce that price is fraught with injustice, and will be productive of distress to the commu-

nity at large. I will not deprecate those who are inclined to treat this opinion with contumely or contempt. To them I will only say, "Strike, but hear me."

Before I attempt to prove this position it will be necessary for me to enter upon a preliminary inquiry into the nature and action of money, or the circulating medium. To explain my ideas fully, I must go back to its origin and first uses; and, if I am not greatly deceived, there is a principle in operation which, as far as I know, has hitherto been overlooked, upon which this great question mainly hinges. I own that I have been more than once inclined to disregard the opinion that I have formed, and to consider it as one not resting on a solid basis, when I reflected how unlikely it was that any important truth of this nature should have escaped the researches of so many great and able men. I have thought it probable that the idea might have been already started, and found to be visionary, and as such justly discarded. I was sensible not only of the imperfect knowledge I possessed on subjects of political economy, but also of the narrow range of my researches; still as I have not been able to discover any traces of the principle to which I allude in the parliamentary debates or public journals of the present time; and as I do not recollect ever to have met with this principle in any of the leading works on

political economy which I have perused, I have repeatedly returned to the examination of it, and always felt my conviction of its truth strengthened and confirmed. I have also recollected that chance sometimes does more than merit or foresight. That some of the greatest discoveries in science, and the most valuable improvements in morals and politics have sprung up in the minds of uneducated and unlearned men, but in whom the reasoning faculty remained unfettered by prejudice. I have, when I reflected that I was neither a financier nor a statesman, nor a commercial man versed in all the technicalities of the monied world, recurred with satisfaction to the memorable observation of the great Lord Chatham, the strength and acuteness of whose mind none can doubt. "I own," he said, "that I am disposed to distrust the refinements of learning, as I have frequently found the most learned men prone to deceive both themselves and others;" and this may afford a motive for consolation to those who venture upon an undertaking apparently above their abilities.

In looking back to the early ages of the world, the accounts of which are derived from history, and considering also the state of uncivilized nations at the present day, we arrive at the knowledge of one fact; namely, that the first operations of commerce, or mutual exchange

between mankind, are performed by barter. In a more advanced stage of society we find money, or coin composed of the precious metals, adopted as the universal measure of value. Many and various definitions have been given of the nature and operations of money. Ancient philosophers considered it as a pernicious invention that had demoralized the world, and let loose the floodgates of iniquity and crime. Modern ones have, I think, upon no better foundation, ascribed to it the most extraordinary effects upon the condition and prosperity of nations, and regarded it as an instrument by which, at the breath of the statesman, wealth could be created or annihilated. But considered in its origin, prior to those times in which it has been enveloped in so much mystery, and adorned and magnified by so much theory, it appears stripped of its fancied attributes, in its original simplicity, merely as a more convenient mode of barter. Money is nothing more than one valuable commodity occasionally exchanged for another, although for public convenience, to save the trouble of weighing and assaying the ore, it is stamped, and its value thereby ascertained by the state. We are indeed told, by some, that money is not wealth; but that mankind by common consent adopted money, composed of the precious metals, as the representation of wealth. But to this the answer is clear. Men

exchanged gold and silver coin for wealth of another description, because their wants or their tastes had already stamped these metals as articles of value in the great market of the world. They adopted or invented them for money in the same manner that men invented horses for riding; they found them fit for the purpose. And as no man ever thought of mounting upon a stick to perform a journey, so none ever thought of offering a leaf from the tree of the forest as a valuable consideration, or inventing money composed of the sand of the desert. They offered that in exchange for other articles of value; they adopted that as the general medium of exchange, which was of the same value as the thing they sought to obtain, and offered a fair equivalent in the market. Had the precious metals, notwithstanding their durability and their reducibility to an uniform standard of fineness, qualities which rendered them the most proper to perform the operations of money, and to become an instrument of universal barter; had they no other use but that to which they are applied as money, they would be as inefficient for that purpose as the pebbles or shells of the sea-shore. They are not valuable because they act as money, but they are capable of being used as money, because they are valuable for other purposes, and from the prices set upon them by mankind as articles of commerce. Thus

we find from the historical parts of the Bible, from Homer, and other ancient authors, that, in the earliest ages, gold was eagerly sought for, as an object of show and magnificence. At the time that kings were shepherds, and when princesses wove their own garments and those of their husbands, we find them pouring forth libations to their gods from golden vessels; we find them drinking from golden cups, wearing crowns of gold, and bearing golden sceptres in their hands. In these times gold was sold only as an article of merchandise, and cattle and corn were the money, or measure of value for all high-priced commodities. Thus we find in Homer, fifty oxen given for a suit of armour. Among the ancient Germans, punishments were inflicted in fines reckoned in cattle. The use and value of cattle were well known to an uncivilized people: but although golden ornaments, in the earliest ages, were used in the worship of the gods, and to swell the state of kings, there probably was a period when a peasant would have been as little inclined to receive gold for the produce of his farm as he now would be to take diamonds or pearls. But with increasing civilization, the value of gold became more generally appreciated; the facility of exchanging it readily for other commodities became every day greater; and at last, from its durable nature, it was adopted as the general medium of exchange, as

that universal equivalent whose value was most uniform and steady in the market.

But even then it appears that gold, as an article of luxury, assumed to the great bulk of mankind, rather the shape of a promise of payment than the actual payment of a definite value. Thus we find the first Greek coins stamped with the effigy of a bull, as if meant to show to those, through whose hands a coin might pass, that its value was equal to that of the animal which had hitherto formed the basis of monetary calculation.

Although that effigy was subsequently stamped on money of inferior value, this was, I have no doubt, the original cause of its being applied. And when the necessity of the thing no longer existed, the coin having fallen off from that standard, proves no more than the alteration that has taken place in the weight of those coins originally called by some name denoting the exact quantity of gold and silver which they contained. But if coin, at the time it was first stamped, had not, as a portion of the precious metals, borne an absolute exchangeable value in the market, all the decrees of any government whatsoever, all the agreements of any body of merchants or traders who ever existed, never could have forced the great bulk of mankind to receive it in lieu of their goods. Even in one particular state it would have been impossible

to effect it; and that it should have circulated from one country to another; that it should have passed from one nation to another, ignorant even of each other's existence, as a pledge of payment, if not possessed of actual value as a merchandise, cannot be credited for an instant.

If this be acknowledged, as I think it must be, it clearly follows that gold, as a measure of value, will follow those fluctuations to which as a merchandise it is liable. Our first care then ought to be to ascertain what these are, and on what they depend.

It may perhaps appear extraordinary that a commodity, thus bearing an universal value, should be one not of utility, but applicable to purposes of mere show and magnificence. Many of us, in reading the accounts of newly discovered countries, have beheld, with mingled wonder and contempt, the ignorant savage, captivated by some gaudy and glittering ornament, and eagerly exchanging his provisions for a few glass beads, which, being unstrung, afterwards passed singly from hand to hand in the purchase of different articles. Poets and philosophers have also moralized upon the folly and vanity of mankind, who have explored the depths of the ocean, and the bowels of the earth for pearls and precious stones and gold, while they have rejected the real wealth placed by the bounty of nature on its surface. Their value in

our eyes depends upon the same principle as that of the glass beads in those of the unlettered savage. Perhaps it will be argued, that the ignorance of the savage is displayed in eagerly seeking an article easily manufactured, and of no intrinsic value; and that gold is a rare production of nature, acquired only at the expense of great toil and trouble. But in what respect does the savage, who is ignorant of the existence of the abundant supply of glass beads which Europe could afford, display less reflection than civilized Europe did, which sought gold as eagerly, and remained equally ignorant, during centuries, of the immense quantities contained in the New World. In what manner does he depart more widely from the principles of commerce, by giving a considerable quantity of his own wealth for an article of show, but rare in the narrow market to which he is restricted, than those affluent merchants who, at this very hour, in London, purchase plate at its exchangeable value to other commodities, with the positive knowledge of the existence of abundant stores of the precious metals in South America, and of the probability of their being soon brought in greater quantities into the market. Both act in the same manner, and upon the self-same principle. The price paid both for the beads and the plate is regulated by that great

law which determines the value of every article offered for barter or sale. It is that fixed upon them by the relative quantity of, and demand for the articles sought to be exchanged in the same market. It is the worth of one commodity compared to that of another, and ascertained by the necessities or tastes of mankind; and when this has been done, either commodity becomes capable of acting as a measure of the comparative value of a third.

It has often been said that the money price of provisions has risen in consequence of the increase of the precious metals, and that this change has principally taken place since their great influx after the discovery of America. Gold has been considered like those streams which flowing into a vast river, enlarge its volume, and its value compared to that of corn is supposed to have fallen in exact proportion to the quantity that has been put into circulation. The value of gold and corn relatively to each other has been supposed to depend upon the respective quantities of each existing in the world. That is, if there were one million of ounces of gold in the world, and one million of quarters of corn grown annually, that, as each must bear a certain exchangeable value to the other; if the quantity of gold were to be increased; that its value compared to corn would

fall; and that if, on the other hand, it were to be diminished, that its value, compared to corn, would rise.

Many reasons induce me to consider this position as a false one. It does not, I conceive, hold good in theory, and numerous facts, open to the observation of all, tend to disprove it. I believe that it is human industry that has depreciated the precious metals. That, if that had remained stationary, the money price of corn would still be low in England, notwithstanding the discovery of America; and that with that cause operating, gold must have sunk daily in value even if America had never existed. That the cry for cheap bread is a miserable delusion where words are substituted for things; and that the political economists who wish to relieve the manufacturing industry of the country from what they term the high price of provisions, grasp at a shadow which will fly before them.

To demonstrate the truth of this assertion, I think it is only necessary to recur to those infant societies, the simple operations of which can be more clearly traced, and the principles of whose transactions can be more distinctly perceived. In them, as in a rude machine, the power which sets them in motion is more manifest; but although in the complicated system of civilized society, where wheel acts upon wheel, the unpractised eye is unable to follow its va-

rious impulses, still the great springs of human action, and the principles which regulate human intercourse remain the same. An intelligence superior to that of man has, both in the intellectual and physical world, placed the great landmarks of knowledge and defined their limits. But men have been too apt to wander away from the lessons which the observation of facts is calculated to afford, to airspun theories formed by themselves. They have, like the ancient sages "left the warm precincts of the cheerful day" and retired to gloomy caves, and dwelt with phantoms of their own creating. Volumes have been written, upon almost every subject, which appear to be meant to clog the wing of science, and retard her in her bold and sublime flight. Hard names and futile distinctions overload the memory; but there is, as I once heard it well observed, a common-sense argument, which, upon almost every subject, will weigh more with a sound understanding than all the jargon of pretended science. The period is, I hope, fast advancing when the former will be more attended to than the latter. Logicians who have demonstrated palpable absurdities:—Lawyers who have arrested the decisions of natural justice:—Statesmen who have argued away the rights and freedom of mankind; and political economists whose theories sport with the prosperity of nations, will, I trust, ere long, cease to exercise

the same evil influence and usurped authority over the public mind.

Various definitions have been given of the nature of wealth. Wealth, as I conceive, consists of all that is useful and desirable to man; but the exchangeable value of any commodity whatever, which constitutes a component part of the general wealth of society, depends upon the supply of it being limited, and its being capable of being possessed by one individual while another is deprived of it. I know it has been said, that water and other things that are so abundant as not to bear any price in the market are not wealth. In this I do not agree. That may still be wealth which, under existing circumstances, does not bear an exchangeable value, because each man possesses a supply without labour; but deprive the estate or garden of one man of water, and let him be obliged to obtain it at a distance, or by permission of his neighbour, and he will immediately discover that water is wealth, and wealth bearing even an exchangeable value, as the diminished worth of an estate or garden, deprived of that great natural advantage, would testify. During the siege of a town, or a drought, water might, even in retail, bear a high price. Some individuals would be enriched, and society at large would suffer. A country possessed of navigable rivers is far richer than one without the means

of transport; and there will be a difference in the exchangeable value of its produce in the interior, if it can be conveyed away by water-carriage instead of being loaded on the backs of mules or the shoulders of men. Even things not capable of being created by the industry of man or of being transferred to others, may be considered as wealth. A man may be said to possess wealth who has only his hands to labour with, and his intellect to direct the operations of his hands. He can at least supply the wants of nature. But deprive the unfortunate individual of the use of his limbs, or the exercise of his understanding, and he becomes poor indeed. Exchangeable value, however, attaches only to things which are in some degree rare and capable of being acquired and possessed by a few individuals, or a certain portion of society, to the exclusion of others. The origin of wealth is twofold. That which is the spontaneous gift of nature, and that produced by human labour. Labour is grafted upon and improves the gifts of nature. Its produce is generally in a tangible shape. But even music, which is "*Vox et preterea nihil*," and the accomplishments and qualities of the mind, which are improved by education and reflection, although not in a tangible shape, are clearly to be traced to the joint sources of nature and industry.

This being the case, it is evident that those

who possess themselves of those materials of wealth which are given to mankind by the bounty of nature, and who leave only the powers of industry and labour to their fellow-creatures, obtain an immense and usurped advantage; more particularly so, as the labour of man, who cannot be supported without food, is, by a pressing necessity, obliged to accept the lowest possible reward from the monopolizer of land. This is the first state of human society; for notwithstanding the traditions of a golden age of innocence and equality, history affords the melancholy proof of the establishment of exclusive property being the universal condition of mankind. Great however as the evil is, it appears to be inevitable, and to tend to results so beneficial in many respects, that when tempered by wise and humane institutions, it may, although contrary to the natural feelings of the heart, be still considered by the sound and reflecting head, as the least of the two evils offered to our choice: of that state in which society, deprived of the spur to individual enterprize and industry, would linger in poverty and ignorance, subject to the great revulsions of famine and disease; or of that in which part of the human race seem sacrificed to the whole; unjustly abridged of their due share of comforts and enjoyments, and doomed to linger, like disinherited children, at the gate of that garden which encloses the forbidden fruit; but

in which the active exertions of every individual struggling for superiority or existence, gives a vigorous impulse to society, and infuses life into the whole.

In Mr. Necker's work on Finance, I recollect the following beautiful and just observation. I can only mention its substance, for it is many years since I read the book. The cruel law of exclusive property had, he said, deprived the greater part of the human race of their birth-right; but the Genius of Industry, like an affectionate parent, commiserating their sufferings, addressed them thus: "My children! you are excluded from the possession of all those gifts of nature which you behold: but I will open to you the stores of the oppressor; I will teach you to obtain from him your share of those enjoyments of which you are now deprived." I do not give this as the literal passage; but I was struck with the benevolent feeling it displayed, and it was pleasing to behold a minister of finance considering industry, not merely as a source of revenue, or greatness to the state, but in its still more important and interesting character, as it related to the general happiness of mankind. This is a true representation of that state of society in which an exclusive property in the land is obtained by a few, and the great body of society have nothing but their labour to offer in exchange for food; while that labour is

of small value, and outrunning the demand for it which exists. It is then that we see the rude and despotic chief surrounded by his ragged retainers, who willingly perform the most servile offices, and undergo the greatest fatigues for a scanty reward; or marshalled under his banner, sell their lives and blood for bread. The land might indeed, if allowed to them to labour upon, afford them plenty and comfort; but no more is cultivated than will give them a bare subsistence, the rest is reserved by the lord of the soil for the pleasures of the chace, the rivers are appropriated for his exclusive enjoyment. They live in huts, while the huge fortress or the lofty tomb is raised by their painful labours to minister to the pride of their ruler, whether living or dead. As human industry, ripening by slow degrees, invents some art or fashions some rude manufacture, a few fortunate individuals obtain a larger recompense; but in this state of society few objects exist which the proprietor of land and the monopolizer of food wishes to purchase. But, as I have already observed, gold appears in the earliest ages of the world to have been eagerly sought for, and as that article which was preferred to all others, and which was in fact almost the only one of splendour and shew, its high price or value, compared to that of corn, cannot be doubted. I think it is also clear, that the value of labour must have borne a certain

proportion to that of corn, and that whatever quantity of gold was given in exchange for the corn equal to the support of a man for one day, was equal in value to, and became the measure of the value of that day's labour. I conceive also, that the quantity of gold existing in any country might have received an annual accession, and at the end of a century existed in a hundred fold greater amount, without altering the original proportion between the value of gold and corn, and labour, provided the state of society likewise remained the same.

No one, I believe, can doubt that the recompense of labour is proportioned to the demand for it, and the supply existing in the market. It is equally certain that food is the natural and indispensable reward of labour. The possessor of land employs the labour of society; but after paying to the cultivator that portion of food which is the natural recompense of his labour, a surplus produce remains to the proprietor. This surplus produce, after deducting what is necessary to his own more luxurious subsistence, he can spend in recompensing other labour devoted to his service. That labour may be either productive or unproductive. Let us suppose a state, common in the early stages of society, when the proprietors of land are rich in herds and flocks, and have the fleeces or wool of their sheep to barter for articles of foreign commerce.

Each fleece must be equal in value to a certain quantity of corn and labour. A merchant arrives from a distant country, and offers a given quantity of gold in exchange for a given quantity of wool: a proportionate value is thus fixed upon the gold and the corn, both being measured by the wool. If, instead of gold, the merchant brought wine, which would be consumed, no doubt that upon his return the next year, if the demand and supply remained the same, the relative value of the wool, the corn, and the wine, would remain unaltered. But as gold is not a consumable article, according to the opinion of those who consider it only in its capacity of money; if the same quantity of it was brought to market the second year, its value ought to be diminished one half. This is, however, contrary to all experience: if gold and other durable articles of wealth were to be thus depreciated in a progressive series, they would soon cease to be brought into the market at all. But with respect to gold, as with respect to many other commodities or species of wealth, not only an increased demand for them may take place from an altered state of society, but even without any alteration of that kind, an ever-craving and unsatisfied desire of possession operates in the breasts of individuals, and maintains their value in the market. It is in the nature of man for his desires to enlarge, and the passion for splendour

and luxury grows by the means of gratifying it. The king or noble, who was at one moment, proud of drinking out of a golden cup, if no other article of commerce is offered to tempt him, will still give his surplus produce in exchange for what is the object of his favourite desire. He will multiply his golden utensils; he will place them as offerings in the temples of his gods; he will display his magnificence by decorating his family, his slaves, and even his horses, with ornaments of gold. It is the proportion that the wool which he offers in exchange bears to the gold brought into the market for sale, which will fix the relative value of both; and not that quantity of gold which he has already appropriated and stored up as a prized treasure, at the price of former sacrifices. This principle is universal in its application, and is not confined to gold alone. Although England is covered with magnificent mansions, we do not find that their possessors cease to add to and adorn these beautiful edifices; nor can a new one be erected at a less cost than formerly. We do not find that pictures, statues, and many other things of a durable nature, but of no utility, and prized only as objects of splendour and magnificence, are offered for sale at a less price, because the houses of our great nobility and opulent merchants are crowded with the stock acquired during a long lapse of years. Nor

would this happen, unless a taste for them should cease to exist, or some change take place in the wealth and situation of society. The price of these, as well as the price of the gold, the favourite object of the desires of the barbarian chief, depends not on that portion withdrawn from circulation, but upon that actually offered at any one moment in the market. That price can only be altered by some event which increases or diminishes either the demand or the supply.

The supply of a durable article, although the most prized of any which was offered in the market, might certainly outrun the demand; although, as I have attempted to prove, it is in the nature of a demand for any article of splendour and shew to enlarge and extend itself, still a limit must certainly be placed beyond which it could not go. But I very much doubt, that that point has ever been reached with respect to the precious metals, or that their increased supply has operated so as to sink their value relatively to provisions. That altered value of gold which we observe at the present day, and more particularly in England than in any country of the world, I conceive to have arisen not so much from their more abundant supply since the discovery of America, as from the diminished estimation in which they are held, from a cause which I will endeavour to explain.

It will, no doubt, be readily admitted that if a

quantity of wool, equal in value to the corn required for the support of a day's labour, is exchanged in the market for a certain weight of gold; that the gold is, at that moment, equal in value to the corn; and that if it were stamped as coin, it would become the money price of that portion of corn. If at this time, another merchant were to arrive, and to offer to the proprietor of land and of its surplus produce in the shape of wool, an equal quantity of gold to that offered by the first merchant; if these two merchants were to outbid each other, the gold must fall in value, and the wool rise in proportion. The wool would exchange for more gold than before, and the portion of corn which was equal in value to the wool thus exchanged, would also be worth more gold, and its money price would consequently be higher. But the same thing would happen if the second merchant offered, not gold, but manufactured articles of sufficient beauty to be prized as highly as the gold itself. The proprietor of the wool, who was tempted with the display of finely wrought silks, of splendid mirrors, of carved ivory and pictured tapestry, and who had only a certain quantity of wool to offer in exchange, both for these and the quantity of gold which he usually purchased, could not obtain both, unless the two merchants were to outbid each other; and in that case, if each of them lowered his price one half, gold

would fall relatively to wool, and relatively to labour and to corn, to half its former value, and consequently the money price of labour and corn would be raised.

This is the great operation that I conceive to have taken place, and to be still taking place in the world, and to account for many remarkable facts that, I am not aware, can be accounted for on any other principle; and I also think, many proofs can be brought from history in support of its correctness. The main principle, it will be easily perceived, is this: that gold is almost the exclusive object of desire to barbarous nations, who know of no other species of splendour or wealth. That in that state of society, its value relatively to labour and provisions is high; but that, as soon as manufacturing industry takes place, it finds a formidable rival in the market, and that its value relatively to labour and provisions is proportionably lowered. We need only open our school books to find proofs of the estimation in which gold was held by the barbarous and uncivilized nations. The Gauls who besieged Rome wore collars of gold. The armies of the barbaric kings of Persia glittered with gold and precious stones. The splendour that surrounded the throne of the Great Mogul, and that of the ancient Caliphs, is well known. In the present day, golden ornaments are most common in those countries possessed of

the least manufacturing industry, and are there worn by the lower orders. Thus they are more frequent in France than in England, in Italy than in France, and in the East than in either of the former countries. These ornaments, composed of gold coins strung together, adorn different parts of the dress, and thus stamp in the eyes of the beholders a conviction of the riches of the wearer, and of the costliness of his apparel. It is a fashion which appears to prevail in an inverse proportion to the wealth and comfort of the inhabitants. But if we inquire what the money price of provisions is in these countries, we shall find it uniformly lowest where there is the greatest degree of poverty and distress, a strong presumptive proof of the truth of my position. In France, a country backward in most of the arts of industry compared to England, corn is at least one third cheaper. In Spain and Italy lower still, although in the latter country, particularly in the Roman States, the population is literally starving. In Russia, although there is no want of provisions, but where manufacturing industry is in its infancy, the money price of provisions is extremely low. The case is the same in Turkey; and in Persia, to which Nadir Schah transported a part of the treasures of the East, but which is still worse governed and more oppressed, it is lower still: and we find in Turner's Embassy to Thibet, that the price of provisions in the north

of India, where the greatest distress prevails, is incredibly low; and the author remarks, that this is not the only instance where the low price of provisions is accompanied with misery in the people, and an inability on their part to purchase food. But the distinction between the money price and the real price of food is apparent. Gold is or may be the money price of food, but labour is its real price. In India, where the money price is low, the people die of famine; in England, where it is high, they fare better than in any other country in the world. History shews the same difference between the value of gold and provisions compared to what they are at the present time, to have taken place in our own country, and that the exchangeable value of gold has sunk, by slow gradations certainly, but in exact proportion to the increasing industry and civilization of the people. In the time of the Saxons, it is, I believe, computed, that provisions were at one-thirtieth of their present price; and that their price, from the time of Elizabeth to about 1780, only increased four-fold. How is this to be accounted for? Is it by the theory of those who consider the precious metals merely in their capacity as currency, and look upon them as a great river, swelled by the supplies from South America, that has overflowed its former boundaries? If so, why did money prices rise before the existence of America was

even suspected? If that depreciation arose solely from the increased quantity existing in the world owing to a regular supply; and if it operated with redoubled force on the discovery of America, why did it operate in England more than in any other country? Why did it raise the price of provisions peculiarly high in that country, which possessed no mines of gold and silver, and when the precious metals have long ceased to be accumulated either in the treasuries of the state, or as a favourite article of splendour and shew among the people? And why has Spain, into which the wealth of the New World flowed, whose altars groan beneath the costly offerings of superstition, and where a taste for the precious metals long prevailed among the higher orders, why has Spain seen her people sunk in poverty and ignorance, and her corn at a low price?

The answer is, I think, plain and conclusive. Because gold is lowered in value in those countries where freedom and civilization, and manufacturing industry flourish; and it has always been the favourite object of the tyrant and barbarian, under that system where the sources of other wealth do not exist.

A very cursory examination of the state of society in different periods will shew how much the quantity of all articles produced by industry for purposes of luxury and comfort has in-

creased, and that they have gradually taken the place of gold in the estimation of individuals. In the time of the Roman emperors, manufactured silk was so scarce in Europe, that we find one of the empresses purchased a silk robe at the price of its weight in gold; and from the beauty and rarity of the commodity, it probably afforded her much more satisfaction as a means of distinction, and was more admired than any ornament containing an equal quantity of gold to that paid for it could have been. Silk is now not worth its weight in silver, and dresses composed of it are worn by every female above the lower orders. But although the price of an individual dress is so much lower, the value of all the silk dresses now in Europe compared to that of the few imported in the time of the Romans must be many thousand fold. The spot on which Francis the First and King Henry the Eighth met was called the Field of the Cloth of Gold; but Queen Elizabeth's vanity was gratified by her wearing the first pair of silk stockings brought into England. The value of those now in daily use in London would amount to an immense sum. But in those days, gold brocades and stuffs of which gold constituted the principal ornament, were common among females of high rank. Gold chains, magnificent trappings, splendid arms and accoutrements, formed part of the state of a great baron, whose table groaned beneath

the massive silver flagon, while in the interior of his castle, the bench and the wooden stool supplied the place of the objects of more refined luxury, now introduced into modern furniture. The corn which grew on the estates of the nobles and the church, was partly consumed by crowds of paupers fed at the gates of the convents, or by the military followers of the feudal chieftain; and part of it was given in exchange to those merchants who procured gold and other valuable produce. While, as I have already observed, gold was the chief article of splendour, it bore, of course, a high exchangeable value compared to corn; but as soon as the idle retainers of superstition and tyranny became industrious artisans, the produce of their labour came into the market to compete with gold; and in exact proportion to the extent and perfection of manufacturing labour, gold sunk in general estimation, and its exchangeable value in the market became less.

