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E S S A Y  
ON THE  
C O R N L A W S;

TO EVINCE,

On the most indubitable ground,

In opposition to the Inflammatory Memorial for the Merchants, Traders, and Manufacturers of Glasgow,

The Equity and Expediency of prohibiting the Importation of OATS or OAT-MEAL,

UNLESS

The price of the latter shall be at, or above, sixteen shillings per boll.

EDINBURGH:

Printed in the Year MDCCLXXVII.

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W. A. B. ...  
S. W. A. I. M. R. O. D

E S S A Y  
ON THE  
C O R N L A W S.

IN spring 1777, a bill was brought into Parliament, the intention of which was to amend some clauses, so far as they related to Scotland, in the acts passed in the 13th and 14th years of his present Majesty, relative to the importation of victual into Great Britain, and the exportation therefrom.

This bill having been brought in nigh the end of the session, it was delayed, that all parties interested might have full time to consider the same.

It is a matter of the most general and national importance, that this bill, if founded on just and equitable principles, be passed into a law; and that, if otherwise, it be rejected.

On the 2d May 1777, a memorial for the merchants, traders, and manufacturers of Glasgow, was published, and transmitted to the other royal boroughs. This memorial reprobates the bill in every particular, and even condemns, in part, the former corn laws. This memorial raised a great flame in the country; the authors of it were highly commended by some, in concerting a spirited opposition to this bill, which, it was represented,

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fented, would, in its consequences, have ruined the manufactures and commerce of Scotland. The intention of the present Essay is to prove the demand made by the Glasgow merchants, &c. to be highly unreasonable; and that it is not only just, but for the real interest of this country, that the present bill be passed into a law.

The memorial from the Glasgow merchants, &c. concludes thus: "Upon the whole, the memorialists are perfectly satisfied with the law as it stands at present, provided amendments be made to reduce the import-rate of oat-meal to thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll, as formerly."

As the merchants, &c. of Glasgow will be perfectly satisfied with the amendments proposed by them, as to the import-rate of oat-meal, it appears intirely unnecessary to enter into any discussion with regard to the import rate of wheat, barley, pease, and beans; because the landholders have made no complaint with regard to the import rate of these, and the trading and manufacturing part are perfectly satisfied therewith.

The single point then in issue is, Whether the import-rate of oat-meal ought to be thirteen shillings and four-pence, or sixteen shillings *per* boll? By the 13th of his present Majesty, *inter alia*, it is enacted, "That, from and after the commencement of this act, all oat-meal imported from Ireland, or from any other part beyond the seas, into any port or place in Scotland, where the price of oat-meal, ascertained in the manner before directed, does not exceed sixteen shillings *per* boll, weighing eight stones troy; as

' as also the ship, &c. shall be forfeited, &c." Most of the boroughs in Scotland petitioned the House of Commons the next session of Parliament, that the import-rate of oat-meal should be reduced to thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll, as formerly.—The desire of this petition was refused.

Some public spirited gentlemen, members of the House of Commons, in order to obviate the defects in the Corn laws, brought in a bill last session of Parliament, wherein it was proposed, "In order to regulate the importation and exportation of oats and oat-meal, that a proof of the prices of oat-meal alone shall be taken; and when it is at, or above sixteen shillings *per* boll, such proof shall be sufficient ground for allowing oats and oat-meal, and other produce of oats, to be entered unshipped, and landed without being charged with any higher duty than two-pence *per* quarter." By the 13th of his present Majesty, one rule was established with regard to the import-rate of oats, another with regard to that of oat-meal, which must have happened through inadvertency. It is oat-meal, and not oats, that is the food of the people in Scotland in general; therefore, if oats and oat-meal shall be allowed to be imported, whenever oat-meal rises to such a price as to render importation proper, it is impossible there can be any ground of complaint against the bill on this account. The single question therefore is, Whether the importation of oats and oat-meal should be prohibited, till the price is sixteen shillings *per* boll? or whether it should be allowed, when it comes to thirteen shillings and four-pence

pence? which is what the Glasgow merchants, &c. contend for. If it be reasonable, when the riches of a country are greatly increased, that the proprietors of land should participate the effects thereof, as well as the other citizens, (and it does not occur how this can be denied), it follows necessarily, that the prices of grain ought not to be always the same. If this was to be the case, the landed men would have reason to grieve, in place of rejoicing, at the prosperity of their country; they would be no better than mere beasts of burden to the trading and manufacturing parts of this kingdom; the more the latter flourished, the more hard would be the condition of the former. Whilst the prices of other things increased, in proportion to the riches of the country, grain, the commodity, or manufacture, or what you please to call it, by which they live, would always continue the same; and thus, these gentlemen amidst the greatest prosperity of their fellow-citizens, would every day be becoming more poor; because, whilst their income continued the same, they would have higher wages to pay their servants, and higher prices to give for all the commodities they wanted.