The same effect seems to have been produced at other periods, and in countries differently situated from our own. Thus we read in Thucydides, that it was the custom in ancient times, in Greece, to wear golden ornaments in imitation of the manners of the barbarians; and that the Greeks exercised freebooting against each other both by sea and by land, and that without security either in their homes or on their journies, that

they performed the ordinary functions of life clad in arms. But that piracy being subdued, they took possession of the Isthmuses, and began to carry on commerce. That the Athenians were the first to pass to milder morals and to a more luxurious existence. And speaking of his own time, he says, that it was not long since, that the old men among them, belonging to the higher classes, had ceased to wear golden ornaments in their hair. It is worthy of remark, that the period of which Thucydides spoke, when golden ornaments were discarded, was that of Pericles, under whose administration Athens reached its highest pitch of opulence and glory; the period at which she had erected those beautiful monuments of architecture, and produced those works of genius which still excite the admiration of the world: when the statesmen, the orators, and historians flourished who are still looked up to as models by posterity. That small but wonderful republic, whose name has survived through the lapse of centuries to attest the superiority of freedom, which delivered Greece from the yoke of the Persian king, backed by his millions of armed slaves, and by the treasures of the East; that active and commercial people placed a lower value upon gold, when, by an advancement in the course of civilization and industry, they had procured wealth of a more refined nature, in the works of art and the productions of genius. It

was at that moment that Pericles, in his splendid eulogy of the system of Athens, said, "Our republic, by the extent of its domination, receives all that is produced in the entire world, and we collect for our enjoyment the productions of other countries not less than our own."

Can any proposition be more self-evident than this, that the exchangeable value of corn depends upon the value of the labour of the community? That it receives its price from that which is obtained by the produce of labour in the great market of the world; but that it can give no value to articles useless to or rejected by the tastes of society. Were a man to spend his whole life in framing a rude and misshapen mass of pebbles, he could not find a purchaser for it; he would see the skein of wool, spun in a single day by an old woman, who might have subsisted upon oat cake, obtain a preference in the market. Does it not follow that if a merchant, who possesses gold, goes into one country and purchases an article of manufacture made by the labour of two men in a given time; and that in another country he finds an article equally useful and well finished, made by the labour of one man in the same time; that he will not stop to inquire into the gains or comforts of the sellers, but that he will give as much gold for the labour of one man in the one country as for the labour of the two in the other? And

since food is the natural and indispensable recompense of labour, does it not clearly follow that gold compared with corn is only of half the value in the country, the industry of which is doubly productive; unless indeed there should be some material difference in the soil or climate in which the corn is raised? Can we then either wonder or complain that the industry of Great Britain, which is the most perfect in the world, that her skill and her capital, that her wonderful machinery, those hundred armed Briareuses, which perform the work of millions,* should, when their produce is brought into the great market of the world, enable her to obtain more gold in exchange for the labour of each individual than can be obtained for the same labour in countries behind her in all these advantages? That, measuring commodities by gold, she can obtain the produce of the labour of two or more foreign artisans, in exchange for the produce of the labour of one of her own; and that as labour and food must bear a proportionate value to each other, that the English artisan, who earns a double reward, should be able to give, and does necessarily give a double quantity of gold, or commodities measured by gold, for food,

* The machinery employed in the manufactures of Great Britain, in the three branches of silk, cotton, and woollen alone, is said to perform work equal to that of thirty-five millions of men.—Vide *Ocios Espanolos*.

to that which can be given for it by the foreign artisan, who earns but half the gold or half the quantity of goods? Can we wonder or complain that the cultivator, who grows the corn and exchanges part of the produce of his labour for the various manufactured articles he requires, should receive more in return, and obtain an increased reward as they become more abundant and are produced at the cost of less labour? That he should be better clothed and possess more comforts of every kind; that he should partake of that universal opulence which, spreading through the great mass of the community, caused the Autocrat of all the Russias, accustomed to the sight of his own subjects, clothed in sheepskins, to exclaim, on beholding the population of England, "Where then are the poor?" But it was at the close of a war, which will be famous in the annals of history, not only for its military glory, but for its unparalleled exertions in a financial view; when the world was tributary to our commerce, when plenty smiled upon our fields, and when comforts and luxuries were showered upon us by the ever active hand of industry; when the past proudly pointed to the future, and predicted a long train of public and private prosperity; it was at that moment that the system under which we had arrived at such results was decried and vilified; when it was represented as the offspring of short-sighted

ignorance, and we were told that if England had prospered, it had been as it were by a lucky accident, and in spite of the mischievous and fallacious policy which she had blindly followed.

But if the view I have taken is a correct one, and I do not see how it can be controverted, that it is the produce of manufacturing industry which, being exchanged for its equivalent in gold in the great market of the world, gives a money price to corn; it is evident that the high price of corn in England, about which so much needless alarm has been entertained, is the sure sign and necessary result of our increasing opulence; and that so far from its preventing us from selling our goods, it is only when they sell and sell with profit that the high price of corn can be maintained. We might as well quarrel with the thermometer for rising when we increase the temperature of our room by a good fire, as with that high money price of corn, that measure of its value by gold, which proves that the labour of England is rated higher in the market of the world, and will command a greater profit than that of any other country. It would be as reasonable for the artist, who can earn hundreds, to envy the common labourer who is happy to work for a shilling a day, as for Great Britain to envy those countries whose industry, and consequently whose corn, the support of that industry, is at a low price.

We cannot turn our eyes on any side without beholding ample proof that no commodity can obtain a high money price, that is, exchange for a certain quantity of gold, unless that gold, or its equivalent in value, is brought into the market and offered for it. If in one night all the coffee existing in England were to be burnt, no man could obtain coffee in exchange for his goods; but if the quantity of coffee in the market were to be doubled, it cannot be disputed that he would be able to obtain a larger quantity than before. In the same manner, if a manufacturer sells one pair of stockings in the South American market, for gold, so as to earn a profit of three shillings, he can offer that in exchange for corn or any other article he wants. If he were to earn gold equal to four shillings, he would bring more gold into the market against the same quantity of corn. When any large class of the community earn high wages, they come into the market with more gold and offer it in exchange for corn, which rises in price. If instead of gold they import other commodities of equal value, they dispose of them to those who give them gold in exchange, which they again take into the market to purchase corn. If that gold or its equivalent were not brought into the market by the fair and natural operation of commerce, how could it be obtained in exchange for the corn? We see a barren piece of ground

which will neither sell nor let; certainly not because the owner is not desirous to obtain a high price for it. But place a town in its neighbourhood, whose inhabitants can afford to pay for it, and are inclined to do so, and it will sell at a high rate. In particular streets the houses let high, and the goods sold are disposed of at a high price. But the owners of the houses and land cannot insist on high rents, and the shopkeepers afterwards get customers to buy their goods at more than their value. The high rents proceed from the goods selling higher, or in greater quantities in particular situations, owing either to convenience or fashion; and it is then only the owners of houses and land can enhance their profits. It is a received maxim in finance, that by levying too heavy a tax, so as to prevent a demand, the article taxed will no longer sell; that is, no one can be found to pay the price, without which a fair remunerating profit cannot be obtained; and if it is a commodity which cannot be carried elsewhere, or its quantity be diminished so as to suit the diminished demand, it must be sold at a ruinously low price.

All practical commercial men acknowledge this principle when they speak of an overstock of goods, or a glut in the market. All manufacturers feel it when, by a fall in the prices of their fabricated articles, they are compelled to lessen the wages of their workmen, who, in their turn,

spend less with the agriculturists. It is in every man's mouth when he says, such labour is ill bestowed; such a thing is not worth the money laid out upon it; such an improvement will not pay. It is that which is acknowledged by the very men, although they forget to apply it to corn, who talk of overtrading and improvident speculations. It meets us at every corner. It makes eggs and butter dear at every watering-place, when there is a sudden influx of rich visitors. It enables the gardeners near London to raise green peas and strawberries in winter, and to obtain for a plate of each as much money as would support a poor family in Yorkshire for a week.

If then the high money price of corn, as I have attempted to show, is in fact a result of our commercial prosperity, and a proof of the superior value of our industry, and consequently of the corn which supports it, compared to the industry and corn of other nations; if, in fact, it merely shows that the relative worth that gold, as an article of merchandise, bears to our manufactured goods, is lower than it is to the productions of other countries, whose manufacturing industry is at a lower pitch, why should it create more uneasiness than the cheapness of any other article which we may happen to import. If we want gold, we can command more than any other country at a less sacrifice. If we do not want it,

why should we be astonished and displeased that we possess that which is worth more. If we choose to employ gold as a measure of value, we must submit to make use of it, not as a perfect but as an imperfect instrument. We must recollect that the measure itself varies at particular periods, and in particular places; and it is for us to bend our theory to facts, and not to misrepresent facts to suit our theory. The consequences of such a delusion may be dangerous. Gold is, as a merchandise, subject to all the fluctuations of value to which other merchandise is liable, although in a less degree. So far from its being an universal and unvarying measure of value, I believe such a measure cannot be pointed out in theory, much more found for practical purposes. A portion of food and labour appears to approach nearest to it; but these differ so widely in value in different places and under different circumstances; in times of peace compared with those of war; of plenty to famine; in situations of fertility and barrenness; that as a measure of the value of other commodities, these first and great components of wealth cannot act steadily and uniformly.

But although we have chosen gold as a measure of value, few persons, I conceive, would deny that some other commodity might answer the same purpose; and thus we find that in Africa, which trades with us in gold dust, the

inhabitants estimate the value of their merchandise, not in gold, but in iron. Park says, the African merchants compare the value of all other goods to that of a certain quantity of iron, called a bar; that thus, so much tobacco is called a bar of tobacco—a gallon of rum, a bar of rum, &c.; and that the Europeans, on their part, reckon a bar at about two shillings, and that a slave is worth one hundred and fifty bars, or fifteen pounds sterling. Our political economists have never started and roused the country, slumbering, and enjoying the delusive dream of riches and prosperity; and dispelled the pleasing vision, by inquiring what proportion in value iron bore in Africa to corn; and were any man to get up in Parliament and state his fears that our trade must be ruined, and our people starved, because the Africans had so little iron, or possessed so little of any other wealth to exchange for it, that the same piece of iron, which in England was only worth as much as one bushel of corn, was there worth four bushels, people would suppose he was crazy. But we actually reckon our commodities by copper; the Chancellor of the Exchequer may, at the expense of a little more labour and paper, make out the budget in pence instead of pounds. We have then only to substitute iron for copper, and a whole continent of low prices might rush in upon us to disturb our peace, and un hinge all

our commercial regulations, and derange and ruin the property of every individual. We pay four times as much iron for our bread as the Foulis and Mandingoes. What a terrible fact! Quite as alarming, I think, as that we pay four times as much gold as the enslaved Pole or Russian. But this argument which, if applied to Africa and iron, would be treated with ridicule, when put into the mouth of the President of the Board of Trade, with relation to Europe and gold, is praised as the highest effort of the human understanding, and received as the dictate of superior wisdom.

To put this argument in another point of view; let us suppose that an English merchant went to Arabia to purchase gums, and that he carried out cotton shawls to dispose of there, worth five shillings each. If instead of gold being used as money by the Arabs they made use of tobacco as the measure of value, (and tobacco at one time was unknown in Europe, or at least not sought for in the market,) would the merchant be disposed to take a quantity of tobacco, either unsaleable or worth but a small part of five shillings in the European market, in exchange for his shawl, which he estimated at that sum? Certainly not. But if he were told, tobacco is the money of the Arabs, you can buy as much gum as you want if you have tobacco to pay for it; he would then ask how much gum the tobacco

offered for his shawl worth five shillings would purchase. If he found he could get gum worth ten shillings in the market to which he meant to carry it, and he knew that would be sufficient to secure his mercantile profit, he would be satisfied. The value of the tobacco would be immaterial to him; he would consider it only as a measure. But because tobacco was worth less in the European market than in Arabia, it would not be a reason to import rice from Arabia, nor could such a measure benefit our commerce. We could only exchange the manufactured articles that we now give for corn raised at home, for the rice raised in Arabia.

The same thing might happen if an English merchant took a teapot, worth five shillings, to China, and there found he could only exchange it for a quantity of silver equal to two shillings and sixpence. He would not accept the silver to bring home; but if he could with that two shillings and sixpence worth of silver purchase tea worth ten shillings in England, and if he knew that price would suffice to ensure his mercantile profit, he would be satisfied to receive the silver which he would consider only as a measure of value. But the different value of silver in England and China would not be a sufficient reason to import rice from China. The tobacco price of rice in Arabia, and the silver price of rice in China, would only prove that a

certain value, greater than we set upon the tobacco and silver, was placed upon them in those two countries; it would not prove that food in Arabia or China was cheaper or more abundant than in England. This is so true, that the case actually occurred a few years back at the German fairs, where English goods sold below prime cost. A member of Parliament observed to one of our ministers of state, "Our trade is then ruined, if we cannot sell our goods at their original cost in a foreign market."—"No," replied the minister, "it is only a change in the value of the currency, and need cause no alarm." Our merchants sold their goods cheap, but they purchased foreign goods at an equally low rate. The relative price was unaltered; and when the foreign goods were brought back to England the commercial profit remained the same. This, in Germany, might be temporary; but a difference in the value of gold in different countries may be permanent. Its value, I believe, is never the same in two countries, or in two societies placed under different circumstances. This being the case with respect to all other commodities, namely, that their exchangeable value depends upon the demand for, and supply of them in the market; I can see no reason why gold should form an exception to this general rule. It is well known, that in moments of political alarm and of convulsions in society, the value of the

precious metals uniformly increases. Gold bears permanently a higher value in the East and in Africa, where property is insecure, than it does in Europe, because it can be concealed; and we find that in those countries it is frequently extorted by the infliction of personal suffering. The precious stones are valuable for the like purpose. The Eastern tales mention the custom of converting wealth into jewels, to be concealed in the clothes, the hair, and even swallowed by persons flying from one country to another. Those who, in speaking of price, consider gold currency, as it is generally called, as distinct from gold as a merchandise, are clearly in error. The very word itself, if taken in its right sense, expresses a quality and not a separate existence. It implies the act of motion or passing from hand to hand. But the dog who runs at one moment and sits at another is still one and the same dog. Gold coin is nothing but gold stamped to ascertain its weight and fineness; and it is well known, that no law or regulation can permanently prevent its bearing the same exchangeable value to other commodities in both of these states, and that the mint and market price of gold always have a tendency to approximate. But as the value of gold as a merchandise must depend solely upon the quantity in the market, and the demand existing for it, at any one moment, so must gold coin follow

those fluctuations of value, to which gold as a merchandise is liable. A certain weight of gold, in the shape of a coin or piece of money, cannot be taken as an unit of a given value all over the world; it cannot be considered as a fractional division of one great whole, unvariable in its nature, and unalterable by time or place. It is not the unerring standard by which the cheapness or dearness of commodities in different countries, and at different periods, can be ascertained. And admitting that fact to be true, which is allowed on all hands, namely, that a great depreciation of the precious metals took place subsequently to the discovery of America, those who conceive that depreciation to arise solely from their greater abundance, and consider them as an accurate measure of value all over the world, must allow that their having been depreciated more rapidly and constantly in particular countries than in others, is a circumstance at variance with their own theory. To suppose that the high money price of corn arises solely from an increased quantity of the precious metals, it must be supposed that the quantity of corn produced has not increased in the same ratio; for it is acknowledged that the value of gold, compared to goods, is greater now than formerly, and that notwithstanding the increased quantity of gold, that the same weight of gold will exchange for a greater quantity of manufac-

tured articles, from the still more abundant supply of the latter that has taken place; while, on the other hand, that same weight of gold will exchange for less corn. This is ascribed to the quantity of corn not having increased in the same proportion as that of gold. Here, however, a remarkable contradiction manifests itself, since we find that it is in England, where cultivation has been so much extended, and where each individual consumes more food and of a better quality than the inhabitants of any other part of the world, that the money price of corn is the highest. But according to the theory which I have endeavoured to establish, that gold is a merchandize bearing a very different value in different countries, these apparent contradictions are reconciled. And although the depreciation of gold in a more rapid degree dates from the discovery of America, it is by no means a necessary consequence that the increased supply from the mines should be the main, much less the sole cause of that depreciation. It will be found that all those causes to which I attribute the depreciation of gold relatively to corn, or that high money price of provisions of which we complain, date also from the same era.

It was at that moment, that by the breaking up of the feudal system, and the firmer establishment of monarchical power all over Europe, that greater tranquillity and good order pre-

vailed, and consequently industry began to flourish. The mercantile body and the inhabitants of the towns, protected by the policy of the sovereigns against the tyranny of the nobles, increased in wealth and importance. At the same time that America was discovered, the trade to the East being laid open by the Portuguese, maritime commerce extended itself in the Old World as well as the New. Governments began to feel the importance of trade, and to attend to its interests. New tastes and new habits sprung up with a different state of society. A passionate fondness for literature and the fine arts succeeded to the rude and warlike habits of the feudal chieftain; and the destruction of the Greek empire, which carried into Italy the refinements of that ingenious people, dispelled the dark gloom of monkish ignorance. It is recorded that one of the Gothic conquerors of Italy, having been shewn the picture of an old shepherd, upon which the artist who painted it set a high price, observed, that if he were ever offered the original himself, he should not think him worth the money. Subsequent ages beheld the descendants of those arrogant barbarians, who had buried in ruins the architectural glories of ancient Rome, eagerly employed in rescuing their remains from the rubbish in which they had reposed for centuries; and, by an extravagant admiration for the fine arts, raising those pursuits, elegant

indeed, but not ennobled by an useful object, to the rank of virtue itself. The gorgeous splendour of the East was rejected by the higher orders of society. Gold and jewels still glittered in the robes of the Virgin, and on the tombs of the saints, to dazzle an ignorant multitude; but the palaces of the heads of the Romish Church were filled with the splendid works of ancient and profane genius. Magnificent and showy trappings still surrounded the sovereign in public, and swelled his state; but the marriage present borne by a princess to the first monarch of Europe, consisted in the works of art, and the choice productions of the chisel and the pencil.

Those therefore, who conceive that the cheapness or dearness of corn to a community can be ascertained by its money price, labour under a vulgar and unphilosophical error. As it is the nature of iron to expand, and of air to rarify by heat; as the specific gravity of bodies varies according to the medium in which they are weighed, so must those circumstances, that affect and stamp the relative value of gold to corn and labour, be taken into consideration, before a knowledge of the real price of corn, namely, the portion of labour exchanged for subsistence, can be ascertained. If, from the freedom of our government, and the stability of its institutions, gold is not sought for in England to be buried or concealed, and bears but a small value as a

means of security; if, from the perfection of our manufacturing industry, the labour of our artisans can command large supplies of gold or its equivalents in the foreign markets, gold must be lower in value in England than elsewhere. Corn, although more abundant in England, compared to the population, than in any other part of Europe, is dearer compared to gold; and it can only become otherwise by equalizing the value of gold in England to that which it bears abroad, and for that, I believe, there is no other means than that of ruining our manufactures and commerce; or of forcing agricultural labouring capital to receive less than their fair share of profits. By rendering the agricultural labourers hewers of wood and drawers of water to their more favoured brethren; by destroying the natural proportion between the comforts and enjoyments of the one and the other of the two classes; and when a fair interchange would give a just recompense to both, like Brennus, to throw the sword into the scale, and incline the balance to the stronger party.

The whole argument for a free trade in corn consists in this: that we can get our corn cheaper than it is grown in England, without considering that we may measure that cheapness or comparative value by a merchandise which is worth more in one country than it is in another. Adam Smith, who distinguishes between real

and money price, distinctly says, that silver, as a measure of value, varies more from century to century than corn. That, at the same time and place, money is the best measure, but at the same time and place only. The exchangeable value of gold or silver depends upon the political state of society, and upon the productive powers of its industry. It varies therefore, not only at distant periods and in distant countries; it may differ materially at periods touching upon each other, and in countries separated by a mere line of demarcation. This is felt and acknowledged by all, practically at least. During the last century, I believe, no individual, who accepted a fixed annuity, expected that the same sum would command as great a share of the labour of society at the end of twenty or thirty years, as it did when he made the bargain: but as he had found the decrease of the value of gold to be gradual, he preferred that disadvantage to the risks of business, or the smaller returns of landed property. Every one, who has ever heard the subject of prices mentioned at all, must have known, from his earliest years, that money went farther in France and all over the Continent than in England; that the same quantity of gold or silver would command more of the food and labour of society, and were worth more abroad than in Great Britain. But does this shew that France is a more fertile country

than England, or that the French people under their old despotic government, were better off than the English under a free one; or that they either possessed or consumed more corn?

This is, even now, the real state of France compared to that of England. The fine climate of France in the southern parts admits of the cultivation of the vine and the olive; this is a natural advantage which England does not possess. England possesses extensive coal mines which France does not. The fuel in France is wood, and in proportion to other things it is at least twice, and in some places, three times as dear as coal in England. The pasture land in France is not so fine as that in England. Perhaps the average quality of her corn land is about the same as ours; but by deficient cultivation, one acre in France produces only about three-fourths of the corn which an acre of land in England produces. Her farm-houses and cottages are mere hovels compared to those in England, and their furniture is wretched in the extreme. The clothing of the lower orders is substantial, but coarse. The peasants wear wooden shoes, and their whole dress differs from that of the inhabitants of the towns. The cross roads are bad in summer; in winter, almost impassable. In Brittany, which is a considerable district of France, ladies, who leave their

country houses, are obliged to be transported in a kind of sedan chair, slung between two horses, (exactly the same mode of conveyance used in Persia, where there are no roads, and that is called a tetravan,) because wheel carriages cannot pass through the deep lanes blocked up with mud and water. The food of the whole community is inferior in quality, and scantier in quantity than in England; but there are so few people in a thriving way, that those, who do possess money, can get the luxuries of life, such as poultry, and fruit, and wine, cheaper in proportion to other things than in England; because labour is worse paid, and there are fewer competitors in the market for any thing beyond bare necessities. Corn is generally about two-thirds of the price that it is in England; labour lower still, and rents are higher.

This, I will venture to say, is an accurate description of the present state of France. But the French government have played no tricks with their currency or trade. The French people are not employed one week, and out of work the next; they are not rich one day, and starving on the morrow. They are poor, but thrifty; and as there are no poor-rates, and not much charity, every man strives to have a little hoard in reserve; but all who are acquainted with the internal state of the country, of which

the English, who follow the high roads, know but little, agree that there is much suffering and distress among the lower orders in France.

It is with such a state of things before our eyes, and but a few miles from our own shores, that we have become dissatisfied with our own opulence, and falsely considered the high money price of our bread as an evil, and a symptom of decaying prosperity. I have heard of a hypochondriac patient, who imagined he was grown too bulky to pass through the door-way of his apartment, and who actually died of fright upon being carried through by his friends, who wished to convince him of his error. Our political economists seem to be afflicted with a similar disease; and some day or other, if their advice is followed, they may condemn the country to sterility, and the people to voluntary famine. Corn cannot and will not be grown, when its production ceases to be profitable, and its price to give a fair recompense to labour and capital. The portion of corn which the natural productive power of land, cultivated by rude labour, can produce, must be scanty indeed compared to, and unequal to the wants of the population of such a country as England. Capital, laid out in cultivation, increases the produce of land, and lowers its real price; but the interest of that capital is now proscribed as an extortion. Let me, however, ask the manufacturer, and I would

put it to the good sense of any artisan in the country, whether the master manufacturer would build extensive manufactories, and erect machinery and purchase raw produce to employ his workmen, if he were to reap no profit, or only an inadequate one, on the capital thus laid out? And if farm-houses must be built, and hedges planted, and drainings and other improvements take place, to set the agricultural labourer to work advantageously, will this capital be laid out, unless a due profit upon it can be obtained? No man of common sense would hesitate in the answer to be given to such a question.

Many persons, perhaps, will say in answer to this, that they admit that in a country which makes great commercial profits like England, corn cannot be raised at so low a price as in less prosperous states; but that what they object to is the exorbitant price maintained by restrictive laws, merely to raise the rents and gratify the avarice of the landowners. That they complain, not of the remunerating price given to labour and capital employed in agriculture, but to the monopoly of the landowners. This argument or assertion appears to have great weight with many, who still are not of opinion that corn can be raised in England at so low a rate as in the Ukraine; and who, whatever hostility they feel towards the landlord, do admit that the British peasant has a right to expect better pay than the

ON THE

CORN LAWS OF FRANCE,

WITH A COMPARISON BETWEEN THEM, AND THOSE NOW PROPOSED TO BE ENACTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.

BY THE RIGHT HON. SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.