If it be unreasonable, that the price of victual should continue eternally the same, it is undeniable, that the alteration, by the 13th of his present Majesty, and as amended by the bill in question, is highly equitable; for it shall be proved in the sequel, that, upwards of these hundred years past, the import-rate of oat-meal has never

never been less than thirteen shillings and fourpence *per* boll; and, if this shall be made appear, it must follow, that these who contend the import-rate ought not to have been augmented, argue very unfairly, and without a shadow of reason to support their argument.

By an act passed in the 1672, in the reign of Charles the II. severe penalties are enacted against the importers of victual from Ireland into Scotland; because, notwithstanding of the importation of victual having been discharged by many former acts, "Sundry persons, preferring their own private interest to their obedience to the law and the good of the kingdom, have adventured to import diverse quantities of victual from Ireland, and had vended and sold the same in this kingdom; whereby the *sale of corns, growing within this kingdom, had been stopped, and much money had been unwarrantably carried out of the kingdom.*"

At the same time, his Majesty's Privy Council was authorized "to allow importation of victual for such time as they shall think fit, the price of victual within the kingdom, for the time, being at eight pounds the boll of bear and meal, and ten pounds wheat, and above." By another act passed in the 1703, in the reign of Queen Anne, the aforesaid act passed in the 1672 was ratified and approved with a very few amendments. And it was thereby enacted, that "when, by reason of dearth, the prices of victual exceed the rates after mentioned, viz. wheat, twelve pounds the boll; bear, barley, malt, and

‘ and meal, eight pounds *per* boll; and oats  
 ‘ and pease, six pounds *per* boll;—the Lords of  
 ‘ her Majesty’s Privy Council shall have power,  
 ‘ after due trial by them taken, to suspend and  
 ‘ discharge the execution of the said prohibi-  
 ‘ tory act, for such space and time as the exi-  
 ‘ gence of the said dearth shall require, and no  
 ‘ longer.”

From the above it appears, that, upwards of a hundred years ago, the import of oat-meal was thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll; and even when the meal came to this price, the Lords of the Privy Council were not ordained to allow the importation of meal; they were only authorised to do so if they judged it proper. Such seems to be the plain meaning of these acts. On this account it is indisputable, that if the desire of the merchants, &c. of Glasgow was to be complied with, and the import-rate of oat-meal fixed at thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll, or eight pounds Scots, and a judge or judges ordained to open the ports when this was the case; the situation of land-holders would be worse now than it was a hundred years since, abstracting from the very great difference of the times, in point of riches.

By an act in the 1707, in the reign of her late Majesty Queen Anne, the powers of the Privy Council in Scotland having been taken away, the prohibitory laws against the importation of victual could not be suspended; and in this situation matters continued during the space of thirty-four years: In all which time, the importation of  
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victual into Scotland was absolutely stopped; and yet, what is very remarkable, no inconvenience was found to arise therefrom, till 1740, when there was a great dearth from the badness of the crop, the oat-meal having risen to upwards of one pound five shillings *per* boll.—No one could deny, that in such circumstances the prohibitory laws against importation should be suspended. Therefore in the year 1741, in the reign of George II. an act was passed, vesting the Courts of Session, Justiciary, and Exchequer with the same powers the Privy Council formerly had in Scotland.

This seems to have been the only object of the law. Every one must have been sensible of the propriety of opening the ports in Scotland, in the time of so great a dearth; and further, the Legislators do not seem to have troubled themselves about the matter, as the Privy Council was authorised to allow importation when the price of oat-meal was at or above thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll; the Court of Session, &c. were empowered to do the same when the prices came this length.

From the above state of facts it is incontrovertible, that, upwards of a hundred years since, even the Privy Council could not allow the importation of oats or oat-meal, unless the price of oat-meal rose to thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll. When this is considered, what is proposed by the bill in question, viz. that neither oats nor oat-meal shall be allowed to be imported into Scotland, unless it is proved, that the price of  
 oat-meal

oat-meal is at or above sixteen shillings *per* boll, must appear exceedingly moderate, and in every respect equitable. The rise proposed is only one fifth more than it was a hundred and five years ago. The merchants of Glasgow, therefore, must have seen matters with a jaundiced eye, when they objected to such a proposal. If it be equitable, that the import-rate of oat-meal should be reduced to the same standard it was at a hundred years since, it must be just, that the import-rate of all the other grains should be in the like manner reduced. This, however, they do not pretend to; on the contrary, it is observed above, that they will be perfectly satisfied with the law as it now stands, provided amendments be made to reduce the import-rate of oat-meal to thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll, &c. In the 1672, it was reckoned as expensive to raise oats that would produce a boll of meal, as it was to raise a boll of bear; and therefore the import-rate of the one and other was made eight pounds Scots, or thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll. When they judged so, they judged rightly; because we know, in our days, it is still the same. By the law, however, as it now stands, the import-rate of a boll of barley is above seventeen shillings *per* boll, the importation thereof not being allowed, till the price be at, or above twenty-four shillings *per* quarter.

On what just ground then can it be maintained, that the import-rate of oat-meal ought to be reduced to thirteen shillings and four-pence Sterling *per* boll? In like manner, by the act in the

1772,

1772, the import-rate of wheat was made ten pounds *per* boll. By the law, as it now stands, the import rate is one half more, wheat not being allowed to be imported, till it shall be at, or above forty-eight shillings *per* quarter.

Yet, though the import-rate thereof be greatly advanced, the Glasgow merchants, &c. are perfectly satisfied; provided the import-rate of oat-meal be reduced, without rhyme or reason, only because it is their pleasure, to thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll. How can such strange conduct be accounted for? If it was reasonable thus to advance the import-rates of barley and wheat, on what medium can it be pretended, that the import-rate of oat-meal ought not to be advanced at all? When facts are truly stated, it is impossible that their plea can be supported on any ground whatever. One reason occurs, and one only, why the Glasgow merchants, &c. have ventured to insist thus boldly for the reduction of the import-rate of oat-meal, whilst they approve of the import-rates of the other grains being so much advanced: They knew it was much the interest of the English to support the import-rates of the other grains, whilst they had no interest to support the very small advance made on the import-rate of oat-meal; for which cause, if they had attacked the import-rates of the other grains, the English would have laughed at their arrogance and folly: Whereas, by approving of the import-rates of the grains in which only the English were interested, they had some reason to think they might consent to their petition for re-

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ducing the import-rate of a commodity in which their husbandry was no ways concerned, if the landholders of Scotland should tamely look on, and, from inadvertency, not oppose what these traders unreasonably desired.

The merchants of Glasgow, &c. in their memorial, set forth, "That they, and all Scotland, were happy to find themselves, in all respects, except these to be afterwards noticed, treated on an equal footing with his Majesty's happy subjects in England, &c. In those respects, they felt the blessings of English liberty; but, with respect to the article of oat-meal, the bread of by far the greatest part of the inhabitants in Scotland, they were struck with astonishment to find the import-price raised one-fifth higher than formerly, that is, from thirteen shillings and four-pence, to sixteen shillings *per* boll."

Let us examine a little the great cause of their happiness. If they speak with sincerity and candour, it must have been on account of the alteration made with regard to the import-rates of the several grains in Scotland, excepting oats and oat-meal; they were happy then that the import-rate of wheat, which was sixteen shillings and eight-pence in the 1672, should have been raised to about twenty-five shillings *per* boll; that the import-rate of bear, which, in said year, was thirteen shillings and four-pence, should have been raised to about seventeen shillings and four-pence; and that the import-rate of pease, which was ten shillings in the 1703, should have been raised to upwards of sixteen shillings *per* boll, by  
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this their favourite act. I do most heartily join with the memorialists, in thinking it would have been happy for us, that the Corn laws, in general, respecting England, had been extended more early to this country. By the bounties granted on the exportation of their victual, when low priced; by the prohibition against importation till their victual rose to a high price, their agriculture has been much encouraged; the consequence has been, that their country has been exceedingly improved. The memorialists have given a most striking instance of this, "Whilst, at the same time, the import-rate of wheat, and wheat-flour, the bread of England, was reduced two fifth parts; that is to say, from four pound *per* quarter to forty-eight shillings *per* quarter." Wheat is the staple grain in England, on which the inhabitants are principally fed; and yet, till the 1774, the import-rate thereof was four pound *per* quarter. It is equally certain that oats are the staple grain in Scotland, on which the inhabitants are chiefly fed; and yet, so wise have we been, that, till the 1774, the import-rate of oat-meal did not exceed thirteen shillings and four-pence *per* boll. Is it any wonder then, that, whilst England has been improved to the greatest height, improvements in this country should be still in their infancy? Whilst I admire the English Corn laws in general, I should consider myself as wild and extravagant, if, regardless of the different circumstances of England and Scotland, I should wish them, in every particular, to be the same. For which cause, I must beg leave to maintain, that  
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the import-rate of oats in Scotland ought, by no means, to be regulated by the import-rate of that grain in England. The staple grains in England are wheat, rye, barley, pease, and beans: That prudent people, sensible of the vast discouragement their agriculture would meet with, if the import-rate of these was made low, have ascertained the import-rate of their principal grain, wheat, and the chief food of the inhabitants, at about twenty-five shillings *per* boll; and the lowest import-rate of any of the rest is, at least, sixteen shillings *per* boll. At the same time that they ascertained the import-rate as above, they fixed that of oats at sixteen shillings *per* quarter, or eleven shillings, or eleven shillings and six-pence *per* boll. If oats had been one of their staple-grains in England, what rational account could there be given for the distinction? The truth is, that oats are not any of their staple grains; the quantity raised in England, in general, is exceedingly small, in proportion to their other grains; therefore, whether the import-rate of these be high or low, it will have little or no effect on their agriculture.