THERE is scarcely an example in history, of such vehement attacks having been made on numerous and respectable classes of the community, as those with which the owners and occupiers of the soil in this country have of late been assailed. They have been attacked, not only in the periodical press, and in other publications, but in petitions presented to both Houses of Parliament, and in debates in these assemblies! It has been boldly asserted, "That in no other country is there any instance of such tyranny being exercised against the rest of the community, as by the establishment of the British corn laws;" and it is maintained, "That the general interest of the nation is sacrificed to the emolument and advantage of the landholders and farmers." I have thence been led to ascertain, what are the regulations regarding the corn trade in the neighbouring kingdom of France, which has frequently been quoted, as an example to England, for the superior cheapness of its grain, and other agricultural productions. This has been attributed to its possessing corn laws of a description less selfish and tyrannical than those of England. But, upon inquiry, I find, that the system of corn laws in France is similar, in principle, to those which had been adopted in England, and that they have been found productive of the happiest consequences. This was the case in England, for a period of almost a century, during which the same principles were preserved. But when agriculture was discouraged by the prevalence of new doctrines, and those to whose care the execution of the laws for the benefit of agriculture was entrusted, suffered "Fraudulent Returns" to regulate the prices,—then, not only agriculture, but the interests of the nation, suffered materially, and to an extent not generally known.

The corn laws which are now in force in France, are of modern date. The principal are those enacted in 1819 and 1822. The regulations they contain, are founded on the supposition, "That from 20 to 22 francs the *hectolitre*, (weighing 154 French pounds,) or from 6s. 4d. to 7s. the Winchester bushel, is necessary to secure a profit to the grower of wheat;" and until domestic growth reaches these prices, that no foreign corn ought to be admitted into the home market.

France being an extensive country, with a great variety of soil and climate, the quantity of corn grown, and its relative price in the markets, vary to a considerable degree, in the several departments of which it is composed.

The kingdom has therefore been divided into four districts, each including the departments in which the prices of grain are nearly approximated; and there is a graduated proportion of prices in these four districts, between the district whose grain is the cheapest, and those where the price is higher.

Importation of foreign wheat is prohibited, when, in the cheapest district, wheat is

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The above four districts taken together, form, by the average price of their corn, the regulating price for the importation of foreign corn, for the whole of France; and by the law now in force, it is enacted, that no foreign wheat can be introduced, until the average price throughout France has reached 6s. 8d. per bushel, or 53s. per quarter. Considering the variety of parochial, and national burdens to which the British farmer is subjected, (which are but little known in France), an addition of twelve shillings per quarter, to the protecting average that ought to be established here, or 65s. per quarter, cannot with justice be objected to.

There are no particular regulations as to exportation, nor any duties imposed, except a trifling tax on the flour of rye, and Turkey corn; but export ceases, when corn reaches the following rates:

Districts.	Price per French hectolitre in francs.	Price per Winchester quarter.
1st District,	26	£.2 12 0
2d Ditto,	24	2 8 0
3d Ditto,	22	2 4 0
4th Ditto,	20.	2 0 0

Russian or Cossack, and who do not wish to see him reduced to the coarsest fare and clothe in sheep-skins.

To those persons, I think, it would be a sufficient answer to ask them, what they mean by monopoly, and in what sense the word applies to the great body of English landlords? Monopoly, as I always thought, means putting the whole of any commodity into the hands of one or a few persons, who by combining together can raise the price in the market to an unnatural pitch, beyond the fair profits of labour and capital compared to those made by other portions of society. But for monopolizers to make extraordinary and unfair profits, they must limit the supply, and reduce it below the actual demand in the market. No doubt the monopoly of land is the most cruel of all, and the most impious of tyrannies. But it was not till the seven years had devoured the seven years of plenty that the patriarch Joseph set the iniquitous example, too often followed by succeeding ministers, of reducing his fellow-citizens to bondage, and that he could compel them to exchange their freedom for bread. But when we recollect that there are ninety thousand landowners in England, and that most of their estates are let upon terms to one or several tenants, who, for the time being, come the actual holders of the produce of the soil, the idea of a combination among these

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The duties on importation vary according as the grain is brought from the country that produces it, or from others where they merely trade in that article, as Holland, Hanburgh, &c. The producing countries for wheat are the Ports of the Black Sea, — Egypt, — the Baltic, — the White Sea, — and the United States of America. This rule of attending to the place of growth, merits well to be imitated. Our British speculators, if they are compelled, as they ought to be, to pay the full duty when foreign corn is landed, will naturally be induced to warehouse the corn destined for the English market, in Holland, ready to be poured into this country, as soon as the price has been forced up, by fraudulent practices, to 70s., and the duty been reduced to 1s. per quarter. But in that case the grain they import ought to be liable to an additional tax per quarter, if brought from a country where it was not produced. A considerable difference of duty also is imposed, according as the grain is imported in French, or in foreign bottoms; a sufficient proof of the greater attention paid to the shipping interest in France, than in England.

Among the excellencies of the French system, it ought to be mentioned, that the average is made up from the reports of the prefects at the end of each month. These contain the average prices of thirty of the principal markets in the kingdom. A much more effectual mode of preventing speculation, than those weekly averages which are now proposed to be adopted in this country. Nor is it a Board of Trade, (who must naturally be inclined to support the interests of commerce,) but the responsible Minister of the Interior or Home Department, who has the superintendance of this great branch of internal policy.

Another particular, much to be admired in the French system, is the attention paid to encourage the manufacture of flour. For that purpose, flour can at any time be exported, if, in return, a corresponding quantity of wheat, of the first quality, is imported, in the proportion of 5 quintals of grain to 3 of flour. The duties also on flour, when admissible, is higher than on wheat, with a view of encouraging so valuable a manufacture.

The important advantage of giving encouragement and security to the farmer, was strongly proved in this country, by the number of years, during the last century, when there was no importation, and when, on the contrary, we were an exporting country. The same has proved to be the case in France. No corn is admissible into that country, until the average price has reached 53s. per Winchester quarter; yet for the last six years, the average price was from 34s. 4d. to 40s. per quarter. Such are the advantages of wise regulations, for the encouragement and protection of agriculture; for, from the security they afford, they have a tendency to diminish, and not to augment the price of grain.

On the whole, it appears, that the corn laws of France have been formed with great care and judgment, and furnish several most important suggestions, the adoption of which might be of the utmost service to this country. They prove beyond the possibility of doubt, that the true mode of having cheap corn, is to give encouragement to the farmer, and not to admit any competition on the part of foreign countries, unless in times of scarcity, which is the only principle by which agriculture can be adequately protected.

It is impossible to suppose, that the British government can refuse to the British grower, the same security, founded on the principle of exclusion, that is enjoyed by the growers of France, otherwise British farmers may be induced to abandon a country, where they meet with nothing but calumny, reproach and ingratitude, and to settle in another, where they are sure of protection, and of every fair encouragement. The whole object of the corn law now proposed is, to prevail upon the landed interest, for the sake of a trifling addition to the duty on imported wheat, to give up "*The principle of exclusion.*" If they surrender that stronghold, which "the agriculturists of France have recently had confirmed to them," they will deeply repent when it is too late, the ruin that they will bring upon themselves and their country.

It is melancholy to see other nations availing themselves of our discoveries in legislation, while Great Britain is abrogating those very laws, to which it owes its power, its happiness, and its splendour.

Russian or Cossack, and who do not wish to see him reduced to the coarsest fare and clothed in sheep-skins.

To those persons, I think, it would be a sufficient answer to ask them, what they mean by a monopoly, and in what sense the word applies to the great body of English landlords? Monopoly, as I always thought, means putting the whole of any commodity into the hands of one or a few persons, who by combining together can raise the price in the market to an unnatural pitch, beyond the fair profits of labour and capital compared to those made by other portions of society. But for monopolizers to make extraordinary and unfair profits, they must limit the supply, and reduce it below the actual demand in the market. No doubt the monopoly of food is the most cruel of all, and the most imperious of tyrannies. But it was not till the seven lean years had devoured the seven years of plenty, that the patriarch Joseph set the iniquitous example, too often followed by succeeding ministers, of reducing his fellow-citizens to bondage, and that he could compel them to exchange their freedom for bread. But when we recollect that there are ninety thousand landowners in England, and that most of their estates are let upon lease to one or several tenants, who, for the time, become the actual holders of the produce of the soil, the idea of a combination among these nu-

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merous individuals cannot easily be credited : and as it is only a few years since that they were accused of over production, and growing so much corn as to ruin themselves, the accusation of their stinting the market can hardly be set up. Indeed, when we reflect that the land is held by so numerous a body, possessed of so little means of union and concert, and even of communication among themselves, the idea of a monopoly of the corn on their parts is absurd; when we admit that free competition exists in other branches of industry by the freedom of labour and capital, many of which branches are protected by positive law, as much as that employed in raising corn, and many others virtually so by superior skill and machinery.

But this cry against the landed proprietors of England has been so general and so virulent; it is one so well calculated to inflame the passions of the ignorant multitude, that I consider it as important to the community at large, and as an act of justice to a valuable and calumniated class, to examine further into the subject, and to shew what the real conduct and situation of the English landlords are. In doing this, I have no doubt that I shall succeed in proving that the portion of the produce of the soil which the English landlord receives as rent, is smaller than that received by any other landlord in the world; and that corn and food of all kinds is obtained

by the great bulk of the English people at an easier rate, that is, that they receive a greater quantity of food as the reward of their labour than any people now existing on the face of the earth, or of whose existence we derive any knowledge from history. I will begin by inquiring what rent is. To this, my first answer shall be a negative one. Rent is not an extortion: it is not a tax levied by the landlord. It is the value which circumstances, arising from the nature of things, over which he has no controul, give to his land. The power which clothed the land with fertility, and gave to the seed the faculty of reproduction, created rent. It resides in the soil; it was appropriated by the first man who scattered on the surface of the earth the seed destined to fructify; it was received by the first man who reaped the harvest that he had sown. This must at once be seen. Suppose a state of society, in which every man possesses a portion of land which he can cultivate himself. He enjoys the natural produce of his land, and any increase which it receives from his own labour; but as soon as that, by the multiplication of the human species, some persons exist who possess no land, if the original proprietor wishes to let his land to another, and to retain a portion of the produce in the shape of rent, the amount of that portion, and of the share left to recompense the labour of the tenant, must, if the con-

tract be a voluntary one, be such as the tenant feels it to be his interest to agree to: that is, such as will give him as much in return for his labour as he could obtain for it in any other manner. Rent therefore, or the proportion between the respective shares of landlord and tenant, depends, in the first instance, upon the value of labour in the community at large; and secondly, as the tenant employs capital in the cultivation of his farm, upon the value of capital and its general rate of profit. The reward which the labour of a community can command, and the rate of profit on capital, do not depend on the will of the landlord. Should he let his farm for less than these warrant him in asking, he makes a present to the individual, and not to the public; but that proportionate share of the produce of the soil, which is properly rent, will nevertheless exist. Now, nothing is more certain, than that the English landlord, not by any merit of his own, or unwillingness to receive the real worth of his land, but by the state of society and the demand for labour, and its high recompense in our industrious country, actually receives a much less portion of the produce of his land in the shape of rent, while his tenants, and the labourers employed upon it receive more, than the landlords of any country that can be pointed out.

The landlord in France receives much more,

and there the situation and comforts of the farmers and peasants are infinitely inferior to those of the same classes in England. A great delusion prevails in England respecting the real state of France. The land in France is generally subdivided into small lots; and possessed by the peasants themselves; and this system, which prevents the fluctuation of wages, and gives the people habits of industry and economy, has great advantages; but those farms that are let by the more opulent proprietors, are let at a much higher rate than land in England.

I have seen corn land in France let at forty francs per acre, equal to thirty-two shillings, not worth above twenty shillings per acre in England; but as the French pay neither poor-rates nor tithes, reckoning these, the rent may be considered the same in both countries. But in that part of the country to which I allude, the price of wheat is not equal to two-thirds of what it is in England; therefore the landlord's portion in France is upwards of a third more than it is in England. And why is it so? From the destruction of manufacturing and commercial industry by a long series of ruinous wars and arbitrary government, which renders the mass of unemployed labour, or of labour employed to little advantage, greater in France than in England, and its reward proportionably low. The French peasant, as I have already said, although

honest, thrifty, and hard-working, is clad in the coarsest articles of dress; he wears wooden shoes stuffed with straw, and lives on meagre fare. His cottage is badly furnished, and every thing he owns is of the rudest workmanship. It is the *Edinburgh Review*, I believe, which spoke of a French peasant's knife as what an Englishman would consider as a disgrace to the arts and his country; and four years ago, a member of the Chamber of Deputies complained, in a discussion on the Budget, that all the manufactured articles sold, in the fairs in the country, for the supply of the lower orders, were worthy, not of the present age, but of the tenth century.

But independently of this cause of diminished rent to the English landlord, the tithes and the poor-rates, which all admit are paid out of his pocket, are a heavy reduction of his portion of the produce of the soil. So far as a reduction of that portion proceeds from the increasing wealth and comforts of other classes, and from the higher reward of labour, none can rejoice in it more than I do; but it is equally absurd and unjust to vilify the landlord for receiving what his property is fairly worth, and what others feel it to be their interest to offer him for it; and no opinion can be worse founded or more dangerous than that which now appears to prevail, that the landlord's rent is an extortion, arising from an unnaturally high

price of corn; that the whole of that high price goes into his pocket; and that if, by allowing foreign corn to be imported, that price were reduced, the landlord alone would suffer. I know this has been advanced lately by the heir to one of the first properties in the kingdom, and no declaration could be more honourable, since, admitting it to be true, it militated directly against the interest of the speaker. But I believe it will be in my power to relieve him, and all those honest and conscientious landlords who are willing to abandon the wealth which they conceive to be unjustly raised on their fellow-citizens; I believe I can convince them, that their praiseworthy scruples are unfounded, and to afford them the satisfaction of knowing that their wealth and their prosperity go hand in hand with those of the community at large; and that their own interests are closely interwoven with those of that large and respectable class of their fellow-citizens, the agricultural body, of which they are the natural protectors.

If it were true, that the whole difference between the price of corn in England and in France went into the pockets of the landlords, I apprehend those rents would be nearly double what they now are. The English landlord, upon an average, receives a rent equal in value to one fifth of the produce of the land; but as corn is one third dearer in England than in France, he

must receive one third of the value of the whole produce to make this position true. But if it were true with respect to France it would be equally true with respect to Poland, and we might prove the rent, or that share of the whole produce of the land received by the landlord, to be equal to one half of the gross produce. A palpable absurdity, contrary to well-known facts. Besides this, it is well known that corn rises in price, not in consequence of fresh extortions on the part of the landlords by the increase of their rents, but while those rents are fixed for long periods by positive leases, of which only a small part are renewed at any one moment.

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But to attempt to destroy rents by lowering the price of corn, and to leave the profits of the farmer and the subsistence of the labourer untouched is a chimerical attempt, which displays both ignorance and rashness. If corn cannot be grown without the possession of land, that possession must be worth something. If a man could grow corn without land to raise it on, well and good, all that the corn sold for would be his own. But if he requires that which belongs to another man to enable him to do so, that man also has a right to a share in the produce. If the rent is taken out of the landlord's pocket by a tax, the Government, as the Church does in the case of tithes, becomes virtually the landlord. If it is reduced so low that the land-

lord leaves it in pity to the starving tenant, he performs an act of charity. So far as the labourer receives only food for his support, it may indeed be true that the price at which the corn sells is indifferent to him; but the labourer receives in the shape of wages, not only a certain portion of corn for food, but a certain quantity, exchanged for money, for the purchase of indispensable comforts. The farmer does the same in receiving his profits; only the amount of his portion above what is necessary for his food is greater than that of the labourer's. Both the tenant and the labourer suffer with regard to this portion above their mere food equally with the landlord, by a reduction of the price of corn; since that reduction does not alter their relative situations. This, which is clear in principle, is practically known as a fact by the French tenants, who pay the greater part of their rent in corn. They cheerfully pay the corn as long as corn sells high, but when it falls in price, they say, if the landlord is to receive as much corn now it sells low, as he did when it sold high, what is left for us will not procure us the necessaries of life. We are no longer able to live. The tenant, in his turn, pays no more than the same portion of corn, or its money price in the market, to his labourer, who feelingly re-echoes the same complaint. The landlord, abridged of his superfluities, employs less of the labour of

the manufacturing class, or at least pays it a lower rate, and discouragement and distress pervade every branch of the community.

Indeed, although it may not appear so at first sight, it is certain, that two workmen, each of them placed in different countries, in one of which corn bore a high money price, and in the other a low one, might receive exactly the same quantity of corn as a reward for their labour, and that one might be poor and miserable and the other thriving and comparatively wealthy. Put the case of a workman in England who received three bushels of corn per week, when wheat was at twenty shillings the bushel. If he consumed one bushel of corn for food, the value of two bushels of wheat, equal to forty shillings, would remain to supply him with all the comforts and luxuries of real life, and that in a country in which those comforts and luxuries are cheap. But let us suppose that a labourer in the further settlements of the Illinois or Mississippi received three bushels of corn, as the reward of his labour, per week, and that the corn was worth two shillings a bushel on the spot. If he consumed one bushel for food, the other two bushels would enable him to command four shillings worth of the comforts and luxuries of life in a country in which they are dear. This seeming paradox is therefore capable of being demonstrated by the plainest arithmetical calcu-

lation. And that this applies to all individuals and all societies is evident, since there is no man who has a rag to cover him, and who is not in a state of absolute nakedness, who does not, besides the food he consumes, enjoy the equivalent of a certain surplus of food, which his labour commands. Therefore in any country where every man has a sufficiency of food, the high money price of corn, or the exchangeable value of the surplus portion of his labour, applied to the purchase of comforts and luxuries, is the real test, not of his poverty but of his wealth; and if so, of the general wealth and prosperity of the society at large.

No practical man will, I believe, dispute the position, that the wages of any particular class of workmen bear a proportion to the profits of that trade in which they are employed. In manufactures which employ a limited number of hands, as soon as the trade becomes bad, the workman carries his industry elsewhere, and the master manufacturer applies his capital to other purposes, or is ruined altogether, and thus an equilibrium is produced; but severe distress often occurs merely by the passing of capital and labour from one branch of industry to another. But the cultivation of land, which employs so great a portion of the labour of society, and in which the main capital is the land itself, which, if it does not procure food, must remain

unproductive, that cultivation cannot cease, or its profits be diminished, without affecting not only the proprietor but all the industrious classes subsisting upon it. It is evident that when a trade flourishes, the master manufacturer, who makes large profits, can give a larger share to his workmen, in the shape of wages; than he who makes small profits can do. If he cannot give them sufficient to support them, and reap a fair profit on his capital, he will abandon the business altogether. In this manner, the low price of corn will prevent capital being laid out in the cultivation of land, and its produce will be daily lessened. The landlord will receive a lower money rent, but in fact a greater share of the whole produce of the soil, and good land will still be cultivated in a rude manner by a necessitous peasantry; while the poorer descriptions of soil will cease to be cultivated altogether. As long as the produce is sufficient to give a scanty subsistence to the labourer, and a rent, however small, for the proprietor, the land will be let, and the landlord will be poor, and the tenant miserable: but the moment that the tenant can no longer live, and pay that small rent, the land must return to a state of waste, and its former cultivators be reduced to the state of paupers.

But here again we are told by the advocates for free importation, that this is the state of things they wish to bring about, and that those

who are now employed unprofitably in raising dear bread, may earn more at other trades, and buy cheap bread from foreign countries. Here then I will meet them; and deferring for the present all consideration of the political consequences of such a measure, and its effects on the vital interests of society, I will examine it only with relation to what I shall term the commercial part of the question. All men, I believe, must admit that commerce, whether internal or foreign, is merely an exchange of equivalents. That when a bushel of corn is sold for six shillings and a hat bought at the same price, that the corn and the hat are in fact exchanged for each other in the market, and that the money is only the medium of exchange, or a measure of the value of the two commodities. Now this is the state of society in general. Part of the community raise food, and, after supplying themselves, have a surplus to exchange for the goods which are manufactured by another part of the community; who, on the other hand, dispose of a certain share of those goods in exchange for food, and retain a surplus for their own consumption. But as the recompense of labour is proportioned to the demand for it and supply existing in the market, we find that the share of the manufacturers is always greater than that of the agricultural labourers, because they exercise trades that require more skill and previous edu-

cation. Thus the manufacturer is better clothed and also better fed than the peasant, who is accustomed to homelier fare and coarser garments. A country will be rich and prosperous exactly in proportion to the quantity of goods manufactured, and of corn raised by the community, so as to give a plentiful supply to every individual of all the necessaries and comforts of life. Foreign commerce merely substitutes in the place of goods made, or raw produce raised at home, equivalents for these procured in the great market of the world, that are more useful or more agreeable to the society which obtains them than the articles parted with. This great benefit attends foreign commerce, that it not only gives a supply of those things which our own country does not produce, but it often stimulates to the production of goods, which, if they could not be exchanged abroad, would not be wanted at all, as being more than sufficient for the home supply, and in this manner gives a means of subsistence to large classes of persons, who would otherwise be unemployed. It is susceptible of a most beneficial and almost indefinite extension, when, by superior skill and machinery, the labour of one man produces what it formerly required the labour of two to produce. Thus not only more goods are produced, but by their being sold cheaper, large classes of customers are taken in who were formerly excluded by not having the

means of purchasing, and thus a market is created for our improved and enlarged industry. In this manner if a manufacturer, who twenty years ago could make four pair of stockings in a week, now makes eight, although he will not, on account of the eager competition of other individuals as skilful as himself, be able to sell the eight pair at double the price at which he sold the four, he may still exchange the eight pair for more gold or foreign produce than he formerly received for the four pair; and, if so, the reward of his industry is greater, and an individual and also a national benefit are obtained.

The same advantage is likewise gained by opening new commercial relations with countries where an eager demand for our goods springs up. In this way the extension of foreign commerce, by calling into a state of active industry large classes formerly unemployed, who, by progressive improvements, obtain a higher reward for their industry, is a source of great wealth to a country. But when we wish to extend that commerce by purchasing corn from foreign countries, and thus forcibly converting our agriculturists into manufacturers, the nature of such a trade, and its effects on the country would be widely different. If an eager demand exists for our manufactured goods in any quarter of the world, united with the possession of something to offer us in exchange which we think worth

having, I can conceive no limit to such a commerce. The skill and machinery of England, and the vast mass of unemployed population in Ireland, offer almost unbounded elements for such an extension of commerce. But if we are to extend our commerce by purchasing corn abroad, what do we do? If one branch of our manufacturers now purchase corn at six shillings per bushel to the amount of one million sterling, and in return sell goods to the agriculturists to the same amount, they exchange their goods for the corn. If they purchased the same quantity of corn abroad at half the price, namely, five hundred thousand pounds, if no other market existed, but that which is thus created for their goods, they must also sell their goods for half the money they formerly sold them at. If they sold only part of the goods in question to those they purchased the corn of, the remainder must be sent to some other market already existing; and by an over supply, sink the profits upon the whole quantity previously sent there by other manufacturers. If, on the other hand, any market should exist not already supplied, goods might be sent to it without purchasing corn abroad, which measure would not be necessary to create it. But in addition to the loss of the manufacturers, just mentioned, the agriculturists, thrown out of employment, must either, by becoming manufacturers, add to that glut, or

create one; or, by living upon charity at home, narrow the means of consumption by the more opulent classes, and thus injure the home market. The whole corn of the country having fallen in price by the introduction of foreign corn, the wages of labour will fall; but if wages fall in proportion to the decreased price of corn, how is the manufacturer benefited? But the fact is, while the unemployed agriculturist is left to starve, the manufacturer will find that in fact he purchases his corn dearer. The moment an eager demand for corn for the British market takes place, its price must rise on the continent. This has always been the case, and must always be so; and when vast additional supplies of British goods are forced abroad for the payment of corn, the price or exchangeable value of these goods will fall, and perhaps in a ruinous manner. We need only look back to the exportations to South America, and to the continent after the peace, to be convinced of the truth of this assertion. It is in vain to say we shall find markets somewhere, and our goods will be so cheap we shall always find purchasers. If these markets exist, by our superior skill and machinery we can supply them; and if they are only to be created by our own purchases of corn, we do but exchange equivalents abroad instead of doing so at home; but by so doing we occasion a glut of goods in the foreign market, and a

suspension of industry at home. We lessen the reward of our own labour and unhinge our commercial relations. I am aware, however, that our political economists say we need entertain no fears as to the interruption of agricultural industry, even if foreign corn were freely admitted. That a very small importation would be sufficient to sink the price of corn in the English market, and that the agricultural labourer would still be employed to raise corn, although rents would fall in consequence of the lowered price: and that without injuring the agricultural labourer, the important object would be obtained of cheap bread for the community, which would enable the manufacturer to work at lower wages, and, by bringing goods to the foreign market at a cheaper rate, extend our commerce. The first remark, I will make is this. That although it is true that the importation of a small quantity of corn might, at any given moment, be sufficient to depress the price of the whole, since it is acknowledged by all practical men, that a small surplus or deficiency will affect the price of corn more than that of any other commodity, because the consumption of corn, which is a necessary, cannot be increased or diminished at pleasure to the same degree as that of articles of luxury; still the first effect that would arise from introducing a surplus quantity, however small, which was sufficient to lower the price of corn generally,

would be to lessen the reward of the labour and capital employed in raising it, and to sink it below that obtained by labour and capital in other branches of industry. The natural tendency then would be for labour and capital to be withdrawn from the cultivation of corn, which would be grown in less quantity than before, and to keep down the price an increased importation would become necessary; and that diminution of the quantity grown at home, and a corresponding enlargement of the quantity imported would continue till prices had equalized themselves in England and on the continent, allowing for the expense of transport and the risks of commercial adventure. If corn sprung up spontaneously, the annual importation of a small quantity of foreign corn would be sufficient to keep down the price; but as corn is raised partly by the employment of capital which would be withdrawn from cultivation, when it could no longer be profitably employed, the expectation that the same quantity will continue to be grown in England, when the price is depressed by the importation of foreign corn, as at the present moment, and that the same amount of agricultural labour will continue to be employed, is a chimerical one, and in contradiction to the plain dictates of common sense, which tells us that men will not voluntarily embark or continue in a losing trade. But if this could be the case per-

manently, what would the effect be, not of this golden, but of this cheap dream of the Political Economists? If our goods continued to sell abroad at as high a price as they now do, while that of our corn was lower, and that by a diminution of the just gains of the agricultural body the manufacturers earned more, it would only be taking money out of the pockets of one class of society to give it to another. It would merely create a privileged order in the state, who were empowered to reap the benefit of the labour of their fellow-citizens, and, by a commercial regulation, sink the hard working peasant to the situation of a helot toiling for the Manchester or Glasgow weaver. But this system of monstrous injustice could not be permanently enforced. Even admitting that not a single agricultural labourer would cease to be employed, if the price of corn were to fall to one half what it now is, the whole agricultural body could bring but half the money into the market to purchase manufactured goods which they now do, and one branch of the profits of the manufacturers would be cut down. With respect to the goods that they would send abroad if they were to be sold at diminished prices in consequence of the lower value of bread and labour, (and this is the professed object of the whole system,) a less return would be obtained of foreign commodities in exchange for the produce of a given portion

of British industry. If more goods were forced abroad than formerly, by withdrawing any portion of those offered in the deteriorated home market, a glut would be produced in the foreign market, and a still less portion of foreign commodities would be received in exchange for the produce of a greater portion of British industry. If under these circumstances we were to sell our goods cheaper than before, and to supply every market in the world, what should we gain but the privilege of working hard for foreigners at a less recompense than that which we now receive. The tradesman who is able to sell his goods cheap, and yet make such a profit as to earn a high reward for his industry, is a prosperous individual; but if, to increase his custom, he should sell them so low as to earn little or nothing, and to work hard for a scanty recompense, no one would envy him. What difference is there between a nation and an individual in this case? If we cannot sell our goods, by the application of skill and machinery, cheap enough to supply the foreign market beneficially to ourselves, it is far better that we should not supply it at all. To render them cheap by robbing our agriculturists in the first instance, and then, by overstocking the foreign market, to lessen the profits of our manufacturers, is, however enlightened and liberal such a plan may seem to our Political Economists, nothing more than a contrivance to give many millions a year

gratis to foreigners, at the expense of some suffering and privation to our own countrymen. There is still a third case which may happen; namely, that we may be obliged to import corn from a country which does not want, or refuses to admit our goods. In that case, the corn must be paid for in gold; and any sudden demand of this kind by narrowing the circulating medium might produce the most dangerous derangement of prices and commercial relations generally. In short, our trade, our finances, our very subsistence, would by this ill-advised system depend upon the breath of a foreign power, which, by preventing the exportation of corn, or refusing to receive our goods in exchange, might inflict upon us both famine and bankruptcy at a single stroke.