Johnson, in his Dictionary, defines oats. "To be a grain, which, in England, is generally given to horses, and which, in Scotland, supports the people;" and oat-meal seems to them unknown, at least totally disregarded, as there is not one word in the act relative to the import-rate of oat-meal in England. If the English therefore, raising but a small quantity of oats, yet wishing to have their horses cheaply fed, by which means their manufactures can be the more cheaply transported from one

one part of the kingdom to another, and knowing that the import-rate of oats, however low, would not affect their agriculture,—who can, with justice, blame them for fixing the import-rate of oats so low as at sixteen shillings *per* quarter?

It is equally clear, on the other hand, that those who contend the import-rate of oats in England ought to regulate the import-rate of that grain in Scotland, do so most unreasonably. Oats, it must be confessed, are the staple grain in Scotland; for the greatest part of this country produces little other grain; and I question if ever it can be made to do so to advantage.—I believe it cannot. The certain consequence, therefore, of a bounty being given on the exportation of this commodity when low, and of the importation thereof being prohibited till moderately high, is, that agriculture will be encouraged, and more and more of our innumerable, extensive, barren fields will be daily improved: Whilst it is equally certain, that, by making the import-rate of oats the same as in England, our agriculture will be greatly discouraged, our barren fields will increase, and all the evils, the necessary attendants of a bad agriculture, must ensue.

By the bill in question it is proposed, that oats may be imported when oat-meal is at, or about, sixteen shillings *per* boll; hence, as the oats in Scotland are far from giving meal equal in quantity to the oats that are grinded, it may justly be said, that, when this bill passes into a law, oats will be allowed to be imported when they reach here the price of fourteen shillings *per* boll;



boll; or, in other words, they will be allowed to be imported at a price much below the import-rate of any their most inferior staple grains in England.

If, in place of the import-rate of oats having been proposed to be about fourteen shillings *per* boll, it had been suggested to be above this price, for the reasons above, it would, if carried into a law, have been still more advantageous for Scotland; but, as the import-rate proposed seems moderately high, it is not the intention of this essay to inflame more the minds of a much deluded populace, by insisting for a higher import-rate than that which is suggested in the bill.

If the bill in question shall be passed into a law, I shall heartily congratulate my fellow-citizens on the happy event: Whereas, if the Glasgow traders, &c. were to be indulged in their desire, of having the import-rate of oatmeal reduced to thirteen shillings and fourpence *per* boll, which is the standard it was at upwards of a hundred years since, there would be the utmost reason to condole with them. It is not only the cultivation of oats that would be thereby discouraged; the cultivation of every other species of grain would be so likewise: In vain would my countrymen flatter themselves with the idea of the import-rate of wheat, barley and pease, being raised higher than formerly. The leaving the import-rate of oatmeal to the pleasure of these traders, would, in a great measure, destroy all the salutary effects which might have been otherwise expected from raising the import-rate