Those, however, who conceive that our commercial prosperity, or the cheapness of our goods, depends on the low price of corn, are no doubt egregiously mistaken; when we consider that we can supply even India, where the Hindu subsists on a little rice purchased at a low money price, and who is said to earn about two pence per day, with muslins made by the most thriving and best paid of our manufacturers, and actually undersell the poor native in his own market. Manufacturing wages do not even bear an exact proportion to the price of corn. They outrun that price; for although the

price of corn follows the increasing profits of manufacturing industry, it still lags heavily behind. From the high exchangeable value of his labour the manufacturer daily advances in luxury and refinement, and obtains a greater share of comforts and enjoyments. He earns them and deserves them, but such is the fact; and I am confident, if on every manufactured article sent to market, a nice estimate were to be made of the cost of its produce; if it were asked how much was expended in the purchase of the raw material, perhaps foreign, how much injudicious taxes, how much in defraying the necessary profit of capital, how much for the luxuries of the manufacturer, and how much for his bread, the amount of the latter would bear so small a proportion to the whole, as to render the great outcry about it quite ridiculous.

But according to the principle that I have laid down, that it is manufacturing industry which raises the money price of corn, it is clear that while the money price of bread is high in England, that our manufactured goods must in general sell well, and command prices that fully remunerate the manufacturer. If any one branch of trade is depressed, it can only arise from its being inferior to the other branches of our trade generally; and in that case the only remedy is an improvement in the manufacture in question. But to endeavour to prop up a ma-

nufacture in which there is a deficiency of skill, and to enable it to compete with foreign manufactures, by pulling down the property of large and valuable classes in society, and endangering the prosperity of the whole community, is a senseless as well as a futile expedient. But the fact is, and now competition is so much talked of, it is not sufficiently attended to, a particular manufacture, or branch of manufacture, may be undersold in the foreign market, not by foreigners, but by ourselves. It is in the nature of manufacturing industry, and particularly of that of Great Britain, in which the improvements are more rapid and sudden than in any other, that one branch of it is continually displacing another. Thus our cotton goods may obtain a preference over our silk ones; and in the very same manufacture, the finer and cheaper productions of power looms will in like manner be preferred to the coarser and dearer articles made by hand. Every improvement in every branch of industry whatever, must, ever since the beginning of the world, have displaced some other which prior to that discovery held the first place in public estimation or in real utility. The first carriage road that was made over a mountain superseded the necessity of transporting goods on the shoulders of men, and lowered the value of their industry. The first plough rendered the spade husbandry less valuable. The

art of printing diminished the gains of the copyist. Every machine performs some work formerly executed by some ruder instrument or by manual labour. Thus there is a continual fluctuation in the productive powers and profits of particular branches of industry. The genius of man, like the emanations of the great Soul of the Universe, according to the Pythagorean system, continually changes its shape, and animates fresh bodies. The interests of some individuals are affected, always temporarily, and frequently permanently, by new inventions and improvements. Sometimes capital already vested, and incapable of being converted to other purposes, is rendered unproductive; sometimes the industry and ingenuity which it may have cost half a life to bring to perfection, find themselves unable to contend with the judicious combination of a few small pieces of iron or of wood. The complaints of persons, or classes of the community, suffering from such causes, from the glut that new machinery and the collision of rival industry produces in the market, till the weaker party finally retires in despair, ought to be distinguished from the general decay of our commerce and manufactures. Their causes and effects are distinct. The low price of corn would mark the decay of our commerce, and the impoverished state of our manufactures: its high price may always be appealed to as the sure test of our wealth and

prosperity. Thus, though individuals suffer, society, which is immortal, may be compared to that beautiful tree, which clothed with eternal verdure, in a genial clime, daily puts forth fresh blossoms while others fall off and perish; but so long as it covers itself with mature fruit, so long as the aurea poma glitter upon its branches, upon beholding the rich harvest, we acknowledge that its flowers have not bloomed in vain.

So great a stress, however, has been laid on the advantages of a free and unrestricted commerce in the first article of subsistence, that it is worth while to consider the subject in all its bearings, and to trace the effects of a free trade in corn upon the countries which export it. We have been told in pompous terms of the inestimable benefits which this new and enlightened system was to bestow upon the world in general; we have heard of a boon granted to Ireland by allowing her corn to enter the English market. Let us therefore inquire what the nature of that boon has proved to be to that unfortunate and distracted country. Ireland, torn by civil and religious dissensions, although blest with a fertile soil and other advantages, is, from the state of anarchy in which she is placed, and which renders property insecure, backward in all the arts of industry and civilization. A large and increasing population are reduced to a scanty and precarious existence derived from the pota-

toe crops raised upon lands for which the wretched peasant pays an exorbitant rent. The share which the landlord receives of the whole produce of the soil is infinitely greater than in England; and that surplus produce, instead of being consumed by the native tradesmen and manufacturers who supply his wants, or by his servants and unproductive labourers, is exported by the proprietor of the land to another and a better market in a foreign country, where he himself lives, and enjoys all the luxuries and conveniences which the food, that he drains from his own country, will exchange for. In addition to the overstock of human labour, which could only be removed by slow degrees, and by the establishment of manufacturing industry, in its turn stimulating agricultural improvements, an artificial scarcity of food is created, which continually reduces the unfortunate and oppressed inhabitants to the very verge of famine. The free exportation of corn from Ireland enables the rich proprietor to say to the peasant, "You shall cultivate my fields, but you shall not enjoy a fair share of the fruits of your labour. I will allow you no more than, in the best of times, is barely sufficient to your existence; you shall live in a mud cottage, and subsist on the poorest food; and I will transport those harvests, which Providence intended for your support, to be consumed in another coun-

try by those who can minister to my pride and luxury. I shall dwell in a palace and revel in enjoyment, while you may pine under actual want, and behold your families cut off by disease. The cries of your expiring children will reach me, but they will not disturb my peace. I shall hear of your acts of crime and desperation, of the blood that you have spilt, and of your own shed by the law; but no inward voice will accuse me, for I have been taught by the liberal doctrines of free trade, that in tearing the bread from your mouths, I have essentially promoted your interests and those of the empire at large." Yes! we have conferred a boon upon Ireland; but it is such a boon as the avaricious and short-sighted Midas obtained for himself. Ireland beholds the rich harvest smile upon her fertile plains; she looks round, and on every side she perceives the promise of plenty and happiness; but these gifts of a beneficent Deity are rendered useless, and she suffers under the strange and terrible curse,—*cereris decerpit aristas Aurea messis erat.*

It was well said, in the beginning of the French Revolution, that freedom consisted in the power of doing all that was not hurtful to others. But if we try a free trade in corn by that rule, in what light will it appear? On one hand, we behold the industrious peasant deprived of his share in the food which his labour has raised, while the cruel tyrant of the soil robs him of it

for his own selfish gratification, and represses by an armed force the efforts of his despair. We perceive the gloomy gibbet in the back ground of the picture, and crime and blood desolate those plains which might otherwise resound with the songs of contented labour, and the rural festivities of the harvest. On the other hand, we see the manufacturer surlily and selfishly refuse to exchange the produce of his skill and fortunate industry, with the peasant who toils by his side, and who offers him food in return for a small share of his enjoyments;—but when he himself is spurned by his foreign customer, turn round and supply himself, without giving any remuneration, from the stores of the hard-working and ill-treated brother to whom he had hitherto refused all share in his own advantages. If this is not the effect in both instances of a free trade in corn, I wish its advocates to point out the fallacy; I own I am unable to discover it. But although we have been triumphantly told, that every great and enlightened man is favourable to this system, if authority is to weigh against argument, I believe illustrious names may be placed in the scale which may counterbalance the reputation, however great, of the political economists of the present day. My own opinion on a free trade in corn, so far as it affects the countries from which unlimited exportation is allowed, has been confirmed by finding it to coin-

cide with that of Montesquieu, as it is expressed in his great work, *De l'Esprit des Loix*. He there says, that commerce is sometimes prejudicial; he instances that of corn and the state of Poland, from which the corn is exported in exchange for luxuries for the higher classes, while the peasant is reduced to inferior food. This commerce he points out as eminently prejudicial, and says, it would have been better for the people that it had never taken place. "Quelques Seigneurs possèdent des provinces entières; ils pressent le laboureur pour avoir une plus grande quantité de blé, qu'ils puissent envoyer aux étrangers et se procurer les choses que demandent leur luxe. Si la Pologne ne commerçoit avec aucune nation ses peuples seroient plus heureux.

"Les grands qui n'auroient que leur blé le donneroient à leur paysans pour vivre Les grands qui aiment toujours le luxe, et qui ne le pourroient trouver que dans leur pays, encourageroient les pauvres au travail. Je dis que cette nation seroit plus heureuse....."

* Some noblemen possess whole provinces; they press the labourer to obtain a greater quantity of corn, that they may send it to foreigners, and procure for themselves the things required by their luxury. If Poland traded with no other nation, her people would be happier. The great proprietors who would possess nothing but their corn, would give it to their peasants to subsist upon. . . . The Great, who

The pernicious effects of a free importation of corn have also been demonstrated by writers of great talent, who have had opportunities of witnessing its operation. The Marechal de Vauban, one of the ablest men of the time of Louis the Fourteenth, has, in his *Testament Politique*, treated at much length on this ruinous system, and traces to it the depression of agriculture, as well as those fluctuations in the price of corn which are so severely felt by the poorer classes. He mentions also, that this measure had been proposed to Henry the Fourth, but that he was dissuaded from it by the wise and patriotic Sully, who represented to him that it would then become impossible for the taxes to be paid. The first political writers in Spain have equally decried this short-sighted and fallacious policy, and have attributed the decay of the agriculture of her southern provinces, now so far inferior to what it was in former times, to this cause. It may perhaps surprise those who have considered a free trade in corn as the criterion of a liberal and enlightened policy, to find that the permitting corn to be imported is the very system which prevailed in the ill-governed states of France and Spain under the arbitrary sway of

always like luxury, and who could only procure it in their own country, would encourage the poor to work. I say, that this nation would be more flourishing. . . .

the Bourbon princes, at the moment it was rejected by the wiser decisions of a British parliament. It may surprise them to find that this policy went hand in hand with the ruin of the finances and the degradation of the lower orders in those unfortunate countries, while England, under an opposite system, rapidly advanced in greatness and in wealth; but upon reflection, they will perhaps discover that a blind endeavour to remedy the evils produced by despotic governments, by inflicting fresh evils, is a common event, and that the attempt forcibly to diminish the price of the first necessary of life, by withdrawing a just protection from those whose capital and labour produce it, is consistent with the spirit of such governments rather than with that of a free and enlightened people. It is indeed of the same nature, although less violent, as the system practised in still greater perfection at Constantinople, where the bankers are strangled for monopolizing money, and the bakers for selling dear bread.

If, however, it is monopoly that we fear, by throwing the corn trade, as it might happen in the case of free importation, into the hands of a few great capitalists, instead of leaving it as at present to that numerous body, whose deficient capital and want of communication tend to render monopoly on their parts impossible, we may, perhaps, create the very evil that we affect to dread. A

monopoly of the corn necessary to supply such a country as Great Britain, or of a sufficient quantity to influence her markets, is a gigantic task, which a second Cræsus alone could accomplish: but the enormous capitals that have been so rapidly accumulated by a few fortunate speculators within a few years, and the influence of their operations, in a manner hitherto unheard of, in the public securities of Europe, prove that the apprehension may not be entirely visionary.

I will now speak of the evil effects of a free trade in corn in a political and financial light. The first and most obvious objection is that arising from rendering Great Britain dependent in some measure upon foreign countries for a supply of the first necessary of life. It may be true, that the money price of corn would be most steady in a port or country which was at all times open, and thus become the great emporium of the world; but it by no means follows that the real price of corn to the people would on that account bear a more just and accurate proportion, at all times, to their labour. For if, as I have attempted to show, the money price of corn is regulated by the amount of commercial profits and wages, the price of corn grown at home, which has no other market but the home market to be carried to, will accommodate itself to the fluctuations which take place in these; it will shrink as they shrink, and expand as they ex-

pand. But this is not the case when the free exportation and importation of corn are allowed. Irish corn might sell at a high rate in the English market, on account of an increased demand there, at the very moment that commercial distress and the stagnation of industry might in Ireland itself, render it more than usually difficult for the lower classes to obtain food in reward for their labour. In the one country the power of purchasing it might increase, while it declined in the other. But even admitting that, in times of peace and security, such a system would be beneficial, and ensure a greater share of food to the lower orders; still we ought not, like the rash mariner, to trust to the security of a halcyon day, and forget how soon the raging tempests may be again let loose. We must reject the experience of the past, and close the book of History even for the last thirty years, before we can reckon upon such a state of our social relations with other countries, as to make us permanently secure of a steady and ample supply of corn from abroad. This is the era of all others when to put faith in such a delusion would be childish in the extreme; for Europe no longer reposes on its ancient basis, but on every side presents elements of convulsion on the one hand, or of an overpowering despotism irreconcilably hostile to our greatness and free institutions. How few years have passed since the

gigantic power of Buonaparte closed all the ports of the Continent against us; and that from the unfortunate clashing of our interests, or from an ill-grounded and illiberal jealousy on the part of the United States, the bond of sisterhood and affection which ought to unite the two countries, was changed to open warfare. If France, in addition to all the mighty means that she employed to destroy us; if, in addition to a whole Continent in arms arrayed against us, she could have inflicted an internal and deadly wound by narrowing our means of subsistence, what might not have been the consequence? And had she never possessed that enormous influence over the whole of Europe; had friendly and independent states still existed to supply our wants, at what an enhanced price, at what a risk, such supplies must have been obtained in times of maritime warfare? This is a subject on which the fears of Englishmen are less apt to be excited than any other, but if we look back to the events of the last five-and-forty years, we may still see grounds for reasonable alarm. At the close of the American war, the united fleets of France and Spain rode triumphant in the Channel. During the French war, Great Britain fought and successively conquered the navies of France, Holland, and Spain, and ended by a maritime contest with the United States. Had those fleets united at the first outset of hostilities against us,

can any one deny that the result might have been doubtful? We have conquered indeed; but the immortal name of Nelson, the pride and gratitude of the country towards her naval heroes, these attest that the victories achieved were not lightly won. Even with that tide of prosperity which attended our naval operations, when no hostile flag dared show itself on the ocean, still the depredations of privateers rendered the rate of insurance high, and its amount a serious item in commercial adventure. And what would the amount of insurance be, if, in a time of war, so bulky a commodity as corn, and one required in large quantities, should become our principal article of import? A real increase in the price of bread would take place, at the moment all the exertions of the country would be required for self-defence, and want might weaken that right arm, never yet overpowered by an enemy in open combat in the field.

At such a moment, when every individual would be called upon to contribute an increased portion of his wealth or industry to the public service, it would be in the power of foreign potentates, perhaps our ill-disguised foes, to tax the people of England. We ought to remember that the King of Prussia actually laid an impost on corn when exported, and limited its duration to the time that the ports of Great Britain should remain open. A tax on the exportation of

any other article than corn might, and probably would, have fallen on his own subjects. If we imported linen from Prussia, if a tax enhanced the price we might decline purchasing it altogether, and supply its place by some other manufactured article; if the Prussian merchant had no better market to go to, he must consent to take the price we were willing to give, and pay the tax imposed by his own government out of his own profits. But a nation requiring a supply of food cannot hold out, and refuse to minister to an imperious want. If we import corn, we shall of course go to that market where corn is the cheapest; and if it is any where so cheap as to be able to be purchased, and after the expenses of importation are paid, and a fair profit reaped by the merchant, still to be brought to market at a less cost than British corn, the government of the country from which we export it may put that difference of cost, whatever it amounts to, into its own coffers by means of a tax, which must be paid by England. The maxim, often false, that taxes fall on the consumer, for that depends upon the market to which commodities are carried, and the means possessed of withdrawing capital from any given branch of trade, would here be verified. Our export trade in such a case, will indeed be greater, but it will be in the shape of a tribute that our produce will be conveyed from our

shores, and such a commerce will enrich us as much as South America was enriched by sending one fifth of the produce of her mines to the king of Spain.

But, independently of these serious objections, there is another of greater weight, which is the impolicy of narrowing our resources at a moment of scarcity, arising from deficient crops. Under the present system, if there is any deficiency in our own produce, the surplus produce of the whole world is at our command; and it is probable that we may, in ordinary times, always obtain a sufficient supply from foreign countries at a price, high indeed compared to that which their own usually sells for, but not distressingly so to us. But when we depend upon foreign markets for any considerable portion of our annual consumption, or even if we bring our own corn and that of other countries to a level in price, and consequently our labour to the same level, any increased demand for corn must force up the price of bread to such a pitch, relatively to the wages of labour, as will operate as a grievous hardship on the lower and industrious orders. But in case bad seasons and short crops were to prevail generally all over Europe at one moment, we could only supply our own wants, however high a price we paid for foreign corn, by inflicting severe suffering on those countries with which we traded, by draining them of

the food requisite for the support of their own inhabitants; and which, in a time of scarcity, their governments ought, and probably would forbid, with a view to preserve the public tranquillity. Thrown back on our own resources, we should then find ourselves deprived of all the means of relief which our present abundant produce affords. For if we are, upon the principle of buying our bread at the lowest money price, to import foreign wheat, we must also, if that principle is a sound one, find an equal advantage in importing foreign oats and barley. For every bushel that we import an equal quantity must cease to be raised at home; and all that superabundant supply of human nourishment now raised in Great Britain, and consumed in our distilleries, and in the keep of our horses, a resource more extensive and more valuable, inasmuch as it is permanent, than that of any public granary or warehoused corn, and which is at all times available in seasons of scarcity, would be entirely cut off. We should destroy the harbour to which, in the hour of danger, we might fly for refuge, and paralyze that friendly hand which is unceasingly occupied in collecting a treasure ready to be administered to our wants in the season of severe privation. Wiser governments have, at other periods, forbid the importation of corn, not with any view to its bearings on commercial adventure, but as a

means to secure a resource against the evil of scarcity, and the distress occasioned by deficient crops. Sweden has lately adopted this policy, and adopted it with success; and history informs us that, in former times, Scotland being afflicted by famines, such a law prevented their recurrence.

It was upon this principle that the representatives of the British people fostered and encouraged agriculture; and it is under this system that, in England, the country has become a garden, and that plenty has been felt in every district and smiled upon every cottage.

It is worthy of remark, that the very object which is sought to be accomplished, that of extending our export trade, or at least creating a profitable market for it, may in fact be impeded by the measure so many weighty reasons concur in condemning. It is a well-known fact, and in the highest degree notorious, that the superiority of English manufactures is principally to be seen in the perfection and cheapness of those articles of comfort and convenience which are within the reach of the secondary and inferior classes: but that in many branches of industry devoted to luxury and splendour we are inferior to our foreign competitors. The reason is plain, because in all countries the supply will suit itself to the demand, and where by the effects of a tyrannical government and a vicious system, wealth is

centered in the hands of a few, the chief demand will be for objects of splendour and show. Thus we find that France, which is wretchedly behind-hand, compared to England, in all that relates to comfort and cleanliness, excels us in her manufactures of silk, of porcelain, of plate glass, in the arts of gilding and decoration, and in the taste of her jewellery; and that she is supreme arbitress of the dashing caprices of fashion, in which she is considered as infallible as the Pope by the Romish church, and bowed to with as blind a submission on those points, as the Holy Father is by the most zealous of his ultramontane disciples. Hitherto our commerce has carried cheap and useful articles to the great bulk of the community, and, by the rapid improvements in our machinery, the market for them has daily extended to more numerous classes, whose labour must have been called into action, or at least into more beneficial channels, to enable them to return us an equivalent for the comforts thus obtained. But it is this market that we must close against ourselves, when we drain from the countries with which we trade the subsistence of the poor, and lessen the real recompense of labour. In return we may indeed minister to the wants of the rich proprietor, who has little taste for our manufactures, and whose power of consuming them is limited. We may talk as much as we please of mutual benefits,

and of advantage to society in general. I maintain that a free trade in corn, by depressing the lower classes, must cause society to retrograde. It renders property not that which it ought to be, and that which every privilege whatever ought to be, on the principles of real freedom, a sacred trust held for the benefit of the whole, and subject to laws that render it consistent with the general happiness of the community; but an odious power, applied to purposes of selfish gratification and cruel extortion. Let those who doubt turn their eyes to Ireland, and perceive the monstrous example of a people unable to earn a bare support for their existence, and the Government actually transporting to distant colonies, at a great expense, those very men who, placed upon a fertile soil and capable of cultivating it, are, by a cruel system, prevented from sharing in the food they raise. A set of men who, by the absence of the landed proprietors, first see all that the manufacturing industry of their fellow-citizens produces, instead of being consumed by themselves, exported to pay the foreign expenditure of their landlords; and, lastly, by the permission to export corn, the bread torn from the mouths of their starving families. Let them look to what the state of England, flourishing England, would be, when all the great branches of manufacture, which supplied her once thriving agriculturists, must

be diverted into other channels, and suit themselves to the tastes of the noblesse of Europe, who will condemn their vassals to live on black bread that they may riot in foreign luxuries. The commerce and prosperity of England have long been regarded with a jealous eye by the continental potentates. Buonaparte painted us in the blackest colours, as the monopolizers of commerce and the tyrants of the sea, who rendered all other nations tributary to our yoke. The same feeling, though less loudly proclaimed, exists in the breasts of those despotic courts whose secret motto is *Delenda est Carthago*. But in spite of their efforts, the popularity of England is every day becoming greater. Her admirable institutions are held up as a pattern to all nations; her state of unrivalled prosperity and greatness is rejoiced at, as that of a friend and benefactress of mankind. The hostility of the despotic governments who hate us is weak, because every where the people are our friends; but if we wish to bind them with their rulers in one common link of hatred against us; if we wish to make the British flag odious in every port, that will be accomplished when we carry luxuries to the rich and deprive the poor man of his bread.

The bare enumeration of those countries from which England has imported corn for the last twenty years, is sufficient to confirm the views I

have taken of the subject. We find that upon an average of 598,000 quarters, Prussia and Poland supplied 204,000 quarters. The occupation of those countries by France is so recent, that to propose that Great Britain should depend upon them for any considerable portion of her subsistence appears wonderful. If it is said, that the supply we shall receive from them may not be large, but that it will merely serve to bring down the price of English corn; if this were not a fallacy, as it is, it would be a dangerous measure, since the interruption of that supply, by restoring what is called the monopoly of the landowners, might in a time of war cause the price of bread to rise rapidly. If foreign corn is to be let in, or rather if it could be let in, in small quantities, and merely render the recompense of labour and capital employed in agriculture less than that obtained by labour and capital in other branches of industry, and sink it below its natural level, it is far better to fix a maximum upon the price of corn at once. If the law is good, just, and beneficial to the country, let it be enacted by the authority of Parliament; but do not let such a law be put in force or abrogated by the march of a foreign army, or by the fiat of any continental sovereign whatever.