import-rate of the other grains. If the great staple grain of this country, oats, shall be always kept at a very low rate, from the importation thereof being allowed whenever the oat-meal is at thirteen shillings and fourpence *per* boll, it will be much the same whether the import-rates of the other grains be high or low; for their price, from the nature of things, will almost always be proportioned to that of the principal grain. Thus, if oat-meal be very low, how can the price of wheat-flour ever be expected to be high? There is a part of the wealthier inhabitants in Scotland who feed upon bread, the produce of wheat; yet it is obvious, that as there are few of these who have not been accustomed, one time or other, to feed on bread made of oatmeal, many will give over feeding on bread made of flour, and betake themselves to that made of oat-meal; thus, the demand for wheat will decrease, and consequently the price thereof will fall, till it comes to some due proportion with that of the oats. One other instance shall be given to illustrate this: By the late act, the import-rate of pease is raised to thirty-two shillings *per* quarter, and consequently is upwards of sixteen shillings *per* boll; yet, of what significance will it be to us, that the import-rate of pease is thus raised, if the import-rate of oats shall be only eleven shillings and sixpence, or so, *per* boll? It is well known, that in Scotland pease and oats are applied to very similar purposes; and that the price of the one corresponds so much to the other, that they are generally much the same: Indeed, the oats rather give the

the highest price, and therefore, by indulging the Glasgow manufacturers in their demand, if the import-rate of pease was raised to thirty-two shillings the boll, in place of thirty-two shillings the quarter, the effect would be none at all, because the price of the oats would still regulate the price of the pease.

In the memorial of the traders, &c. of Glasgow, they set forth, "that the proposal to regulate the importation of oats by oat-meal, is cruel and oppressive, and is erecting an invidious distinction betwixt England and Scotland." It is hoped, that the most satisfactory reasons have been offered to evince the necessity of making this distinction. In another place they tell us, "that trusting to be sheltered under the wings of English liberty, they demand it as their right and privilege to be treated on an equal footing with the King's English subjects." I would desire to know, if, in consequence of the Corn laws adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the respective countries, the people of Scotland shall be fed as cheaply as the King's English subjects, the Glasgow traders, &c. have any cause to complain of injustice being done them? Most assuredly they have not, unless high-sounding, unmeaning words, are to juggle men out of their reason and common sense.

I shall therefore consider, whether, supposing the bill in question was passed into a law, the people in Scotland would be fed at a dearer rate than in England; or whether the contrary would be true. The produce of wheat is the food of the English; the produce of oats is the

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food of the Scots. The import-rate of wheat being forty-eight shillings per quarter, makes that of the boll about twenty-five shillings. Supposing the import-rate of oats shall be regulated by the import rate of oat-meal being sixteen shillings, this will in reality make the import rate of the oats about fourteen shillings. I shall suppose for a moment, though afterwards the contrary shall be proved, that the medium price of these grains would be the import-rate: In such a case, the medium price of wheat would be twenty-five shillings *per* boll, and the medium price of oats in Scotland would be fourteen shillings *per* boll.

The next thing to be considered, is the proportion betwixt the boll of wheat and oats, with regard to sustenance. Having tried repeatedly the produce of flour from wheat, I found, on a medium, the flour from a boll of good wheat to be ten stones troy, which is what we call meal weight. Middling oats will produce *per* boll seven stones ditto, and therefore one boll and a half of oats will produce a greater quantity of meal than a boll of wheat does of flour: this computation can be little doubted, when it is considered, that our boll of wheat consists only of about four Winchester bushels; whereas one boll and a half of oats is rather more than nine. After making the experiment, I am further convinced, that a stone of oat-meal will go at least as far by way of nourishment as a stone of flour;—I think it will go farther. Therefore, with the greatest justice, it may be concluded, that, though the present bill be passed

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into a law, and all the consequences were to follow, which the traders, &c. of Glasgow from caprice suppose; yet still the people in Scotland would be fed at a considerably cheaper rate than those in England: Therefore the same motive, viz. cheapness of provisions here, which has of late induced such a number of English manufacturers of substance and credit to leave their native country, and settle in the west of Scotland, will continue to operate and produce the same effect.

I shall next consider the different effects that may be produced from the import rate of oat-meal being sixteen shillings *per* boll: Some contend it will have the effect to keep oat-meal when lowest at one shilling *per* peck; the contrary of which shall be convincingly proved. Supposing, however, for argument's sake, this was to be the case, there would be little danger of either manufacturers or any other set of people in Scotland starving. It is notorious, that the wages of all kinds of manufacturers, and of every rank of labouring people, have been raised greatly above what they were formerly; this is so true, that just now the manufacturers and others could live better and more comfortably, if the meal was to be continued generally at one shilling *per* peck, than they would have done before, when the meal was at a considerably lower rate; all the effect, even of the meal being at this price, would be to make them work more diligently, and drink less than they do, when it is below this price. However, this is arguing for arguing's sake, the fact being, that though the import rate of oat-meal