The assertion, however, that our importation of corn would be limited, founded as it is upon the small supply which the countries with

which we trade can at this moment afford, would not, I am convinced, be borne out by experience. There may be but a small surplus produce beyond the demand of the countries which grew it, now warehoused and waiting for the opening of the British ports; and why is it so? Because it is not sure of a market. But the moment that market is always open, the proprietor of land in Germany and Poland will grow more corn, because it will be profitable to do so, and its cultivation will be extended till corn there and in England is equal in price, with the difference only of the expense of transport and fair commercial profit. We shall then trade more largely with that country, which Montesquieu has described as suffering under the effects of an impolitic commerce; and wherever the poverty and misery of the inhabitants are greatest, we shall be at our posts to assist a tyrannical aristocracy in extorting from their vassals part of their wretched subsistence. Mr. Whitmore* has himself said, that we import most corn from the poorest countries; that is, from countries where the labour of man produces the least corn, and where every individual consumes least food. We have even imported corn from Norway, where the people consider it a sin to eat white bread, as a lavish abuse of the bounty

* Vide Mr. Whitmore's Speech on his motion, &c.

of Providence ;—a people who mix the bark of trees with their barley meal, and among whom a complaint resembling a leprosy is gaining ground, owing to deficient nourishment: a people delivered over by one stroke of the pen by a congress of European sovereigns to a foreign master, and whom England, to her eternal disgrace, compelled to submit to this violation of national independence, by blockading her ports, and threatening the infliction of famine. / And yet we are told, it is good policy to import corn from where it is raised at the least cost, and to confine ourselves to those branches of manufacturing industry in which we excel, as other countries excel us in the production of corn! It is almost incredible, that such a fallacy should be adopted by men of great talent, furthered by an administration, from conscientious motives, and applauded by those who will become its victims. The artisans of this country trouble their heads but little, perhaps, about the profits or losses of the agriculturists; they want cheap bread, while they hope to earn the same wages and enjoy more foreign luxuries; but they will find to their cost that it is not the money price of bread which is its real price. They will also find that the selfish and ignorant policy that leads them to hope for advantage by depressing a large class of their fellow-citizens, will recoil upon themselves. Labour, like all other things, obtains a

reward in the market in proportion to the demand and supply. Every man thrown out of employment diminishes the rate of profit to the whole working class. Every man who exerts a profitable industry benefits not only himself, but every individual who carries his labour to market. Every man who raises the same quantity of corn at the cost of less labour than before, increases the portion of food which each individual obtains as his share. The members of one society are made to assist, not to supplant each other; and by a wise and fortunate dispensation of Providence the interests of all its various classes go hand in hand.

The great effect that must be produced on the ignorant and unenlightened multitude by a cry for cheap bread is evident; and that such persons should form no idea of cheapness but a low money price, is not wonderful; but this is a vulgar error, quite unworthy of the statesman and the philosopher. To those who are not convinced by the arguments I have used to prove the different value of gold in different countries, I would at least address this question. If a man earns a certain sum, and spends the half of it in purchasing bread, is he not richer than if he earned only half of that sum, and spent three-fourths of that diminished income in the purchase of bread? The reply could not be doubtful. Now this is the situation of England

compared to France. In England, four millions of agriculturists raise bread for six millions of manufacturers and two millions of other persons, either unproductive or engaged in scientific pursuits and learned professions.* One man therefore, in England, raises food for himself and two other men; that is, he produces three portions of food equal to the support of three individuals. Two individuals engaged in manufacturing labour or scientific pursuits, allowing a small deduction for the totally unproductive persons, labour for three men. One third of their labour, if the produce of the labour of every class was equally divided by mutual exchange between the whole of society, would purchase food, and each man can apply two-thirds of his own labour to procure enjoyments and luxuries. In France, twenty-four millions of agriculturists raise food for thirty millions; that is, four men raise food for five men, and one manufacturer or scientific man labours for himself and four others. If the produce of the labour of society were to be equally divided by mutual exchange, each manufacturer must give four-fifths of the produce of his industry for his bread, and be able to apply one-fifth to procure enjoyments and luxuries. In which country, notwithstand-

* Vide the report of Sir F. Burdett's Speech in the House of Commons.

ing the low money price of corn in France, is the bread cheapest, and the manufacturers best paid? What is it that has placed us in this enviable situation? What but that very law preventing the importation of corn, about which so senseless a clamour is made? If corn is raised by rude manual labour alone, one man will produce but little. If capital and machinery come to his assistance, he will produce much; but if you take away the fair profit of capital, it will not be employed. And while capital and labour engaged in commerce command a high reward, a mutual exchange between the agriculturist and manufacturing classes is equally to the benefit of both.

But were it possible, which I maintain it is not, to purchase our corn from the Continent at a low money price, and still sell our goods high, we must be content to convert our agricultural capital and labour to commercial enterprise. Grant that we may always get abundant and cheap supplies of corn from abroad, and that England may become the great workshop of the Universe; and that by this means each individual may enjoy more luxuries than he does now. Can those who propose such a system have reflected upon all its possible consequences? Have they reflected on the awful responsibility which that man or that state incurs, that raises up a surplus population with-

out the means of future subsistence? Their ears must be deaf to the warning voice of history; their understandings must be callous to experience, and their hearts dead to every sentiment of humanity, who would willingly condemn our fertile fields to sterility, and raise up a people depending on the vicissitudes of commerce for food. Have such men ever glided in the melancholy gondola through the silent streets of Venice, and, as in the sepulchre of departed greatness, exclaimed, "How are the mighty fallen?" Have they ever stood upon the pier of Genoa, and beheld the rags and ensigns of beggary hanging from the windows of her marble palaces, and the proud halls of patrician greatness, blocked up with the filth of a degraded population? Have they ever seen on the steps of her superb temples, adorned with all the gorgeous magnificence that the lavish hand of wealth could scatter, a miserable multitude, pining in the pangs of famine and disease, and like the dreams that surround the couch of the god of sleep, appear but as phantoms of the living, that still present every variety of human wretchedness to the appalled beholder? Events, that the wisdom of man could neither foresee nor prevent, have struck from the grasp of these proud republics, the sceptre of commerce which they once triumphantly held. Not only there, but in the greater part of Italy, the new channels into which trade

has diverted itself have inflicted that worst of all curses, a population greater than the means of subsistence. It has been well, and truly, and feelingly said, that the man who causes two blades of corn to grow where but one was produced before, is a benefactor to his species. What are they, who would inflict the curse of barrenness on a fertile soil, and render it doubtful whether the day may not come, when England shall no longer produce a sufficiency of food for its inhabitants?

If this system should receive its full extension a change must infallibly be produced of a most injurious nature in the state of society, and the relative situation of commercial and landed property. In former times, great feudal lords divided the country between them; when they received permission to alienate their estates, the land was sold and soon divided into smaller lots. Till within the last half century, England contained a great number of small estates, the property of the inferior gentry, and also of small freeholds possessed by the yeomanry. Different causes have almost entirely swept away that description of landed propriety. Our great military establishments, our possessions in the East and West Indies, the increased profits of the learned professions and commercial enterprises, have offered so many means of advancement to men of small fortune, that few are now

to be found willing to vegetate in obscurity on a narrow income; similar causes have operated upon the yeomanry, and both these classes have in general sold their property, to which the liberal price given by our wealthy merchants retiring from business, has been an additional inducement. The deficiency thus created in that most valuable and respectable body, the independent yeomanry of England, has been in some measure compensated by the rapid increase in wealth and respectability of the farmers holding land on lease, now men of substance and capital, and often of education. But notwithstanding the rapid tendency of both these classes to become extinct, the evil of an accumulation of the land in the hands of a few great proprietors was prevented by the great increase in the value of its produce, and by the bringing large tracts of hitherto waste land into cultivation. But when the value of the produce is lowered, a much larger portion of land will sell for a given sum; and I have seen it stated, that within a few years the number of estates in England had diminished. If the system should be adopted which will reduce the produce of the land to half its natural value, probably in a given time there will be only half, or even less than half the number of estates; since the rental of the whole land of the country will no longer bear, as it has hitherto done, a just proportion to its wealth and capi-

tal. All the farmers of substance and capital now occupying the land will also gradually withdraw, and be succeeded by poorer, and more ignorant and dependent tenants; and the whole structure of society upon which our political institutions have been built will be suddenly changed. If the change were even for the better, a rash and dangerous experiment; the commercial aristocracy will then be the first order in the state. The rich farms of England may then be held as parks and villas by our great capitalists. We shall approximate to that state in which Italy was in the time of the Romans, when her patricians were enriched by foreign wars, and her people fed by foreign corn; when all political power centered in the cities and the army; when the country was covered with the luxurious villas of the opulent classes; and when the spirit, and almost the race of the Roman peasantry were extinct. It was then that the empire was defended by hired auxiliaries, and not by citizens attached to their native soil; it was then that the mistress of the world fell, and it was observed by one who witnessed these symptoms of her decline—*Latifundia perdidere Italiam*.

But dismissing any further consideration of the political tendency of the measure, I will proceed to inquire what its probable consequences will be as it relates to our finances: I might in-

deed say, its certain consequences, if the theory on which it rests is built on a solid foundation. We cannot, say its supporters, compete in foreign markets with foreign manufacturers, because the landowners of Great Britain are monopolizers, and they sell their corn so dear, and the wages of labour are so high, that we cannot sell our goods as cheap as others. We will therefore purchase cheap bread, give low wages, and furnish cheap goods, *and thus relieve the country, now labouring under a heavy debt and severe taxes.* Now what is this but saying, the corn, and the labour, and the manufactures of Great Britain, shall be worth half as much as they used to be? But have those, who are so anxious to relieve the country, and who set about it in this manner, recollected that government, in the shape of taxes, puts its hand on a certain portion of the corn, and labour, and manufactures of the country, which it applies to the service of the state. Whether that portion be represented by one piece of gold or another, is of no vital importance; but if the value of all commodities compared to gold, is lessened by one half, if taxes to the same amount in gold are raised, we must then allow government to exact a tribute twice as heavy from the country as before. Our current expenses may be modified so as to meet the prices of the day; but with respect to our debt, which we are obliged to pay

in gold, no change can take place without a national bankruptcy. If the measure succeeded as its proposers wish it to do, it would at one blow double the taxes, and with respect to a large portion, make it impossible to reduce them with either safety or honour. People say, reduce the military and naval establishments. I do not mean to inquire whether this would be advisable or not, but I am certain it is far better, in case we should lower our public expenses, to remit part of the real burdens of the people, not to increase those burdens, and then, from actual distress, be driven to economy which may endanger the interests of the state. I am no advocate for an extravagant expenditure of the public money, nor is it possible to disown the serious amount of the public debt. It is such as would crush any other nation in the world. If it does not crush us, it is only because the gold, which the English nation has by its government been pledged to pay as interest of that debt, represents a much less portion of the corn, the labour, and manufactures of Great Britain, than it would do of those of any other country in existence. I believe a great mistake prevails in general with respect to the taxes and public burthens of England; I believe them to be less than those imposed on any other people, compared to the means which the English nation have of paying them. I have read both in

French and English authors, statements proving that, although the nominal revenues of France and England are now much higher than formerly, that by the altered value of money, the real tax, which is the portion of the wealth of society which is levied, not the gold which is only its measure, is in fact less. In the same manner, by the different value of gold in England, the taxes, though nominally higher, are in fact lower, compared to our resources, than they are in other countries. This is no argument against economy. England is the freest country in the world. That is no reason we should give up our liberties instead of securing and improving them; and if we are less taxed than other nations, that is no reason not to diminish our burdens, and rid ourselves of the dangers attending our public debt. Hitherto, notwithstanding the immense amount of our debt, and I am willing to admit the imprudent manner in which it has been incurred, the fears expressed at different periods of the inability of the country to support it, have not been verified. Our resources have more than kept pace with the exigencies of the times; for while the expenses of the state have risen in a rapid progression, still the relative situation of every class of individuals in point of comfort and wealth has been improved. The nation at large, as well as the statesmen who conducted their affairs, had ceased to con-

sider the public debt with alarm, and that sense of security arose from the conviction imprest upon all, by facts of daily occurrence, that the value of money was no longer the same in England as it was some fifty years back, and that we might look forward to the moment when, proceeding in the same course of prosperity, the country would be able, during a season of peace, to apply its vast resources to the gradual liquidation of that debt. Nations, when they borrow, act like individuals; they borrow in moments of extraordinary expense and insufficient revenue; the extravagant, the slothful, and the unfortunate, will sink under their burden, but both the state and the individual, who by industry and prosperous circumstances, increase their revenue and accumulate capital, will, in the course of a certain number of years, repay with ease, and by sacrificing a small portion of their income, that loan which at another moment was of vital importance. It was reserved to the superior sagacity of our political economists to follow an opposite and a retrograde course, and to increase the real pressure of the public debt by fallacious and violent measures. It was reserved to them to say to the people, on whose behalf they have so officiously and unwisely interfered, "Instead of one bushel of corn, you shall pay two; instead of one day's labour, you shall contribute two to

the service of the state." We have all heard of the ass, who, being discontented with the weight of the load of hay which he carried, laid down in the water, and rising when it was saturated with wet, found himself compelled to proceed under a double burden. We are not, I believe, informed whether the ass fell down by the way, a victim to his own imprudence, but whether a national bankruptcy may not succeed such an enormous increase of the public burdens, as any great diminution of the price of corn will occasion, is a problem which remains to be solved.

Hitherto, however, I have argued upon the supposition that it would only be our debt which would be increased by a change in the value of gold relatively to corn, and that our current expenses might be reduced in exact proportion to that alteration, whatever it might be. This, however, would not be the case. We certainly might, if a certain quantity of gold commanded a larger portion of the corn and labour of the country than before, pay the servants of the public, and clothe and feed our army and navy by the produce of the British soil and industry, at a lower rate in money than heretofore; and the real burden on the people might be no greater than when gold was of a lower relative value to that produce. But in the event of foreign war, of war carried on as the wars of Great Britain hitherto have been, and will, it is to be hoped,

continue to be, in other countries; and in which by subsidies we have brought our allies into the field as efficient auxiliaries, the case would be far different. If by a difference in the relative value of gold and corn in England and Spain, a given quantity of gold which represents a certain portion of the wealth and industry of the community, will feed ten thousand men in England, and that the same gold will feed twenty thousand in Spain, should we have an army in the Peninsula, we could maintain a military force, provided provisions could be purchased on the spot, at just one half of the real burden to the community as that which we must do were the price of food the same in both countries. The same thing would take place with respect to auxiliary troops. If their pay is equal to half that of the British troops, a subsidy of one million sterling would enable a foreign sovereign to pay a given force, and that million must represent a certain portion of the food and industry of the country. So soon, as by a change in the value of gold, that million represents a double portion of food and industry, so soon as we are placed in the enviable situation of prosperity anticipated by our political economists, the burden of paying a certain force of foreign auxiliaries will be doubled. Great Britain has subsidized almost the whole of Europe, and unless she could have done this, her numerical strength

could never have sufficed in her late struggle with France; but had we enjoyed the benefit of cheap corn, Buonaparte would never have poured forth all his doleful lamentations and virulent abuse upon the effects produced upon the Continent by the gold of England, and the population of his extensive empire dragged into the field against us, might have overpowered the utmost efforts of our native valour.

But not only has Great Britain subsidized the greater part of Europe, the time may come, and perhaps sooner than we expect, when she may subsidize the world. To the most inattentive observer the signs of an eventful struggle near at hand are manifest; a struggle not between nation and nation, not between one ambitious potentate or one aspiring republic opposed to another; but a struggle between the principles of good and evil for the mastery of the human race, and for the triumph of darkness or of light. In the midst of the troubled elements that burst into storm around us, Great Britain shines with a calm and steady light; but the rude tempest may cross her path, and for a time involve her in the common confusion. The intrigues of wily and perfidious cabinets, and the disciplined barbarians of despotic states, may aim a blow at her greatness. At home she is vulnerable in Ireland, and her Indian empire lies as a golden prize to be seized by a Power whose

ambition is constant and insatiable. In the event of such a struggle, when the interests of the civilized world would be involved, England still possesses the means, if she does not destroy the sources of her own wealth and abdicate her own sovereignty, to call forth in her defence the hardy and barbarous nations who look up to her with mingled admiration and awe, and who are ready to sell their blood to the highest bidder; and who may, if I may use the expression, be fed by the crumbs that fall from her table. But if, by a decay of our commercial greatness, or by the unwise measures of our government, we should lose the great advantage which the high money price of our corn and industry gives us, we descend from our present superiority and are content to seat ourselves at the same board with them, from that moment the golden sceptre of England will be but as a broken reed. Already under the effect of these evil and misunderstood principles, it has become too weighty for her hand. Notwithstanding the great and happy change which has taken place in the administration of her foreign policy, although a skilful hand has untied the Gordian knot, and relieved her from the ignominious shackles which bound her, a silent spectatress of the crimes perpetrated against civilization and freedom by a combination of despots; although she is now looked up to, as she ought to be, as the natural

protectress of the independence and happiness of other nations, the difficulties of her situation have in some measure counterbalanced the weight which she has acquired by a conduct so noble and enlightened. But if her omnipotent arm was not stretched across the Atlantic to arrest the unprincipled Gallic invader in his attacks upon a free and independent state; if her voice has not overawed the ferocious Mussulman, and compelled the fierce tiger, thirsting for human blood, to crouch and tremble, it is because our commercial and financial embarrassments are known, and that our enemies already openly exult in these symptoms, as they fondly hope, of our approaching downfall. We have too long slumbered on the brink of the precipice towards which we have been rapidly gliding. After ten years of peace, it is time to awaken from this fatal dream. Dreadful visions surround us. The ghastly forms of bankruptcy, starvation, rebellion, and bloodshed rise before us. It is time, like Richard, to awake and struggle for empire and for life.

Not only the interest of the debt will operate as a heavier charge upon society at large, but the real value of the principal sum borrowed will also be doubled, when the value of all other commodities, relatively to gold, has sunk to one half of what it now is; and it will become as difficult for the country to raise five millions an-

nually to be applied to the reduction of the debt, as it would be to raise ten millions of gold for that purpose, if the value of gold, relatively to corn and labour, remained the same as at present. This is very obvious, but that which may not be seen so plainly at first sight is, that an increase of the value of gold, compared to other commodities, will make the funds fall and materially injure the credit of the government under existing circumstances. No one supposes, at least no one who has right ideas on the subject can suppose, that the debt of eight hundred millions contracted by the State is capital. It is an acknowledgment of capital either usefully employed or wasted by the Government, but it is no more capital than a bond given by a necessitous individual for a sum of money, which he has laid out in purchasing clothes and other necessaries, or swallowed in champaign. If his friends are willing to trust him, so long as he can pay the interest it is well; if he ceases to do this, and has no property upon which his creditors can put their hands, he is insolvent and they are become losers. So it is with the State. It is therefore in proportion to the ease with which Government can raise money to pay the interest of the debt, and accumulate savings to pay off the capital, that confidence will be felt, and this may be called a moral cause operating on the price of the funds. But there is

another cause that affects the price of the Government securities, which is reducible to calculation as much as the price of any other commodity.

The price of the three per cents., for example, is determined by the demand for that species of stock and the supply in the market. What that portion offered for sale obtains, stamps the price of the whole. In times of peace and prosperity the nation at large is always adding to its capital. A portion of this capital is laid out in agricultural and commercial speculations by the individuals who possess it. Others, desirous to retire from the risks of business, lend their money to the active and enterprising, and receive a certain interest for its use. Among these there are always some who prefer lending their money to Government, and when Government requires no loans, they can only accomplish their purpose by exchanging places with the existing creditors of the State. If, in the course of one year, the creditors of Government holding half a million of stock, for which 60% per nominal hundred had been paid, offer that stock for sale; and that persons come into the market who are willing to give more, and bid against each other, each 100% stock may rise in price from 60% to 80%. If, on the other hand, the same creditors are obliged to sell and nobody will offer as much as 60% for 100% stock,

the price may fall to 40%. But what can enable those who come into the market to offer an increased price for stock, except their having money which they wish to invest? The money vested in the funds proceeds from the savings of the community. If the community saved nothing, it could lend nothing to Government; and, unless it continued to save more than Government spent, it could not give an increased price for stock. While the community can save one tenth of the produce of its labour and capital, if the fifth part of that saving, or a fiftieth of the whole saving of society is vested in the funds, if the value of gold has not changed, a yearly addition is made to the value of stock. But if the value of the whole produce of the labour and capital of society is lowered relatively to gold, that portion of the saving applied to purchase stock must also bear a less value, and stock would, as far as the amount of this saving acted upon it, rise less in value than it would otherwise have done. The evil, however, would not be confined to a less rise in the funds owing to the diminished value of the savings of society. The same change in the value of gold, which would alter the price of produce, would affect capital in the same proportion, whether in land or in manufactures. If corn falls in price, rents must fall also; and, as land is worth a certain number of year's purchase, the value of the ca-

pital of the landed proprietor will sink with that of his income; and all buildings, shipping, machinery, or other capital stock vested in commercial and manufacturing industry, whose value depends upon that which the produce they assist in raising or transporting bears, will in the same manner decline. Now it must be remembered that it is only the rise in the value of stocks, which, setting out from a given period, arises from the savings of society. Its value up to that period had been already saved or created by the labours of society; and those who obtain the right of receiving that interest which the sacrifice of capital lent to Government has obtained, must replace that capital and put some other in its place. But if all capital vested both in land and manufactures is diminished in value, the portion of capital usually exchanged for stock is equally worth less. Those who have stock to sell must, if the value of the whole capital of the country is represented by half the gold it was formerly, be satisfied to take less for their own commodity; and in this manner should corn and labour fall considerably in price, funds must fall also. The relative value of stock compared to other property might be affected by many other circumstances, so as to render the fall in the funds either greater or less than the general fall in the whole capital of the country; but the absolute money price of stock must always be less, when

the value of the wealth of society is diminished than it would be if that value were increased. In case of a war, if Government wished to borrow, it must do so at a ruinous rate. That this opinion is correct, that sensitive barometer the price of the funds affords ample proof. I now hold in my hand an English newspaper, published in 1821, in which it is said, that upon a rumour of opening the ports for foreign corn, funds fell four per cent. And yet such is the wonderful delusion that has gone forth on this subject; such an effect has been produced by the senseless and vulgar cry of cheap bread; that it has misled the first understandings in the country, and we find one of the ablest men in Parliament declaring, he hoped when corn and rents fell, that labour would fall also, so that all classes might share in the universal prosperity.* That is pay more taxes, owe more, and earn less.

If the subject is fully considered, there seems ample reason to believe that the late commercial distresses, which have involved every class of the community in suffering, and placed the State itself in danger, have arisen in great measure from the depressed state of the agricultural interests, and the decreased value of land. Almost all, who are likely to understand the subject practically, have agreed that there has been

* Vide the report of Mr. Brougham's speech.

a great spirit of speculation, which they term overtrading, that has been unsuccessful; and that the consequent failure of particular mercantile houses has embarrassed the whole operations of commerce, not only by the positive loss incurred, but also by the destruction of credit and confidence. But from what does this proceed in the first instance? Many new and hazardous speculations have been entered into, because safe ones did not present themselves. Men who have realized capital must employ it, or lend it to be employed in some way or other; and in England, in time of peace, there is every year a great addition made to the capital of the country. It is that accumulation of capital, as Mr. Pitt observed in his celebrated speech, in which he painted in such glowing but true colours, the prosperity of the country a few years after the end of the American war; a situation far different indeed from that in which the country now stands, after eleven years of profound peace—It is that accumulation of capital which has supported the country in the time of war and pecuniary exertion, and which, although its operation may be obstructed or suspended for a season, will always, on the return of peace, enable her to triumph over all her difficulties. Our commerce since that period has received a prodigious extension, but our capital has been unwisely forced into hazardous channels.

Lord Lauderdale has, in his able and ingenious work, pointed out the danger of too suddenly paying off a large portion of the public debt, or of reducing its interest, when no new employment for capital exists. He has, in a late speech, referred part of the existing distress to the operation of the sinking fund, and the reduction of the interest of the debt, effected by Ministers in the four and five per cents., as the means of driving capital into more hazardous channels. Although no one can be more aware than myself of the superior ability which Lord Lauderdale brings to the discussion of every subject, and of his habits of research and powers of discrimination, so that an opinion of his would carry more weight with me, than that of any ordinary person, still, in this instance, I think he has not seen the question in its true light. The principle is undoubtedly true, but to apply it justly, different circumstances are to be taken into consideration. If a large debt existed in a country possessed of great wealth, and in which most of the enterprises in various branches of industry, which promised a profitable return, had been carried into execution by the application of existing capital; if the Government could suddenly obtain a loan from a foreign country, and pay off its creditors at home, a vast mass of floating capital would be suddenly thrown on the market, and would, from the difficulty of finding

employment, be directed into new and hazardous channels; and the sudden lowering of the rate of interest would, by diminishing the income of the richer classes, for a time disturb the usual commercial relations of the country, and be productive of much injury and confusion. But when that fund appropriated to the payment of the national creditor is drawn from the accumulating capital of the country itself, it would, if not raised by Government for that purpose, equally come into the market as an addition to the floating capital of the country. In the same manner any reduction made by Government in the interest of the debt when funds arrive at par, merely shows, since the holders have the option of accepting or refusing it, that the rate of interest, by the greater abundance of capital is becoming lower; and Government fulfil a duty which they owe to the people, by taking advantage of that decreased rate of interest to pay less to the national creditor. If Government could not effect that reduction, the stock being irredeemable would rise above par, and the same effect arising from a lowered rate of interest would take place; perhaps more gradually, but it must inevitably do so. If by miscalculation the national creditor consented to take less than the real rate of interest for money at the time, his stock would fall, and he would be the only loser; but his improvident bargain would not

affect the rate of interest generally, as that would depend on the greater or less supply of capital.