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be sixteen shillings *per* boll, it does not at all from hence follow, that the price of this commodity will seldom or ever be below one shilling *per* peck; it is only in very barren years, when there is not grain of the growth of Scotland sufficient for the consumption of the inhabitants, that there is the most distant probability of the oat-meal rising to sixteen shillings *per* boll, or one shilling *per* peck; wherefore, *communibus annis*, it must be supposed, that the ordinary rate of oat-meal will be below this price. The memorialists themselves have brought so strong a proof of this, that, after mentioning it, it would be trespassing unnecessarily on the patience of the readers to add one word more on this head. It has been observed above that, from the 1707 till the 1741, all importation of grain of every kind was strictly prohibited, and no power existed that could take off the prohibition, without the aid of an act of Parliament, which was not obtained till the 1741.

If the memorialists' reasoning then be just, that the raising the import-rate of oat-meal will greatly advance the price thereof in Scotland, and that then the poor manufacturers, &c. would be starved, they certainly must have been reduced to the most cruel distress during the space of thirty-four years, when the importation of every kind of grain into Scotland was absolutely stopped. Did this really happen, or did the price of oat-meal rise to an enormous height during said period? The very reverse happened, the memorialists themselves having set forth, that "from the union till the year 1740, the price of

oat-meal

oat-meal had generally run from ten shillings and eight-pence to twelve shillings sterling *per* boll." Therefore, I think it demonstratively proved, that asserting the effect of raising the import-rate of oat-meal to sixteen shillings *per* boll, will be to prevent the meal ever being below that price, is mere pretext,—a bugbear thrown out by corn-dealers, and the like, to serve their own selfish purposes.

If, during the thirty-four years that the importation of grain of every kind was prohibited, the meal did not rise to any great height, how much less reason is there to suppose it will do so when both oats and oat-meal can be imported whenever the price of oat-meal rises to sixteen shillings *per* boll; the more especially, when it is considered, that annually very great quantities of potatoes are now raised, the culture of which, till within these thirty years, or less, was scarcely known in any part of Scotland.

I shall now proceed to shew, that the settling the import-rate of oats and oat-meal, &c. in the manner proposed by the bill, will have the most happy effects, and that the doing so is for the real interest of this country; that it will be advantageous to merchants, traders and manufacturers, corn and meal importers alone excepted, as well as to the proprietors of land, and all that numerous and hardy race who are employed in cultivating the same.

The more any manufacture is encouraged, the greater will be the produce of that manufacture; this is a self-evident proposition, and yet, self-evident

evident as it is, the memorialists have dared to deny the truth of it: Their words are: "The same number of bolls of oat-meal, or other grain, will maintain the same number of persons, whether the price it is sold for is ten shillings or sixteen shillings *per* boll;" so far right, no man in his senses will deny it, "and the same quantity will be produced;" a position so egregiously wrong, that the falsity thereof must appear at once to every one who is not blinded, to a strange degree, by motives of self-interest.

If linens were allowed to be imported into Scotland, duty free, from all quarters of the globe, would not the linen manufacture of this country be thereby discouraged, and would not, consequently, a smaller quantity of this manufacture be produced here?

If woollen goods were allowed to be imported, duty free, into England from Ireland, and other places, would not infallibly a less quantity of woollen goods be manufactured in England?

If oats and oat-meal were allowed to be imported at all times, duty free, from Ireland and other parts, into Scotland, would not the manufacture of grain in this country be discouraged? and would not, on this account, a less quantity of oats be annually produced in Scotland?

It will be the principal care of every wise people to encourage agriculture, and to that degree, that, if possible, a sufficiency of grain may be raised for the maintenance of the whole inhabitants. When this point is once attained, commerce and manufactures may be expected to flourish. When  
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this is not the case, the nation must be dependant on others for the necessaries of life.

When grain is produced in a country sufficient for the maintenance of all its inhabitants, it is easy, by allowing exportation, and granting bounties in certain circumstances, to keep the prices of grain at such equal and moderate prices as effectually to prevent the grinding the faces of the poor, (an expression borrowed from the memorialists). When grain is not produced in a country sufficient to maintain its inhabitants, it will exceed the power of the wisest men in any extended state, such as Britain, to prevent at times the faces of the poor, and even these of a higher rank, from being grinded with famine. Is not this proved every day from the fatal experience of the French, the Spaniards, the Italians, &c. &c. ?