This has lately been seen in France. If Mons. de Villele could have borrowed from foreign capitalists sufficient to pay off the dissentient stockholders, that additional capital, introduced into a country in which so many useful enterprises, both in agriculture and commerce, might be carried into effect if the funds for doing so existed, would no doubt have been beneficial to the nation. By affording an increased supply of capital, such a measure might have lowered the rate of interest generally; and government stock, although bearing a reduced interest, might have retained its former price. But when being defeated in this measure, the French minister created his three per cent stock, to be taken at 75, making the interest equal to four per cent.: those whom he persuaded to exchange into this stock have found that their calculations have been erroneous, and a fall of ten per cent. in their capital has proved that interest in France is not so low as four per cent.; nor can the French government, except by obtaining a supply of fresh capital, make it so. But neither this diminution of the rate of interest on the part of the French securities, nor the action of the sinking fund have operated in France in the manner Lord Lauderdale supposes such mea-

asures must do, and indeed have done in England. In England the nominal sinking fund is only five millions sterling, with a debt of eight hundred millions. In France the sinking fund amounts to upwards of three millions sterling and the debt to one hundred and sixty, not including the indemnity to the emigrants, which is forty millions more. The difference in the proportion which the French sinking fund bears to the accumulating capital and to the whole capital of France, to that which the English sinking fund bears to the accumulating capital and the whole capital of England, is perhaps still greater; and if in France the sinking fund has not, when in its most active state, produced that derangement which Lord Lauderdale ascribes to it in England, I conceive there is good ground for doubting that it is the cause of our commercial embarrassments. That, however, which the sinking fund could not do has been effected by the violent change made in the value of landed property, the complete closing up of one of the great channels of domestic enterprise, the improvement of its land and agricultural system; and it may well account for that redundant capital and hazardous speculations which have involved the country in such remarkable difficulties and so much severe distress. Capital has been forced abroad by the unwise measures of Government; but if it has gone forth like the dove from the

ark, if it has crossed the waste of waters and returned disappointed, it is because it found not the land for a resting place at home.

This is the prospect which the rash and ignorant measures of our Political Economists are preparing for us. Our land will cease to boast of superior cultivation; its farm buildings will fall into decay. The mansions of the gentry will be abandoned. The home demand for our manufactures will daily lessen. The industry of the country will at all times be called into active and profitable exertion by foreign demand; at others subject to severe revulsions of stagnation and distress: and England instead of resting, as she hitherto was wont to do, on the solid basis of internal prosperity, instead of holding with dignified calmness the first station in the world, and presenting an unrivalled example of domestic happiness and industry, will, like the desperate speculator, fluctuate between the extremes of luxury and despair, and staggering and reeling, like a drunken man, feel the ground unsteady under her feet.

Much of the unfortunate eagerness now manifested by the country at large for the free importation of corn proceeds from that principle, laid down by Mr. Baring in the House of Commons, that unless the restriction on importing corn is removed, protection must be given to some branches of our home manufacture, and

that what are called the shackles of trade cannot be removed. In the first place let us ascertain the truth of this principle, and then, if it is found to be correct, inquire whether these shackles of trade, which consist in protecting our own industry, are hurtful or not. Two circumstances may affect the cost at which commodities are brought to market; the inferiority or scarcity of the raw material, and the higher cost of the labour employed in manufacturing it. A superiority of skill will sometimes compensate for a disadvantage in the price or quality of the raw material, but there is a boundary placed to this by the very nature of the thing produced. It would be absurd to raise grapes in hothouses at the expense of five shillings a pound, to make wine, when they can be cultivated in their natural state in other climates and cost but a mere trifle; or to grow bad oranges at half a crown each, when we can import the best for a tenth part of that sum. The same may be said of all the productions of the tropical climates, and it is in these that one great branch of our foreign trade consists. Other articles, such as gold, precious stones, pearls, minerals, and marbles, cannot be produced by the art of man; they are the works of nature, which we have not the power of improving or multiplying. There are others, like cotton, to the production of which our climate is not suited, but susceptible of receiving

great additional value from human labour and skill. These we must procure in their raw state from foreign countries, but the industry that manufactures them is our own. Now the real price of any manufactured article is that of the raw produce of which it is formed, and the cost of the labour bestowed upon it. If it is manufactured at the expense of little labour, it is cheap to the community; but the cost of that labour will, in the first place, depend upon the amount of the recompense given for that labour in food and manufactured articles; and again, the money price of these depends upon the exchangeable value of the merchandise used as money in any particular country. If, therefore, any manufacture existed, the raw material for which could be obtained in France and in England from a third country at exactly the same price, so far the two manufacturers in these respective countries would start fair; and if both were equally skilful, the manufactured article would be produced in each country at the cost of the same labour. But if the French manufacturer receives only half the food and half the manufactured articles in payment for his labour that the English manufacturer does, no doubt the article made by this ill-requited workman could be offered cheapest in the market. The consumer would pay less for it; but the question is, if by the demand for labour in England, and

by the active employment of every individual, the recompense obtained by the labouring class there is greater than that obtained by the same class in France, whether this is to be considered as a benefit or an evil? And although the rich man does in fact pay more for the same quantity of labour in England than he does in France, whether the more equal distribution of the wealth and comforts of society is not the greatest political and social advantage, and with a view to the happiness of the community at large, an inestimable blessing. Is that law wise, is that law humane, is that law friendly to the interests of the industrious poor, which would throw one part of society out of employment and produce a glut of labour, and a consequent diminution of the earnings of industry, to enable the rich consumer to purchase more articles of luxury from a foreigner? But it might happen that the skill of the manufacturer and the actual reward of his labour were the same in both countries, in some particular branch of industry; still the money price might differ from all those circumstances, which, as I have shown, occasion the value of the precious metals to differ widely in different places. Is it the act of an enlightened and philosophical statesman to rob one large class of society of their only birthright, the power of applying their labour to obtain food, upon the presumed and false ground of the uniform value

of the precious metals? When in the whole wonderful structure of the universe, we perceive the mobility of every quality both physical and moral; when we see water freeze by the action of cold, and the air become rarified by heat; when we know that intellect and reason are but relative terms, and even joy and grief, and pain and pleasure are comparative; but that in all these varied modifications a supreme and incomprehensible power maintains a system of harmony and order, upon principles which our limited understandings cannot fathom. When we know the wonderful manner in which the faculties and wants of man can be enlarged or restrained, and the diversity of his condition in different climates and under different governments; where is the arrogant individual who shall fling down a piece of yellow earth, and assume that as the unerring standard by which to apportion out the reward of human industry, and mark the due distribution of the productive powers and wealth of society? Where is the merciless legislator who, like a second Procrustes, shall set up an invariable standard to which he would level the whole human race, and mutilating the one and stretching the limbs of the other, place each upon a bed of agony?

Whatever obloquy, therefore, may be thrown upon that system under which Great Britain has to this moment flourished; with whatever con-

tempt it may now be the fashion to speak of those measures, which all tended to foster the national industry; the time, I am convinced, is not far distant when a fatal experience of the evils attendant upon an opposite course, will operate a full conviction on the public mind of their wisdom and utility. The laws which protected particular manufactures, and which forbade the free importation of corn, gave employment to the great body of the people, and security to the capital which put their industry in motion:—They gave to every man a full scope for the exertion of his skill, or the application of his property, to any object that he felt to be most beneficial, and exacted no condition but that of his sharing his own advantages with his fellow-countrymen. They gave employment to the poor, and restrained the rich from seeking enjoyments to be derived from foreign sources, when these could be supplied at home. They ministered to the wants of the needy, rather than to the craving desires of the affluent, but they protected property and capital engaged in profitable production as well as the wages of labour. They respected the lofty oak, because they knew that it would in its fall crush the feeble plant that grew beneath its fostering shade. They sacrificed no man, nor class of individuals, to the blind envy of the multitude; but so long as one human being could be found

deprived of the means of providing for his own subsistence, the state, like an affectionate parent, watched over and protected the beginnings of his humble industry. The political economists of the present day follow a different course. Like the cruel anatomist, who dissects living animals, and coolly says, “I removed the leg of a frog, or I touched a nerve and produced strong convulsions;” they have proceeded in the midst of wide-spreading misery and suffering to prosecute those experiments which will end in the ruin of the country.

The simple question is, whether we should prefer names to things, and under pretence of benefiting trade, in fact destroy our own industry. The subject has been very much puzzled by much that has been artfully interwoven with it, but which I will endeavour to explain. With respect to the silk trade, two things quite distinct have been confounded: the removal of an unwise tax on the raw material, and the new principle of withdrawing protection to particular manufactures, avowed, though not fully acted up to in this case. That a tax upon the raw material of any manufacture is injurious to trade by enhancing the price of the manufactured article, and that consequently, as a financial measure, it is unwise, and the sooner it is repealed the better, is too plain a principle to require any proof; and it is equally clear, that any counter-

vailing protection to the amount of the increased price of a manufacture arising from this tax, may be safely withdrawn. This, however, does not affect the question as to whether a manufacture should be protected from foreign competition, or its ruin be allowed by permitting the importation of the foreign article at a lower price. If the protecting duty of thirty per cent. on silk goods should prove a sufficient protection now the tax on the raw material is done away, the old scouted, exploded principle is still acted upon by the very men who assume to themselves credit for more liberal and enlightened views. If not, the silk manufacturers at home must suffer, and be thrown out of employment. That the protecting duty should not be much higher than is absolutely necessary, that it should even be rather less, provided the reduction is not operated too hastily, may be and is, I believe, considered as a good rule to adopt in a country like England, where machinery is carried to so great a pitch of perfection, and where capital exists to apply it to every branch of industry when requisite; because, by suffering the foreign manufacturer to tread as it were on the heels of the home one, an impulse may be given to improvement. But when we recollect that every improvement is made from the hope of profit, that system, which gives the most absolute security to the capital laid out in perfect-

ing any branch of industry, by ensuring a market to it, appears most likely to accomplish the object in view; and in this, as in all other instances, it may be found that honesty is the best policy. It ought also always to be remembered, that it is not only the difference of the real recompense of labour in England compared to that which it receives in other countries, and the different value of gold in different parts of the world, that are to be considered, but all the taxes which, although not direct ones, weigh upon every branch of our manufactures. These taxes ought to be removed. When we consider the additional amount of capital which is required to establish any manufactory from the taxes on bricks, tiles, glass, &c., and how much they tend to increase the price of the manufactured article, their impolicy is obvious. To abolish these would be an act worthy of an administration friendly to the great interests of trade; but to tax West India sugar, and then to allow it to be undersold by the produce of the East; to tax raw silk and the capital employed in manufacturing it, and then to let in French silks, and after all to turn round upon those who are ruined and starving, and accuse them of improvident speculations, is to act like the perfidious St. Dunstan, who is said to have invited a large company of persons to a religious controversy, and when they were assembled, to

have cut away the supporters of the floor on which they stood, and crying out, "A miracle, a miracle!" to have exulted as he beheld the whole fall in one appalling mass of death and destruction. Protecting duties, and even prohibitory ones, are also extremely proper and useful for the encouragement of infant manufactures. I know this is now denied, and it is said that manufactures never thrive by monopoly, and prohibitions. That, however, is not a monopoly to which every individual in the country can apply his skill and capital; and as all first efforts are apt to be ill directed and imperfect, a prohibition to import the foreign article, and thus protect the individual who risks his property in establishing a new branch of industry, is just and wise. So far from its being hurtful, I believe few manufactures ever grew up to importance without such protection absolutely or virtually given. To say otherwise appears, to me, a contradiction to common sense. If a manufacture is perfect, and its produce sells cheaper than the foreign article can do when imported, it wants no protection; if it is imperfect, and its produce will not bear competition, why should any one undertake it at a certain loss? It is because men only work when they expect profit, that patents are given to protect useful discoveries and ensure rewards to their inventors. The same principle applies to a class of manufac-

turers, and when protection is afforded to any branch of industry, we often find but a few years sufficient to produce the most remarkable improvements. We have indeed heard, that our cotton manufactures, the most improved and prosperous of any, are not protected. Perhaps not against European goods, but they are protected by high duties imposed on India cotton goods; and with this protection, in the short space of thirty years, they have become able to undersell the Indian manufacturer in his own market. The French have prohibited British cotton goods, and the improvement of their manufacture is so rapid, that the same calico which in Buonaparte's time sold for five francs, or four shillings and two-pence an ell, now sells for twenty-two sous, or eleven pence. But the instances in which prohibitory or protecting duties have raised up important manufactures are so numerous, that those who overlook them must do so willingly.

There is another reason for prohibitions and protecting duties of an infinitely more important nature than that relative to the encouragement of any ordinary branch of industry; I mean those that encourage and support those branches of our trade which are essential to our naval superiority. No doubt sugars might be brought home from the West Indies at a cheaper rate by foreign ships than our own, and our sailors

might be turned into stocking makers, and superintend a spinning jenny instead of braving the storms of the ocean; but in a time of war, where would our brave defenders be to be sought for? Allowing then, that the employment of our own shipping is a tax, it is one for the most beneficial purpose, and for the most indispensable object, the safety of the state. We are told that money will always procure a navy when we want it, and that we can keep one ready trained and exercised; in the same manner, I suppose, that Buonaparte trained his in the harbours of France when he embarked his crews in flat-bottomed boats to accustom them to sea-sickness. But two thousand years ago, it was remarked by the statesmen of Athens, and adopted as a maxim of policy essential to the well-being of the republic, that it was commerce only that could raise up an efficient navy, and give sailors to the state habituated to the toil and dangers of the sea. Our national safety and honour are compromised by the new regulations which depress the shipping interest, and in return we save a trifle in the transport of the goods in which we trade. For this we risk the sovereignty of the seas, and, like Esau, barter our birth-right for a mess of porridge.

The principle that I have endeavoured to establish with respect to corn, namely, that it receives its money price from the wages or pro-

fits of industry, and does not fix the money price of these, is equally applicable to all articles of staple produce whatever. If they can be raised in our soil and climate with as much facility and at the expense of as little labour as in other countries, so long as there is a sufficient supply, they are, whatever may be their money price, equally cheap to each community respectively; and any attempt to benefit our trade and manufactures by importing them from abroad, instead of raising them at home, must diminish our national wealth, and undermine our prosperity. What, for example, gives a price to timber? It is the demand for it. Were the population of Great Britain to live in mud hovels, timber would bear no price, because it would have no exchangeable value; and when a demand takes place, and there is an ample supply to meet that demand, the money price will be an exact measure, ascertained by the operations of daily barter and exchange of its value relatively to other commodities; that is, the capital and labour necessary to grow timber will reap the same profit as capital and labour employed in the production of any other article whatever, allowing always for any difference in the risk of the capital employed, or security of toil requisite for its production. If two branches of manufacture concur to produce one article intended for foreign sale, whatever price that article obtains in

the foreign market must be shared by both; and the due proportion between their respective shares will be determined by fair biddings in the market, and by the computation of individuals. Let us consider timber in this light, as employed in the building of manufactories and the erection of machinery, and in the construction of ships destined to carry the manufactured article to a foreign port. The price obtained for that manufactured article cannot be wholly appropriated by the manufacturer; part of it must go to pay the grower of timber, and give an adequate return to the capital and labour employed in growing it. If by any arbitrary edict a government were to decree that a larger and undue profit should be reaped by the manufacturer, and that that of the grower of timber should be proportionably depressed; what would this be but an act of injustice and oppression directed against an useful branch of national industry, and evidently tending to discourage and narrow it? To say that our manufactured goods cannot compete with foreign goods, because the expense of transporting them in ships built with English timber, at its present high money price, is too great, is mistaking cause and effect. If our goods did not sell, and sell advantageously, the price paid for freight, and consequently that of the timber employed in ship-building, would decline. In the same manner, the high wages

and superior fare of our sailors render the cost of carrying goods in British bottoms greater than in foreign ones; but it is the price which the cargo obtains when it reaches a foreign market, which, by the high profit it gives to the merchant, enables him to pay these high wages, and were they to be arbitrarily reduced, what other effect would take place, but unjustly bestowing upon one set of men the fair rewards of the labour and skill of another? But supposing that, with a view to benefit trade, and setting aside all political considerations for the maintenance of our naval power, foreign ships at inferior rates of freight were to be substituted to our own for the transport of our goods. The grower of timber and the seamen employed would cease to receive any profit, and could no longer come into the market as purchasers of manufactured goods. Admitting that the same demand were to take place on the part of the foreign timber growers and seamen, that is a demand for an equal quantity of goods; their power of paying for them would be regulated as far as the money price went by amount of the money they carried. The real price, that of a portion of timber and maritime labour, might be the same, or much less valuable from deficient skill, but it could only be an exchange of one portion of human industry against another, of which the money price is but the measure!

True we might run more risk in our commercial adventures of losses from shipwreck, and have the pleasure of working at half price for foreigners, while our landed proprietors sunk into indigence, and our seamen were exposed to actual want. This is, I maintain it without fear of its being disproved, the only result that can arise from the new and liberal policy, which by confounding value with money price; or the measure of value, interferes with short-sighted ignorance, with the property and earnings of every individual.

I know the Political Economists cry out we shall export more goods, and at a cheaper rate, and that our manufacturing industry will be put in motion. Be it so; but although industry is the great source of wealth, its produce must be consumed or enjoyed by an individual, or a nation, to entitle them to the appellation of wealthy. The slaves in the West Indies who toil for their masters, and produce great quantities of sugar for their benefit, are not wealthy; neither are the oppressed subjects of Ali Pacha, who cultivate cotton for his sole benefit. Englishmen have been wealthy, and England has flourished hitherto, because each man enjoyed the produce of his own industry, or its fair equivalent. But if a million of foreigners are to be employed, in the place of a million of Englishmen, in raising corn and other articles of staple produce, the

latter must starve unless they find some other trade to embark in. The policy, which would force their industry into the manufacture of cotton, resembles the act of the improvident merchant, who ventures all his wealth in one uncertain enterprise. It is replete with danger and ruin to the community at large.

I consider it therefore as a positive rule to be laid down, that whenever any staple articles, such as timber or flax, can be raised at home, and that the circumstances of soil and climate are favourable to their growth, they ought to supply the home market, without any regard being had to the lower money price at which they may be imported. Whatever staple article is used to work up or bring any commodity to market, its money price will adjust itself to the money price at which that commodity sells, and will only be such as is necessary to obtain a fair share of profit to the capital and labour employed in raising it. It is the general prosperity of our manufactures that has given a high money price to our staple produce and land; if one branch of manufacture is so much behind the others as not to be able to pay what others pay for that staple produce, it ought to be improved: government ought to afford protection to the skill and capital of those engaged in it, by preventing foreign competition; but not pull down other classes and valuable branches of domestic

industry, and oppress all its children to favour one weak or idle bantling. The real friend of the poor, the enlightened advocate of the lower orders, the man who has the happiness and improvement of his fellow creatures at heart will, as the first step to civilization, morality, and education, give employment to the bulk of the people, and ensure a due reward to their labour. While one human being languishes in inaction and misery, he will stoop to raise him from his abject situation, and give him the means of providing for himself. If he cannot put into effect the benevolent and amiable wish of Henry the Fourth, that every peasant may have his chicken in his pot on Sunday, he will at least endeavour to enable every man to become independent of the charity of others, and to relieve him from absolute want. He will ask, not at how low a money price the sons of affluence can purchase foreign silks, or pier glasses, or French wines; but whether the loom of the native manufacturer is at work; whether the spade of the labourer is employed in digging the ground; not whether luxury revels in palaces, but if plenty and content bless the cottage of the poor.

The question of the Corn Laws being in some measure involved in and depending upon that of the currency, I will here take a brief review of the revulsions that have taken place in the latter within a few years. It is now generally allowed

that the paper currency was, for a considerable time, depreciated relatively to gold, and that the nominal price of all commodities was proportionably raised. It is also known that Government, after having by a solemn resolution of Parliament, declared that a Bank note for twenty shillings was equal to twenty shillings in gold, and decreed that it should pass as a legal payment for the value therein expressed, in a short time turned round, and by restoring a gold currency, obliged every individual to pay four ounces of gold instead of three, or twenty shillings in the place of every fifteen, that he had borrowed. This act of monstrous injustice and oppression, by which so many individuals have been completely ruined, has however been justified and extolled as a salutary measure ensuring a sound metallic currency to the country. Lord King was at one time unjustly stigmatized for asking his tenants to pay him his due, that is the quantity of gold they had contracted to pay; but ministers, who then opposed him, have since been praised for compelling every tenant in the country to pay one third more gold than his contract bound him to do.

In the midst of the confusion and loss occasioned by this and other measures of the Government, it has become the fashion among some of those who distinguished themselves by adulation of Mr. Pitt during his lifetime, to ascribe

all the disasters of the country to the late war. The heavy public debt and the taxes consequent to it have, they say, raised the price of all the necessaries of life, and the restriction on the Bank's paying in gold has caused all the fluctuations of our currency and commerce; and the subsidy of three millions sterling sent to the Emperor in hard cash, stripped the country of its gold then and for ever after; while the false system of protecting British industry has prevented the extension of trade. I shall endeavour to examine these measures of Mr. Pitt, as far as it may elucidate any of those disputed points of political economy which come within my present subject.

First, with respect to the opinion which is, I believe, generally received, that taxes raise the price of provisions: to me it appears completely erroneous. No circumstance can affect the price of any article whatever, but the demand for it in the market. That will stamp its real price; and its money price is determined by the value of the merchandise employed as money, that is, as a measure of value between two other commodities. How then can taxes raise the price of provisions? Do taxes create wealth? Do they manufacture articles of an exchangeable value, or dig up gold and silver from the bowels of the earth? No; they only transfer gold from the pockets of individuals to the treasury of the

State: they take from every man part of his property, or the earnings of his industry, to bestow it on some other individual. If the wealth, on which Government thus puts its hand, is wisely employed and honestly administered, the money paid in taxes is well spent. It defends the country from foreign aggression by means of a military force: it maintains internal tranquillity, and guards the property and person of every individual, by a due administration of justice and police. Roads are made, cities lighted, public institutions are endowed; and the advantage derived by every individual is far greater than if the sum he has contributed in taxes had been kept and expended by himself. But were it ever so ill spent; were it squandered on the minions and flatterers of a court, still taxes cannot raise the price of provisions. The means of enjoying a certain portion of comforts and luxuries may be taken from one man and unjustly given to another, but the whole demand for labour and provisions continues the same. If it were otherwise, the countries most taxed would be those in which bread would be dearest; instead of which we find, that in all oppressed countries, where the real tax, that is the portion of labour wrung from the people, is the greatest, the money price of provisions is always low; because excessive taxation destroys and ruins industry. If it were possible for taxes to make

provisions dear, they would have this effect in Persia, where the exactions of the government are carried to the highest pitch of oppression and cruelty. In that miserable country it is not only the sovereign who draws large revenues from his subjects, but an almost unlimited power of extortion is possessed by the delegates of his authority. The governors of the provinces, obliged to contribute large sums to the treasury, in their turn raise them upon the people in the most iniquitous manner. The taxes imposed are in great part levied on the land, and are not regular in their operation. Sudden demands are made upon villages for a certain amount of money, and if not complied with, it is extorted by the infliction of the bastinado, carried to such an inhuman excess as to cause the nails of the feet to fall off, and frequently to deprive the victim of this atrocious tyranny of life. In this way the poor pittance, which has been the long concealed treasure of an indigent family, perhaps handed down from father to son, is brought to light, and seized by the rapacious and cruel hands which again resort to the same barbarous expedient, till at length the terrified and despairing peasants forsake their wretched abodes. In travelling through that country, I have seen plains of extraordinary fertility, the inhabitants of which frequently fly from their homes, and leave their crops standing, feeling

their utter inability to meet the demands made upon them. If taxation could make bread dear, it would have that effect in Persia, where it is carried to so severe and almost an unexampled extent; but on the contrary, provisions are at a far less price there than in any part of civilized Europe. But a high money tax may be raised, and still each individual may contribute but a small portion of his gains to the service of the state. High taxation in that sense follows wealth, denoted by the high money price of provisions, but never can create the one, nor produce the other. The national debt therefore has not made provisions dearer in England; but if provisions had not increased in price, in consequence of our improved industry and commercial prosperity the taxes necessary to pay the interest of that debt could not have been raised without a grievous oppression upon the people. I have long been of opinion, that notwithstanding the outcry raised about the taxes in England, that comparing the sum raised to the portion of corn and labour, which it will command, and applying the same rule to other countries, that each man in England will be found to contribute less to the service of the state, than the subjects of any other government. For when we speak of taxes, it is not those imposed in the shape of money alone that are to be considered. Personal services required by the state, such as the conscription in

France, must be taken into account, which is not only a tax, but in many instances inflicts a grievous hardship on individuals. Of this however I am certain, that taxes in England have not raised, and could not raise the price of bread. Three-fifths of our whole revenue are appropriated to the payment of the national creditors. The country gentleman who pays a portion of his rent, the merchant who contributes part of his commercial profits in taxes, must, to meet this expense, cease to employ some servant or manufacturer formerly working for him, and thus a portion of unemployed labour is thrown on the market. This is the first operation of every tax, and if this were the only one, it might make bread cheaper by diminishing the means of purchasing it, on one part of the community; but the demand destroyed by taxation in one quarter springs up in another, and in the case of the holders of the national debt, a demand is created for the same labour directed in precisely the same channel, that of the production of the comforts and conveniences of life for the more opulent classes. But even when government expends the money raised, although some branch of industry is destroyed, others are created by the demand in the market for gunpowder, fire-arms, clothing for the army and navy, the fabrication of which employs a number of hands. These artificers come into the market to pur-

chase food; and if the state employs soldiers and sailors, the government itself appears as a bidder for the provisions necessary to their support. Taxes, therefore, merely transfer the command of a certain portion of labour from individuals to government: but as long as the demand for labour, and the money price paid for it continue the same, provisions which receive their price from that obtained by the labour of the community at large, will not become either really or nominally dearer through the operation of any tax.

Even the expenditure of large sums raised by loan, provided they are raised at home, will not have that effect, although it is said that, in time of war, government brings the capital of the country into the market, and by that prodigal expenditure raises the price of every commodity. Government does not create, it only appropriates to its own use, the money raised by a loan. That portion of the income of the country which at the end of a year is not spent, becomes capital in the hands of individuals, who, as loans to government are voluntary, lend it to the state, in preference to laying it out in any other way; but if government did not borrow that money, it would still be expended in some speculation conceived to be profitable, and would employ that portion of labour which the government that borrows, employs in some other shape.

That taxes, unless exacted in such unfair proportions as to crush particular individuals, are by no means so injurious to society at large as is generally supposed, and that the burden they impose on the lower orders is much over-rated, and their effect frequently misunderstood, might, I believe, be easily proved: but if they could, without diminishing the supply of food, raise its money price and the money price of labour, and thus bestow on a particular country the immense political advantages which these high prices bring with them, they would indeed be the first of social blessings; and despotic kings, by their exactions from their subjects, would become their greatest benefactors. For my own part, I firmly believe, that if England had not unfortunately been engaged in a long and expensive war; if many hundred millions had not been expended and destroyed in naval and military equipments; and if the capital thus destroyed had been laid out in an accumulating ratio in agricultural and manufacturing improvements, that our present wealth and prosperity would be so great, that the whole country would resemble a garden; that the conveniences of life would be multiplied in an extraordinary degree; that our bread would be at a much higher money price than it has ever yet reached; and that the same sum which we now pay in taxes would represent a far less portion of the wealth of society, and of

the income of each individual; that the national debt, if not paid off, would be laughed at as a paltry sum; and that England need only, like Jupiter, to give one awful nod to make the world tremble; and to enforce the spirited declaration of the ablest and boldest of her statesmen, that no cannon in Europe should be fired without her consent.

With respect to the measure of restricting the Bank from paying in gold, to appreciate it justly, a previous inquiry is necessary, not only of the circumstances under which it was carried into effect, but also of the general principles that govern gold and paper currency. That a forced paper currency is a dangerous expedient is most certain, because it is liable to depreciation from a want of confidence in the government or body that issues it, and also from an over issue. The value of bank paper during the late restriction was not, I believe, in the slightest degree affected from the former of these causes, but it is now well known that a depreciation of Bank paper took place owing to an over issue. This depreciation took place principally after Mr. Pitt's death, and cannot therefore be ascribed to him. Had he continued at the head of affairs, I am inclined to think his sagacity would have perceived the growing evil in time, and that his superior discernment would have rejected that memorable resolution of parliament, by which a commodity

only worth fifteen shillings in the market was declared to be equal in value to twenty shillings. Whether the restriction on the Bank was a necessary expedient or not, can only be decided by an accurate knowledge of the political circumstances of the time, and of the commercial relations of England with other countries; but I think it is easy to shew that the measure itself might be a wise one, and not necessarily productive of evil consequences. The precious metals have, from an early period of the world, been used as a measure of value, and the preference given to them in that respect, has arisen from their durability, and being less liable to sudden changes in their own value as merchandize, since they cannot be created, and their quantity be indefinitely increased, at the will of men; and as they are applicable only to purposes of show and luxury, the demand for them as a merchandize can only increase or diminish gradually. But in times of war and tumult they acquire another kind of value, namely, that as a means of secreting and securing wealth, and their relative value to other more perishable commodities varies in a rapid and ruinous manner. In England, a farmer is as well satisfied with having a stack of hay worth a hundred pounds as if he had the money in a bag. The shopkeeper is as much at his ease who knows he has a stock of silk or muslin worth a certain sum, as if it

were in the drawer of his counter; but let us suppose that an enemy is at hand, whose cavalry will take the hay for their horses, and who will pillage the shops. Instantly the shopkeeper and farmer will gladly sell their goods for a small part of their usual price, and will conceal and hoard their gold. Thus we find, by the Journal of a Prisoner in France, that when the allies were marching upon Paris, many goods became unsaleable, and even the proportion in the value of silver and gold altered, the latter bearing a premium. This was the case during the French Revolution. In those days of anarchy and blood the precious metals were hoarded, and frequently buried; and on the other hand, and it is a remarkable fact, those who were obliged to receive assignats, aware of their rapid depreciation, immediately purchased some article of less perishable value, and if they found nothing that suited them, they squandered them in luxurious gratifications rather than keep them by them; imitating in some degree the dissolute extravagance of those populations suffering under the visitation of the plague, who are uniformly described as rushing with almost frantic eagerness into those enjoyments which they conceive will be short lived.

When a great derangement in the relative value of gold and other commodities takes place in one country, and when its commercial rela-

tions with surrounding states are suddenly changed, the effect must be felt to a certain degree by its neighbours, and there can be no doubt that political causes during the French Revolution might, and did probably momentarily alter the relative value of gold to other commodities even in England, and that commercial causes originating in political ones also operated since the closing up of some of the usual channels of trade, with those countries become the theatre of war, and in the power of the enemy, caused the bankruptcy of many of our great merchants. If to these evils a glut in the market had been added by the eagerness of every merchant or manufacturer to sell, and by the consequent loss and wide-spreading bankruptcies, a run upon the Bank had obliged it to declare itself insolvent, and if its immense issues of paper, as well as those of the country banks, had suddenly lost their value in the public estimation, the confusion and distress, public and private, that would have ensued, and the dangerous political consequences in the critical state of the country at that moment may be easily conceived. Those measures that assisted the merchants and manufacturers at that great crisis, and enabled them to hold back their goods, and thus relieved them from the difficulties to which the times had subjected them, instead of treating them as a pack of ignorant over-traders responsible for

their own ruin, were no doubt productive of general good, and both humane and wise, as they prevented the pressure of severe distress on the lower orders of manufacturers; and by the restriction on the Bank, the sudden narrowing of the currency, and all the evils that would have taken place from a change in the real value of money, were obviated. When we compare these measures of Mr. Pitt, and their effect on the country, to the policy which has been pursued by government in the late commercial crisis; when we look round and behold the ravages of that storm which has on every side spread desolation and ruin, his genius appears like that of the philosopher, who, watching the awful signs of the heavens, can draw the lightning, armed with destruction, from the clouds, and cause it to fall harmless.

This is the favourable side of the picture; but it is said, that the issues of the Bank becoming unrestrained, fictitious credit ensued, and a false impulse was given to commercial speculation. Here again, I conceive, cause and effect are mistaken for each other. Much stress has been laid on the effects of an increase of the circulating medium in producing prosperity, and the miserable condition of those countries where it is narrowed, and Hume's authority has been quoted in support of this doctrine. But let us inquire if it is founded in

truth. Do we find that France, when she was deluged with assignats, or Russia, whose paper rouble is worth about one-fourth of her silver one, advanced in prosperity during the periods of that excessive enlargement of their circulating medium? The contrary is known to be the case. England, on the other hand, advanced rapidly in wealth and commercial prosperity from 1784 to 1806, at which time the depreciation of her paper money was slight, and the actual increase of her whole currency by no means very great. But although it may be true, that countries with an increased currency are prosperous, and those with a decreasing one poor, to give these circumstances as the causes of wealth or poverty, appears to me like saying, "Such a man is ill, because he is thin;—that other has improved in his health, because he is grown fatter;" instead of saying, that the one grew fat because he was well, and the other became lean from the effects of illness. If the stock of wealth in any country is increased, by the natural industry, it must be represented by a larger quantity of money, and require more to put it into circulation, either in gold, which is real money, or in paper, which is promissory for the payment of gold. If its stock of wealth diminishes, it will be represented by less money, and its circulating medium, if in gold, will be exported; and if in paper, it will become depreciated, un-

less it is narrowed in proportion to the decreased value of that wealth. The government which coins money, or the Bank which issues paper to supply the increasing demands of society for circulating medium, may imagine that they create the national wealth; and so did the fly imagine that he raised the dust that followed the wheels of the carriage. The fact however is, that the Bank and country banks in England perform a twofold operation; that they act in the capacity of money lenders as well as that of issuers of circulating medium. These are two distinct offices, and of this I shall speak hereafter; but as far as an issue of circulating medium goes, no bank, no government, no power on earth, can extend it beyond the amount in real value required to circulate the wealth of any country, and perform the daily operations of barter and exchange in the market, without its being exported or melted, if the issue is in gold, or becoming depreciated if it is in paper. In the former case, the vessel leaks; in the other, the same portion of national wealth is transferred from one individual to another, by a piece of paper bearing a nominal value greater than its real one; by stamping upon a note four roubles instead of one, as in Russia, or twenty pounds sterling instead of fifteen, as was done in England.

But so far from an increasing issue of cir-

culating medium creating wealth, if it were made so as to produce a rapid depreciation it would check production; as merchants would be aware that in giving credit, so essential to commerce, that they would become losers. Neither is this effect confined to those over issues where any doubt is entertained of the solvency of the state or bank that issues the paper. A remarkable elucidation of this fact, namely, that currency cannot be enlarged beyond its due proportion to the wealth of a country has lately taken place in Norway. At the time of the union of Norway and Sweden, the former had a paper currency extremely depreciated, and the government, to restore its credit, imposed a severe tax, obliging all persons of property to pay in a certain quantity of silver, to form a deposit for a national bank; which, after calling in all the old notes, issued others on the security of this deposit of silver placed in responsible hands; when, to the great discomfiture of the projectors of this bank, the new notes were shortly depreciated as well as the old. That depreciation was so great, that it had not only driven silver out of circulation, but even copper partially so; for, on my journey through Norway, in the summer of 1820, I not only never saw either silver or gold coin, but I found it extremely difficult to procure copper money in the towns, even at a premium, and in the coun-

try it was absolutely impossible. I did not inquire what proportion the silver deposited in the bank bore to the whole nominal value of the notes that were issued; but reflecting upon that which, at first sight, appeared incomprehensible, that a solid deposit of silver should not establish the credit of a national bank, I was convinced that if the deposit had even exceeded in real value the nominal value of the notes issued, that those notes, if not payable in silver at demand, would be depreciated, if issued so as to render the amount of circulating medium greater than the wealth and money transactions of Norway required. Indeed no person can doubt that if fifty millions sterling are sufficient for the circulating medium of England, that if one hundred millions were to be coined and issued from the Mint, a temporary rise of the prices of all commodities would take place, which would speedily be rectified by the melting and exportation of the coin; but if Government, to prevent this fancied evil, had lodged the hundred millions in the Bank, and then issued the same amount of paper not convertible into gold, the notes would infallibly be depreciated, and in all foreign exchanges, and in the purchase of the precious metals could not pass at their nominal value. On the other hand, without a single piece of gold being lodged or pretended to be lodged in a bank, its paper might bear a premium, as that

of the Bank of Venice formerly did ; for although that was a deposit bank, the known wealth of that prosperous republic was sufficient to guarantee the credit of its paper in the commercial world. But currency to be sound, must follow in the train of a superior power. It is the handmaid and not the parent of wealth. Like water, it will flow down a hill in the channels already prepared for it ; but if we attempt to force it up the barren and inaccessible rock, it will recoil upon ourselves. What has tended to produce this mistake as to the effect of an increased circulating medium is this ; that while the currency increases in consequence of increasing wealth, it is frequently by the ignorance of government or banking companies extended beyond its true mark, and its natural and forced increase going hand in hand, their causes and effects are confounded. In one instance the enlargement of the currency follows the increasing wealth of the country, and affords a test of it ; in the other it is forced, and instead of promoting wealth, it becomes depreciated, and deranges the transactions of commerce and mutual exchange between the inhabitants of the state in which it has taken place. Its effects on other countries are nugatory. The rate of exchange testifies the real value of a bill, on any particular place, without any reference to its nominal value. A depreciated currency may, therefore, raise prices

nominally at home, but cannot cause greater prices to be obtained from foreigners for any goods which they may purchase. Russian timber or tallow will not sell higher in England, though the worth of a given quantity may be computed at St. Petersburg at four paper roubles, instead of one silver one. But when currency has been enlarged, as it has been in England, it is because foreigners do actually pay us more for a certain portion of our industry, and is the positive proof of our increasing wealth. And here it may perhaps elucidate the subject to remark, that the famous regulation of Lycurgus, forbidding the use of any money but that composed of iron, although it clogged the transactions of daily exchange, and rendered the accumulation of money difficult, still could not have effected his favourite object as a legislator, that of the destruction of wealth and luxury, had not the severe institutions of Sparta, and the public tables, where even their kings were forced to dine upon black broth, and the honour paid to the warlike virtues, and their attendant vices, theft and rapine, discouraged industry and destroyed wealth. But in subsequent times, when the original laws and institutions of the republic fell into disuse, at least to a certain degree, we find that some of their leading men were accused of being corrupted by the gold of Persia, which proves that a state of society had sprung up

which gave a value and use to gold, although not countenanced by the existing laws.

One of the great disadvantages attending paper currency is this; that however cautiously it may be issued, and even kept rather below than above the mark, and although by its nice adjustment to the wants of society it may be exactly on a par with gold, circumstances that affect the value of the precious metals, or that narrow commercial enterprise may suddenly render it redundant. While gold and paper are at par, they act, like the antagonist muscles of the human body, in harmony with each other, and facilitate all the great and multifold operations of commerce and universal barter among mankind. But when the one is weakened and its countervailing force no longer exists, it is borne down by the resistless energy of the other, and, as in the human frame, convulsions and agony ensue. These disastrous effects have been fatally aggravated in England by the measures of Government. Country banks have been allowed to issue notes without giving due security to the public. It is not that the country bankers have enlarged the currency beyond the amount required by the country, if they did so their notes would be returned upon them; and even during the Bank restriction they could not extend it so as to produce a difference between the value of their notes and

those of the Bank of England. But the country banks, as well as the Bank of England, act as money lenders for the temporary advance of capital to individuals. In the eagerness of each bank to get out its own notes, they sometimes lend to those embarked in bad speculations; to that, however, their own interest is perhaps the best check; but as they are allowed to be established without giving any pledge of property for the ultimate payment of their notes to the public, whenever one of those merchants, to whom they have lent large sums, fails, they fall with him; their notes then become worth nothing, and from the sudden want of circulating medium in particular districts, great distress and numberless bankruptcies take place, quite independent of commercial losses. Another inconvenience is, that as they are bound to pay at sight in gold, and that paper, as the cheaper circulating medium, will always displace gold in times of prosperous confidence; when a sudden and general panic occasions a demand for gold, it is impossible to satisfy it. The law that compels payment in true and lawful money then acts with peculiar hardship on many individuals. It is like an obsolete statute renewed, and put in force against the ignorant and unoffending, whose only crime is not being prepared to comply with the regulations imposed by the legislature, which slumbered at its post when it ought

to have protected him. At present, by a capricious contradiction, banks are allowed to issue paper money, and gold coin to be freely exported; and upon the first alarm, the unfortunate debtor who borrowed in paper is obliged to pay in gold, and not only in gold but in a certain money which he could not get coined under two or three months. Driven to the last extremity, he sacrifices every thing he possesses to meet this pressing demand. It is in vain that he possesses goods, or houses, or land, or even gold, it is the lawful money of the realm that he must produce. Without this all is lost. There is no doubt that the rendering it legal to discharge sums to any considerable amount, by payment in bullion instead of coin, would tend to remedy this evil. This was perceived by the bank at Frankfort, which, during the late commercial crisis, took the wise measure of issuing foreign coin at its value as bullion, to meet the pressing exigencies of the moment, and to relieve the difficulties under which the merchants laboured. Had not this been done some of the first commercial houses of the world, possessed of immense wealth, might have failed, and diffused general dismay and ruin, because the gold they could command at that moment bore the effigy of one king, or the arms of one state, instead of those of another. In England the inconvenience and distress from this cause is increased still

more by making gold the legal payment, since that metal is liable to more frequent and greater fluctuations of value than silver. But quite independently of any general rise in the value of gold, an eager demand for it may be created in England, by a change in the value of British merchandise, and a diminution of the prices that it will command in the foreign market. If a certain class of English manufacturers usually export goods which they sell for one million sterling, the amount received by them, either in gold or in equivalents to the gold, will enable them to discharge the obligations into which they have entered; but if these goods were, not by any change in the general value of gold, but by a fall in the value of British merchandise, owing to the successful competition of some rival manufacture, to sell for only nine hundred thousand pounds, the deficiency of one hundred thousand pounds must straiten the means of the merchants to discharge their obligations. The first, who compelled by necessity, sent more goods abroad, would lower the price in the market; and as each merchant, attempting to save himself, adopted the same expedient, a great depression of prices would ensue, and a ruinous change in the exchangeable value of gold compared to British goods would momentarily take place. The engagement to pay a bill in gold, at however short a date, upon a calculation of

what goods will sell for in the market is, in fact, to a certain degree, a gambling transaction, like that of undertaking to pay the difference in the value of stock on a certain day; but its failure does not show that currency was redundant at the time the speculation was entered into. The merchant engages to pay so much gold in the shape of lawful money or coin; but that must be considered as an engagement to deliver a certain valuable commodity; for it is no longer wanted as currency; on the contrary, in times of commercial distress, gold disappears and is taken out of circulation. It can no longer exist in the shape of circulating medium, or money, to the same extent as in more prosperous times, since the legitimate use and character of circulating medium is to assist in transferring goods and property from one individual to another at their actual value at the moment.

This then, I believe, may be safely affirmed with respect to the recent commercial distress, that it was not occasioned by an increase of the currency, but that it originated in commercial speculations that failed. The bankruptcy of the individuals concerned would equally have taken place under such circumstances, if our circulating medium had consisted solely of gold, and those who had pledged themselves to deliver gold in the shape of coin on a certain day in payment of the bills they had accepted, must have forced

their goods to sale, and produced a great depression in the market. But from the unwise system of allowing country bank paper to be issued by irresponsible persons, when the failure of great mercantile houses occasioned that of the banks with which they were connected, a sudden contraction of the circulating medium, so as to render it below the actual wants of commerce, and insufficient to the operations of general exchange throughout the country, also took place.

It is a distinct question what gave rise to those unprofitable and hazardous commercial speculations, in a country formerly so celebrated for successful industry on the part of its artisans, and for sober and solid undertakings, and unblemished integrity on that of its merchants. I have already said, that hazardous and uncertain enterprises were entered upon as a means of employing the accumulating capital of the country, when the measures of Government narrowed the great channel into which it formerly flowed, in the improvement and cultivation of the land. Individuals, if they could have purchased estates and received a rental equal to three or four per cent. upon their capital, with the enjoyment of all the advantages and consequence attached to landed property; or who could have lent their money on mortgage at five per cent. and felt secure of the regular payment of the interest; or embarked in farming concerns and seen a prospect of bring-

ing up their families by the profits of an honest industry, would have been far less inclined to lend their money at seven or eight per cent. to foreign states exposed to all the chances of war and revolutions; or to have risked it on the mere hope of a rise in the price of Egyptian cotton or East India spices. Here however it may be remarked, that although by the sudden fall in the value of those foreign securities, and the non-payment of the interest great inconvenience has been felt, and many persons have been ruined; taken as a whole, this speculation will no doubt be a highly profitable one to the nation at large, not only as the source of revenue drawn from other countries, but from the immense moral influence that such transactions have given to a country supreme in freedom and civilization, as well as wealth, over the rest of the world.

A great and signal proof of the position that I have laid down, that the circulating medium cannot be extended beyond that point which is required by the real wealth and transactions of the country without becoming depreciated, was afforded by the state of things in England previous to the Act enforcing cash payments being passed. At the period of the peace, the rapid declension of the prices of agricultural produce spread general distress. The primary cause was the decline of our commercial prosperity, which dated further back than some persons

were aware of. The closing of the ports of the Continent against us, had been in some measure a dead letter, till such time as the complete subjugation of Prussia and Russia rendered them active parties to this policy, so hostile to the interests of our trade. As early as 1812, Russia merchants became embarrassed, and a fall took place in the value of houses, with domains for the purposes of pleasure or convenience attached to them, within fifty miles of the metropolis. Those which had, from the prosperous condition of our merchants, sold at an extravagant rate, were the first to be affected when commerce no longer flourished to the same extent. An immense fall in the value of land took place from similar causes at the end of the American war, but quickly subsided as the trade of the country sprung up with increased vigour. The glut of goods in the warehouses at home occasioned, as is well known, that improvident exportation to South America, rendered still more unsuccessful by an ignorance of the state of the country to which it was made, and of the wants of its population, which proved so ruinous to many concerned in it. Then it was that distrust first began to manifest itself in the monied world, and I know that in a letter, from one of the first and most experienced bankers of the metropolis, the circumstances of the times were pointed out as reasons for caution in advancing money to

his customers. As the evil extended itself, the stoppage of some branches of trade was felt in the declining prices of agricultural produce, and the country banks, accustomed to lend money to tradesmen and farmers, looked with a more jealous eye to the amount and value of their stock, and perceiving their security less solid than before, they refused the usual accommodations to those individuals, who, called upon to discharge fixed obligations in rent and taxes at fixed periods, were forced to carry their stock to market, and the consequent glut occasioned so rapid a fall in prices, that an almost general failure of the farmers took place. All those who had lent them money came upon them in this moment of distress, and those who did not owe money, were, in order to pay their rents, obliged to sell to such disadvantage, that they quickly became impoverished. No exertions on the part of government could have entirely obviated these evils, for if by the non-employment and diminished gains of the manufacturers there is a less demand for food, or a demand for it at a lower money price, the wealth of the farmer and landed proprietor must sink in proportion; and in proportion to the diminished wealth of society, the circulating medium will contract itself. But thanks to the misnamed liberal system then in vogue, to the doctrines of cheap bread and sound currency, a series of acts of the most

monstrous injustice, ruinous and oppressive to individuals, and inconsistent in their immediate operation with the best interests of the state, took place. At the very time that a fall in all agricultural produce, and the consequent embarrassment of the landowners occasioned a prodigious emigration, and a check to the home demand for our manufactures, which again reacted upon the agricultural interests; while by a stagnation of industry the glut of agricultural produce in the market was so great, that it was actually imagined, and seriously stated that the country was afflicted by over-production, and by the cultivation of too great a portion of its soil; the government relaxed from that principle of protection afforded by the Corn Laws, under which England had so long flourished, and in the course of eighteen months a prodigious importation took place. It was then that the most opulent individuals were reduced to distress. Instances must be familiar to every one of estates foreclosed from the inability to raise sums equal to one third or fourth of their original value; of the possessors of large properties finding themselves without rents, and ladies of high rank being informed their jointures could no longer be paid; of respectable and industrious farmers, who had begun life with a capital of two or three thousand pounds, being suddenly reduced to the state of paupers, and who

were then insultingly told, they had rode good horses and drank port wine on a market day, and that their daughters had been educated at boarding schools, and played on the pianoforte too long; that they must now learn the one to follow his own plough, and the other to milk the cows.

But when at length the fury of this great crisis had spent itself, when the prices of agricultural produce had sunk in England below those of the Continent,* and the few individuals who had continued to pay their rents out of their capital were swept away, and the landlords, either from motives of humanity or the necessity of the case, had agreed to a large diminution of their rents on the lands let on lease, so that it again became possible for farming business to go on, although with reduced profits, then the return to cash payments extended its mischievous effects to all money transactions, and in every instance of contract between debtor and creditor, defrauded the one to enrich the other. It was in vain urged, upon the attention of government, that a man who had borrowed three ounces of gold ought not to be obliged to pay four, and that an equitable adjustment of all former contracts ought to be allowed, so at least

*In 1821, oats were cheaper in London than at Odessa; and in 1822, meat was cheaper in London than at Paris.

as not to crush the debtor by the obligation to pay in an altered currency, when, in fact, his real debt was already rendered so much heavier, by the change in the value of landed property; and of every branch of industry by the pressure of the times. Government turned a deaf ear to these just remonstrances, and there cannot exist a shadow of doubt that this arose from a natural unwillingness to pay the national creditor at a lower nominal rate in gold than in paper, which would have assumed the appearance of national bankruptcy; and no other alternative existed, except that of fairly acknowledging that the error into which government had fallen in allowing, and even encouraging the Bank to issue a depreciated currency, rendered it necessary, whenever cash payments were restored, to add at least one-third more to the existing taxes, raised for the purpose of paying the national creditor. This change in the currency, which acted retrospectively on the fortune of every individual in the country, by enriching the fundholders, and the holders of mortgages and capital lent in any shape, secured a large body of partisans to the system. The case might be, and was puzzled by talking of a recurrence to a sound metallic currency, and of the pledge of parliament to that effect, forgetting its subsequent vote that stamped the depreciated paper with the authority of the state; but in whatever

words it was couched, or by whatever artful reasoning it was varnished over, it was still directly contrary to that broad rule of natural justice which requires, that the measure by which a man deals out and receives shall be one and the same.