Another unavoidable consequence from a nation not raising grain sufficient for the maintenance of the inhabitants is, that there must be the greatest inequality as to the prices of grain one year from another. Those that can furnish grain will always give it to the highest bidders, and the highest bidders will be generally these where the greatest scarcity prevails. Therefore, unless you give as much as they do, many of the citizens must perish for want; and, if you do so, the price of grain will rise very high. On the other hand, when a general plenty prevails, grain will be at a low rate. The worst consequences will follow from this: Wherever such inequality of prices takes place, the wages of manufacturers and others will be found proportioned

to the high prices, or otherwise they could not subsist in years of scarcity and dearth; and when grain comes to be exceedingly cheap in other years, still the wages will continue the same. Then the manufacturers being able to gain, by working a few days in the week, as much as will support them the whole, they will work much less than they used to do in years when the grain was high: Thus their employers, not being able to supply the demand, will be induced to raise their wages, and thus pay dearer for their manufactures in years of plenty than in years of scarcity.

In fact, it will be found, that it is in plentiful years, not dear ones, that the wages are raised, and the price of all kind of labour increased; hence has arisen the common saying amongst your master manufacturers, and these whom they furnish with their manufactures, that it would be a great advantage to this country that our weavers, and other workmen, lived better, because this would hinder their gaining as much in one day, in cheap years, as will maintain them for two. This is a vulgar error. The preventing the common great inequality of the prices of grain, one year from another, is the sure and most effectual remedy to this evil.

For this reason, it is certainly the wisest policy to give such encouragement to agriculture, that grain may be annually raised sufficient for the support of the inhabitants. There may be states, however, where the greatest encouragement given to agriculture never will be able to produce grain of the growth

growth of the country sufficient to support them. This may happen from the extreme barrenness of the soil, the great drought common in some parts, and the like. I shall, therefore, next enquire, whether Scotland be such a country, that, by proper encouragement given to the raising of grain, a sufficiency thereof may be produced for all its people. I am exceedingly happy in being able to advance, that Scotland is a country of this kind. When it is considered, that agriculture here is still in its infancy; that there are innumerable extensive tracts of land, that at present are barren, which yet, by proper culture, might be so improved, as to carry both corn and grass in abundance. It seems clear, that grain may be raised, and will most certainly be so in Scotland (if the proper encouragement be given,) sufficient for supporting its inhabitants.

What puts this assertion beyond the possibility of doubt, is, that from the 1707 till the 1740, during all which time importation was stopped, there was no famine; on the contrary, the price of meal never rose to any great height, it having generally run from ten shillings and eightpence to twelve shillings Sterling *per* boll. Another observation I must beg leave to make here is, that, whenever any country produces grain sufficient for its inhabitants, it must necessarily often produce much more than is sufficient for this purpose; because, if it produces grain sufficient for them, it must do this in years of scarcity, as well as plenty. If the grain, the growth of the country, in bad years, is sufficient to support the people,

ple, the grain, the growth of good ones, must surely be much more than adequate. This shews the amazing advantage arising from the granting bounties on the exportation of grain when below certain rates; because, if there be not frequently superfluous grain in good years, owing to the produce being greater than necessary for maintaining the inhabitants, it is self-evident, that there must be less grain in bad ones than what will answer this purpose. If then, this superfluous grain, in plentiful years, was not carried off by exportation, the market would be so overstocked, that grain would give no price, which evidently would greatly discourage the raising of grain in subsequent years\*. Thus, infinite numbers of

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\*“ For, if the whole be not consumed, the regorging plenty will discourage the industry of the farmer.” Principles of Political Oeconomy, vol. I. p. 28.

Don Geronymo de Uztariz, an author of the first note, and in the highest repute, who wrote, in the 1724, a large treatise on the theory and practice of commerce, speaking of the reasons why the exportation of victual was allowed from certain provinces of Spain, observes this was done, “ in order to administer some relief to the farmer, who, by not having a market for his grain that would reimburse his charges, was under an inability to raise the King's taxes, pay his private debts, and cultivate his farm again; a circumstance that threatened a scarcity, or FAMINE the ensuing years, and arising purely from that very plenty, which reduced the value, and deprived him of a reasonable price for his commodity.”