One of the worst consequences of this unjustifiable measure was the temptation, and indeed the justification that it afforded to acts of substantial fraud and injustice. At that period every man's hand was against his brother; for there is no doubt that every creditor who recovered for a debt contracted in depreciated paper, the same nominal value in gold; that every landlord who received in gold the rent agreed for when Bank paper was the legal currency, exacted more than his due. Many committed this wrong with honest intentions; and many, aware of the advantage they possessed, strove to profit by it, by all the iniquitous means which, in so many instances, a perversion of the law too easily affords. This demoralizing measure, so inconsistent with the fair transactions becoming the first nation in the world, produced similar effects on society, to those produced by the great change in the value of the currency which the failure of Law's scheme caused in France; and which the able and lively pen of Montesquieu has so forcibly described. "J'ai vu une nation, naturellement généreuse, pervertie en un

instant, depuis le dernier des sujets jusqu'au plus grand Les hommes les plus vertueux faire des choses indignes, et violer les premiers principes de la justice, sur ce vain prétexte, qu'on la leur avoit violer. Ils appeloient des lois odieuses en garantie des actions les plus lâches, et nommoient nécessité, injustice et perfidie J'ai vu un honnête citoyen dans ces temps malheureux ne se coucher qu'en disant; j'ai ruiné une famille aujourd'hui; demain j'en ruinerai une autre." *

And what object, after all, was attained by this boasted measure? If a return to a metallic currency was necessary, it might equally have been effected, and an equitable adjustment of the contracts of individuals, upon a calculation of the actual worth of the money in which they were made, might have taken place. Admitting to the fullest extent the propriety or the actual obligation to pay the national creditor in gold, a real addition would have been made to that

* I have seen a nation naturally generous, perverted in one instant from the lowest subject to the highest The most virtuous men do unworthy things, and violate the first principles of justice under the vain pretext that it had been violated to themselves. They called odious laws in justification of the basest actions, and denominated injustice and perfidy, necessity I have seen an honest citizen, in those disastrous times, go to bed, saying, "I have ruined one family to-day, to-morrow I shall ruin another."

portion of the taxes raised to defray the interest of our debt. In the present case a real addition has taken place, notwithstanding the boasted reduction of taxes, to the weight of the whole burden imposed upon the people. The sum now raised is greater, reckoned in gold, than it was when its nominal amount in paper was much higher. There is great reason also to believe, that if such great embarrassments had not taken place in the circumstances of individuals, if our corn laws had not been tampered with, and the disasters that have occurred to our commerce been caused by the unwise measures of Government, that the prosperity which the country would shortly have attained, would have rendered any extraordinary burden imposed, in order to keep rigorous faith with the public creditor, merely temporary. I think I have proved that currency follows wealth, and enlarges itself in proportion to commercial prosperity. It cannot be denied, that if fifty millions either in paper or gold are sufficient for the circulating medium of Great Britain at the present moment, that the same amount in the time of Queen Elizabeth would probably have been so excessive as to produce a prodigious depreciation: and by parity of reasoning, the time may come when the present amount of our currency will be far below our actual wants. At the moment that cash payments were resolved upon, heavy losses sus-

tained by the commercial and agricultural bodies had rendered the amount of circulating medium, required but a few years before, redundant. But if sound measures had been adopted, if Great Britain had recovered from her late shocks, as she did after the American war, not only the same circulating medium, but a more extensive one, would have become necessary. If Government had taken care to do what it ought to have done before, namely, to restrict the Bank from farther over issues so as to depreciate paper beyond the mark it had already reached, and confined their issues to their actual nominal amount, gold and paper would gradually have become at par, and at least every man would, as he came nearer and nearer to the point of paying in gold, have done so in consequence of the improved value of his property, and the increase of the burden and the means of discharging it would have gone hand in hand. And now that this measure of injustice has taken its full effect, we have found the country equally deluged with country bank notes, and on the first moment of commercial difficulty, the distress of all classes equally severe, and the scarcity of money equally great.

It would have been well if Government had paused before it adopted measures so injurious and oppressive to individuals, as those of a

change in the currency and of the corn laws. It would have been well if those who have so eagerly promoted them, had asked themselves how the interests of the state can be separated from those of its subjects, or the prosperity of the body politic and that of the members that compose it rest on a different basis. When the timbers are rotten, the proud vessel that navigates the ocean sinks to rise no more. When the foundations are undermined, the lofty tower falls and crumbles into dust. How then came the government of Great Britain to suppose that the national prosperity could be advanced by a wanton disregard of the rights and interests of large and important classes of her population? How came the parliament of Great Britain to adopt a measure, and to conceive that it could be profitable, which was avowedly unjust? Surely men placed in power ought to have hesitated before they had destroyed the property of so many persons, and deprived others of the earnings of a life of industry. It would have been well if they had reflected on the sufferings they were about to inflict; had they deigned to look on the humble children of toil, bewailing the loss of property acquired by years of laborious exertion; and the prouder sons of affluence slowly retiring from the halls of their ancestors, perhaps bearing their shattered fortunes to a fo-

reign land, and mentally exclaiming, in the anguish of their hearts, *Nos patriæ fines et dulcia linquimus arva.*

It has been the fashion to extol the abilities of the political economists of the present day; their arguments, however, have carried no conviction to my mind; and they appear, to me, to consist solely of assertions that it is necessary to relieve the country from the present high money price of bread; that it is our interest to purchase corn where it can be got cheapest; and that the landowners and agriculturists do not know their own interests. All this empty declamation might, I think, be easily answered by the plain but forcible remark that Frederick the Great made to a counsellor of state, who, in a long report, pointed out the advantages which would accrue from allowing a free importation of eggs into the Prussian dominions. "What," replied the monarch, with that rapid glance of intellect which, like his one eagle eye, was characteristic of himself, "do not my own hens lay?" Let us apply this homely rule to England. Do not our own fields grow corn? And is it not notorious, that corn is grown at a cheaper rate in Great Britain, not in money indeed, but in labour and human exertion, than it is in any other country in Europe; and that each individual can by his industry command and enjoy a greater portion of food? If two acres of land of equal fertility

exist in France and England; if one acre, by the superior capital laid out in its improvement, bears one-third more corn than the other, at the expense of less labour; and if the corn, when raised, is conveyed on good roads or by water carriage to a market close at hand, while the inferior produce of the other is transported through almost impassable lanes, which is in reality the cheapest?

Ministers, in entertaining the question of a free trade in corn, have, I have no doubt, acted with upright intentions, and to the best of their judgment on this subject, have conscientiously discharged their duty to their country. It is, however, one which it is dangerous to trifle with. Those who urge its consideration with so much heat and violence, ought to reflect how unsafe it is to excite the popular passions, and to encourage popular clamour as they have done, on a question requiring, above all others, a calm and impartial examination on the part of men, whose intellect and knowledge raise them far above the common multitude. It ought to be remembered, that a cry for cheap bread, in a moment of distress, caused the first blood to be shed in France at the period of her revolution; and prepared the way for the disastrous scenes of anarchy and terror that followed. It was not the principles of constitutional freedom, so nobly asserted at the commencement of that revolution,

which produced these scenes of horror, but a fatal disunion between the rich and the poor. Hitherto, in our happily poised constitution, the interests of the higher and lower classes have been felt to be identic. Woe to that man who shall attempt to divide them, and burst asunder those ties that bind society together for its general benefit. Such an object in the earlier ages of the world, when wealth and oppression were synonymous, might have been cherished by the philanthropist. The tradition of a golden age of innocence, when men in the state of equality originally established by nature, enjoyed in common the fruits of the earth, might and no doubt did present a dream of happiness dear to the humane heart. But since that period, commerce and civilization have advanced hand in hand, and large masses of capital accumulated by different individuals have procured inestimable benefits to society, and increased the comforts of all its members; and as experience has proved, they have by fostering the intelligence, the independence, and influence of particular classes, afforded the strongest barrier against arbitrary power. This truth is generally felt and acknowledged; and that a man should be lauded to the skies as an useful member of the state, so long as he sells hemp or tallow imported from Russia at the highest price he can get for them, and the instant he has vested his capital in

land, and sells the same articles produced on his own estate by the labour of his own countrymen, or lets the estate itself to the best advantage, that he should be held up to popular hatred as a monopolizer and an oppressor, is too ridiculous to be worthy of attention.

Between the two inferior classes, the agricultural and manufacturing bodies, the injustice and absurdity of the principle is equally apparent. The manufacturers usually earn twice as much, or at least one half more wages than the agriculturists; but the cry of the one class for cheap bread, and their combinations for higher wages, at the very time they enjoyed a considerable share of the luxuries of life, have convulsed the whole empire, while the sufferings of the other have been too long unheeded. But were the agricultural labourers to assemble tumultuously, and inquire why certain opulent merchants have made immense wealth by selling, at an exorbitant rate of profit, those manufactured articles necessary to clothe themselves and their families? Why their clerks dressed like gentlemen, and obtained high salaries extorted from the sufferings of their tattered and half naked children?—Would not their reasoning be equally specious with the complaints of the manufacturers against the landed interest? To both, a wise government would give no countenance. It would know that the poor cannot be relieved by

destroying any branch of national wealth or domestic industry; but by ensuring, according to the old and decried system, as much as possible employment to every individual, and a due interchange of all the commodities raised by the productive powers of society. No other remedy can avail to alleviate poverty and distress. The boasted one of a reduction of taxes so as to enable the landlord to reduce his rents, is a mischievous delusion, in which I am sorry to see even the landowners themselves participate. With respect to the owners of land such a reduction would be altogether insufficient; for if rents were reduced to one half of what they now are, the taking off taxes to a far less amount of a man's income could not place him in the same situation; but not only are the greater part of the taxes not levied upon the land, they are not even paid, at least directly, by those who cultivate and possess it. But if the whole revenue of the country were raised in a direct tax upon land, it would not raise the price of bread, which would depend upon the demand for it, and the money offered for it in the market, or the means of those who purchased, not on the wants of those who sold.

In France the far greater part of the taxes levied by the government, are imposed directly upon the land, and yet there the money price of bread is lower than in England. But, even if

by the removal of taxes the owners of estates in England were to be as well off as they now are, although receiving diminished rents, unless a law were to be made, and could be enforced, altering the proportion which now exists between the value of land, labour, and capital, the profits of the farmer and labourer would be equally affected, as the rents of the landlord, by a diminution in the price of bread. And is there a man in all England so blind, so besotted to this new system, so absurdly called liberal, as to imagine that the proportionate value of land, labour, and capital, can be changed, except by the operation of causes beyond the control of the legislature? Would they propose that the landlord should be debarred from accepting the rent which, at public auction, might be offered for his land; or the labourer prevented from working at such wages as would procure a subsistence, however scanty, for his family? The absurdity of such a doctrine is evident.

It has been often said that men are guided by words. The popularity which this system has acquired, the faint and almost dastardly resistance made to it by the landed proprietors afford a proof of it. Lady Macbeth said, "not all the perfumes of Arabia can sweeten this one little hand." And it appears that all the calamities which have been suffered have not cured Englishmen of their prejudices in favour of a system

to which one little word has been annexed. It is now said to be liberal to give no preferences by commercial treaties. But would it have been less becoming a great nation, the natural protectress of other free states, to have united her interests to those of humanity and justice, rather than to have welcomed the first and most flagitious candidate for her favour? Would it have been less liberal, or less politic, to have secured permanent advantages for our own manufactures, in giving a preference, for example, to the cotton of the South American republics over that of the Pacha of Egypt. In that case we should have afforded substantial aid to the cause of liberty and humanity in another hemisphere, and paralyzed the arm of that perfidious and murderous chieftain who has, unfortunately for humanity, been allowed "to wade through slaughter to a throne, and shut the gates of mercy on mankind." It is the wealth of England, the millions paid by her merchants for Egyptian cotton, that has enabled Mehemet Ali to equip his fleets, and organise those regular armies, which have spread desolation and carnage from the burning sands of Nubia to the classic mountains of Greece. The high-minded Douglas refused the proffered hand of Marmion, whom he received by order of his sovereign, and proudly and scornfully told him, his castle was his king's, but his hand was his own: but

Great Britain, that owes no allegiance to any earthly power, has voluntarily embraced this criminal connexion, and has received the produce which the strong arm of oppression has wrung from a suffering people, sinking under severe toil, like the Israelites of old, and in return has furnished the weapons destined to immolate fresh victims. But ought Great Britain to make no distinction between right and wrong, and to acknowledge no difference in her feelings towards the friends or the oppressors of the human race? It is, I will venture to affirm, her interest as well as her duty, at the present crisis above all others, to do so. Commonplace declamation will not alter facts. The despotic powers of the continent view her with jealous and hostile feelings. I have heard good and upright men, the friends of freedom, lament the common use of the expression, once consecrated by custom, that of our natural enemies the French. That the French are not our natural enemies is true; but can any one doubt that their old arbitrary government in conformity to the principles of Lewis the Fourteenth, who advised Charles the Second to withdraw his confidence from the honest minister who told him the colonies ought not to be taxed but by their own consent; and who recommended his grandson to preserve the Inquisition in Spain, as a means of maintaining the public tranquillity: can any one doubt that

such a government was the natural enemy of England, and of the example set by her glorious revolution.

What might the fate of Great Britain now be, if the Whigs of that day had not watched and resisted the hostile efforts of France, and connected their country, not by mere treaties, but in the bonds of common interest and close commercial intercourse with the free and Protestant states of the continent? That policy was discarded at the late peace; and such a state of things might afford grounds for the most serious apprehensions, if the course, that we have lately adopted in our foreign relations, did not prove that they were now administered by an abler head and a more English heart.

And for what purpose have we inflicted so many deep wounds on the wealth and credit of the State, and spread on every side confusion, ruin, and universal dismay? It is in an attempt to reduce the price of bread from a mere unphilosophical notion of the word *cheap*. A prejudice at variance even with the avowed doctrines of the very set of men who have adopted it. Ridicule has lately been cast upon the various theories by which the value of Bank paper was attempted to be established, when not supported upon the solid basis of being payable in gold. Among other positions, this has been mentioned as a subject of sarcasm and merriment, that a Bank

note is an unit of value: by which it must be meant that a Bank note may, by a decree of the legislature, represent a certain portion of the precious metals, or of the general wealth of the country. This system is not ridiculous, provided we admit that money merely represents wealth, but is not in itself wealth: or that gold has a separate value as money to what it has as a merchandise; for in that case, if an arbitrary value can be given to gold, why not to a stone; and if to a stone, why not to paper? But if gold is valuable only as a merchandise; if its capability of acting as money rests solely on the price it bears in the market as a merchandise, can it be denied, even by the most ignorant, that as a measure of value it becomes a variable one? That it may be increased or diminished in value; not only in proportion to the quantity of it existing in the world compared to all other commodities, but by the greater or less estimation which casual circumstances, or a particular state of society give it in the eyes of mankind. That it is, in fact, as Adam Smith says, a good measure of value at the same time and place, but at the same time and place only.

If it were true, as many able writers have stated, that the value of gold depended upon the quantity existing in the world, or even the quantity brought into the market compared to that of all other commodities, the money price

of corn would be a measure or test of its comparative value at two given places. But I maintain that gold does not act as a great weight placed in one scale against all other produce, or species of wealth, placed in the other. Gold is but a component part, and perhaps but a small component part of the wealth of society, although employed as a measure of the whole: but to me it seems clear and undeniable, that the whole quantity of gold existing in the world might be lessened, and yet that corn, remaining as abundant as before, might exchange for more gold than it did previously; and that in particular countries this has really been the case. Suppose, for instance, that there were one million of ounces of gold in England, and that manufacturing industry of any kind did not exist; if nothing was brought into the market to exchange for provisions but gold, that million of ounces would purchase all the corn in the country, and the price of a bushel of corn would be equivalent to, and represented by a certain small portion of gold. Reduce that million of ounces to five hundred thousand; in the same state of things a bushel of corn would be equal to only half the gold it was equal to before; but if at the same time other commodities came into the market, the whole of which appeared three times more valuable in the estimation of society than the half million of ounces of gold: that half mil-

lion of ounces of gold would then only be equal to the value of one fourth of the corn of the country, and could purchase but one fourth of it in the market; the money price of bread would then be twice as high as when there was double the quantity of gold in the country, because gold had lost its value in the market as the industry, and wealth, and comforts of the whole community increased. In this manner, I venture to affirm the high money price of bread, if not caused by scarcity, is the measure and proof of the wealth of society: a comfortable truth for England to know, where it is always found impossible to keep down the price of the quartern loaf for long together. Notwithstanding all the ruinous experiments of our Political Economists, their dabbling with the currency, with commerce, and the corn laws; so soon as these severe shocks are in some measure got over, and the country begins to breathe again; again bread rises in price, and people begin to eat the quartern loaf at a shilling, who were starving when it was at sixpence.

Indeed, I believe, that if it were possible at the present moment to form a comparative scale of the money price of bread in all the countries of the world, and then to inquire into the quantity of food shared by each of their inhabitants, the degree of general comfort and enjoyment arising from the possession of luxuries and ma-

nufactured articles, it would uniformly be found that a high money price of bread existed in all prosperous communities; and that in proportion to their poverty and wretchedness, that its money price became low. I know of no exception existing at the present time; nor am I aware of any of which history affords even a faint tradition. When the money price of bread is low, a less share of food, and of a worse quality, is consumed by each individual. To obtain the surplus produce which high cultivation gives, capital must be employed. In poor countries it does not exist; and if it did it would not obtain an adequate reward in raising food for a distressed and unemployed population. But in any country where, by improved skill, a given quantity of human labour produces a great return, a certain portion of that labour will be naturally directed to the raising a larger and better supply of food for the whole community. Men, it is well known, will make sacrifices of comforts and even of necessaries for the attainment of that which gratifies their vanity, or raises their consequence in the eyes of others; but it is a general principle, that in proportion to the opulence of society, and the ease with which its members can satisfy their wants and inclinations, a demand for food of a superior quality will arise. This is uniformly found to be the case. The Pole lives on black bread; the

poor Highlander on oatmeal; the Frenchman, in great part, on soup meagre and vegetables. We hear it lamented, that in England the common people are no longer satisfied with brown bread as formerly. Compare the fare of these different nations to that of Englishmen who live upon white bread, pork, cheese, and butter, and who enjoy many foreign luxuries, such as tea, sugar, and coffee. Their successful industry enables them to pay that price without which the capital necessary to produce this extraordinary supply of human sustenance could not be put in motion. The high money price of bread, of which, with short-sighted ignorance we have complained, unmindful of the blessings of which it constitutes an unerring proof, is not only an evidence of commercial prosperity, and of the general ease and comfort of society; but as these must depend upon greater or less degrees of civilization and freedom, it is a test by which we can estimate the advances of both, and of man himself to a more perfect state of social happiness. This system is not one formed in the closet, upon mere theory; it is the result of the observations I have made during a long course of travels in various parts of the world, when my mind has been naturally led to consider the causes of the difference that exists in the wealth and comforts of society, and the price of provisions in particular countries, compared

to others. Every where I have found the low money price of provisions accompanied with wretchedness in the great bulk of the people; and I have never seen any individual offer the food necessary for human subsistence, or its more luxurious gratifications, for a mere trifle in money, without a painful conviction of the scanty recompense which the labour of the community could command. I have seen a fine turkey sold in the southern part of Russia, in the capital of the Don Cossacks, for eight pence: why? because few possessed eight pence which they could afford to part with to purchase it. I have seen wine in France at three pence a bottle, in a district in which it is not produced but imported, where the great bulk of the inhabitants drink water; because wine, even at that price, is too dear for their scanty means. But it is not in Russia where the cultivators of the soil are slaves to their lords, who, if they allow them to exercise any industry on their own account, do it on the condition of their paying a tax out of their earnings, a tax uncertain and arbitrary, levied at pleasure, depending on the increasing profits of the slave and the insatiable avarice of the master; it is not in such a country that the people can possess the usual incitements to industry, or reap its rewards. They cannot acquire wealth, and it therefore becomes impossible that they should offer it in any shape,

either in gold or in produce whose value is measured by gold in exchange for their food. Neither can the French peasant who lives in those provinces of France where superstition and the influence of the priests have taken the firmest hold, and keep the community at large in ignorance, and where few manufactures exist; neither can the poor French peasant afford to drink the wine, which, to Englishmen, appears so incredibly cheap. Change the situation of the people inhabiting these countries; give freedom to their exertions and a spur to their industry, and so soon will their labour become valuable, and the bread exchanged for that labour bear a high money price.

If, as I observed at the outset of my observations, we carry our thoughts back to that period of the world when manufacturing industry did not exist, and when the possessor of land commanded the whole labour of society, and enjoyed the whole produce of the soil, after affording a coarse and scanty nourishment to his vassals, this truth appears still more evident. When such a state of things exists, how can the inferior classes give gold, or any thing which can be exchanged in the market for gold, as the price of their food? It is impossible: money, if in such a state of things it circulates at all in the shape of coin, must be composed of the least valuable metals. Thus the first money of the

Romans was copper; and it is a remarkable fact, that at this very day, in one of the departments of the French empire, corn, owing to the poverty of the people, is used as the instrument of exchange, and that money composed of coin is seldom seen. Many persons will be disposed to doubt this fact, but I refer them to the account of Corsica published by M. de Beaumont, a public functionary lately residing in that island. He describes it as mountainous and barren, and the population as uncivilized, fierce, and ignorant, and devoid of habits of industry. He informs us that, from the defective administration and from the barbarous custom of private revenge, assassinations are frequent; and to shew the great proportion of these crimes over those of theft, he instances a report made to the prefect of forty-eight murders, and only fourteen thefts, being committed in a given space of time. And in this country, the poverty of which we cannot doubt, not only corn does not bear a high money price, but money itself is almost unknown.

Gold, therefore, is not a general measure by which the cheapness of corn can be measured. Gold may be cheap, and is cheap in England from her superior industry and skill: more gold, therefore, is required to measure corn and labour. But corn may be cheap relatively to labour, although gold is cheap relatively to both. To endeavour, in a country where gold itself is

low in value, and when in the market, a certain weight of gold is equal in value to a given portion of corn, to make money, composed of that gold, of a higher value, and equal to a larger portion of corn, is as unreasonable as it would be to say, that a number is both even and odd; or to place a certain quantity of merchandize in a scale, and declare its weight equal to one pound, and to half a pound at one and the same moment. Therefore, I again repeat it, the money price of bread may be high while bread itself is cheap, and that the high money price of bread, if not produced by scarcity, is the natural and inevitable result of manufacturing and commercial prosperity. It is the consequence and test of wealth, intimately blended with, and inseparable from private ease and political superiority. All just and consistent theory tends to shew, and experience has, I think, fully proved, that it is not and cannot be the cause of poverty and distress.

The great rise in the money price of bread, or rather that depreciation of gold, that lowering of its exchangeable value with respect to provisions, which has taken place with such remarkable rapidity in England during forty years, namely, from the end of the American war to 1813, was, I apprehend, merely the result of our extraordinary commercial and manufacturing prosperity. Whenever that prosperity is destroyed, gold will re-assume its ancient value.

Could an army of Turks reduce us to the miserable bondage to which they have reduced the most ingenious people in Europe, we might be as poor as the Greeks have been, and our bread, watered with the tears of indignant patriotism, might bear as low a money price as theirs. If the Inquisition of Spain could be established on our shores, to cramp the advancement of science, and to bind the human mind in the chains of superstition and ignorance, we might become slothful paupers at the gates of convents, and the exchangeable value of our corn would vanish with our industry.

And if it is admitted that the money price of corn is not the test of its real price to the community, but merely a measure of its relative value to other commodities; to disturb which is to interfere in a ruinous and unjust manner with the productive powers of society, and with the property and gains of individuals, it clearly follows, that the free importation of corn is a measure, of all others, most destructive and injurious in its nature. It would compromise equally our agricultural, our commercial and our financial prosperity, and the vital interests of the state. Under no circumstances, therefore, ought the importation of corn into Great Britain to be allowed, but in the event of a real deficiency in the usual and necessary supply. In that case, by the high money price which we can give for it,

if corn is any where to be procured in the world, we can command it. But so long as we produce a sufficient supply at home for the subsistence of the people, no uneasiness need be felt at its high money price. If the means of paying that high price fail, the price itself will soon cease to exist. Whenever our manufactures and commerce shall decay, the price of bread will fall, and fall low enough; and if ever the moment should arrive when it shall be lower in England than in the other countries of Europe, the knell of our departed greatness will have tolled.

Let then the Parliament of Great Britain pause; let them, while there is yet time, save the country from the evils that threaten it. Let them remember, that in England the money price of bread has been high, while bread itself has been actually cheap; let them beware, lest, by the rash measures proposed, they may reverse the position, and render its money price low, and bread in reality dear.

Here I will close my observations. They are, I conceive, worthy of examination, and at least, such as require an answer. I am fully sensible of the imperfect state in which they are put forth; but, in arranging these few thoughts, I have laboured under great disadvantages; as, by my residence in a distant part of the Continent, I have been entirely deprived of all the assistance I might have derived from books and

various public documents, from which I might have adduced proofs of my positions, or come to the knowledge of facts which might have corrected the errors into which, it is probable, I have fallen. As it is, I have been unassisted; and if the composition is a flimsy one, it may be accounted for, since, like the spider's web, it is drawn from my own thin store. If, however, the principle on which it rests is correct, abler heads, and more eloquent pens than mine, will not be wanting to enforce it, with all the powers of reasoning, which I have failed to bring forward, in its support. Such as it is, I address it to the People of England, to be, in all probability, like the warnings of Cassandra, despised and disregarded till it is too late; and until such a time as the insidious foe, with which we now parley, shall have been received within the citadel of our greatness, and humbled the prosperity and lofty pride of Great Britain to the dust.

THE END.

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