This author's opinion, with regard to the practice in England of granting bounties on exportation, is so remarkable, that it well merits a place here. “ It would take up a very large chapter to explain the grand policy of the English in allowing and encouraging the exportation of grain. (I have been informed by persons whose intelligence is to be depended upon, that this bounty to exporters of grain is only granted when the price of

the poor would be absolutely starved in these years of the greatest plenty, from their total want of employment, owing to the impoverished condition of the landholders and their tacksmen; the want

it does not exceed a certain sum fixed by law. This rule, as to an allowance to export, is also observed in Navarre, to the great advantage of the natives; since every person may export grain at any time, except the price exceed what is prescribed by the laws of the kingdom). The principal ground of it is, that by procuring the farmers a vent for it, and a reasonable price, they put them into a condition to cultivate their lands again, and thus prevent a scarcity the ensuing years. But as this practice of England, which some recommend to our imitation, will raise great astonishment almost every where from the novelty of the thing, and its contradiction to what seems prudent at first sight, I shall enlarge, in a separate paper, upon the grounds of this maxim, which they esteem a piece of prudence, in order to prevent years of famine, and promote plenty at all times."

The separate paper where he enlarges on the grounds of this maxim, is chap. 92. where, *inter alia*, he observes, "That a very extraordinary measure is employed in England, and which, at first sight, appears somewhat strange, as I hinted in the 28th chapter; for they not only give leave to export grain in times of plenty, free of every tax, but a bounty of two reals and a half plate is paid out of the treasury upon every bushel of wheat sent abroad, at such times as the price of it does not exceed a certain reasonable sum: That Prince and his Parliament apprehending, that this same liberty, and encouraging bounty, is the very thing that secures plenty to that kingdom for the ensuing years; and they support their policy both with arguments, that, in all appearance, are very well grounded, and with a repeated experience of having never felt a FAMINE in that country for many years, ever since this law was first enacted, though it seems very strange and opposite to the conduct of other states."

One of the articles of the covenant made betwixt his Catholic Majesty and his kingdom, on the 18th July 1650, mentioned by the same author, in order to shew of what great concern the interesting affairs of agriculture has been both to the monarchs of Spain and the kingdom, is so curious, and so much to the present purpose, that I have subjoined a copy of it at the end of this treatise.

want of employment being an evil infinitely more to be dreaded by the poor, than the dearth of provisions.

If the bill in question shall be passed into a law, I think there is great reason to imagine that the manufacture of grain, the primary and most staple one of this country, will thereby meet with such encouragement, that, in no very distant period, grain will be raised fully sufficient to feed the whole inhabitants, even in bad years; and that, consequently, in years of plenty, there will be always a superfluity of grain, which, by means of the bounty given, will be carried to foreign parts.

The inhabitants of Scotland are computed at one million and a half; the grain necessary to answer the consumption cannot be estimated at less than four millions of bolls of grain of one kind and other. In England, the inhabitants I shall compute at seven millions (which is nigh one million and a half more than Dr Davenant computed them at), and the grain consumed there is said to be about fourteen millions of quarters\*. When the consumption of grain, therefore, in Scotland is estimated at four millions, this rather must be below the truth, because the people in Scotland live much more on grain than the English do, and their sowing is considerably greater in proportion to the produce. The crops in Scotland, though not so precarious as in many other places, do yet very much depend on the seasons;

\* Vide the Farmer's Letters, p. 45. Political Oecon. vol. 1. p. 41.

seasons; hence it very often happens, the crop one year is one fourth more than it is another. If grain, therefore, shall be raised in Scotland sufficient for the support of the inhabitants in bad years, it may be fairly computed, that frequently there will be one fourth of grain more produced than is necessary for this purpose\*.

This superfluous grain will be exported with, or without bounties, according to the circumstances of the neighbouring countries; and thus, many years, there will be a fourth of the produce, or one million of bolls of victual, that would be exported: Computing, then, every third year only to afford such plentiful crops, that one million of bolls can be exported, it may be justly reckoned, when agriculture is properly encouraged by the present bill being passed into a law, (I mean so far as relates to the exportation and importation of oats and oat-meal; because, whether the mode for ascertaining the prices of grain and oat-meal shall be fixed in this or the other way, is of little importance, provided the law be thereby fairly executed, and all frauds prevented; to which the mode prescribed by the thirteenth of his present Majesty gave the greatest inlet †), that in a few years there will be exported from Scotland, *communibus annis,*

\* Vide Pol. Oecon. p. 109. &c.

† It may be added, with respect to the mode, that there is now more reason than formerly for making the prices at Edinburgh the rule for regulating the importation for all Scotland, on account of a canal being cut from the Frith of Forth to the Clyde, by which means grain can be much more cheaply transported from the east to the west, and the contrary, than this could be done only by land carriage.

*annis,* or one year with another, three hundred and thirty-three thousand bolls of victual; but as I would not chuse to exaggerate, I shall, on account of the greater waste in plentiful years than scarce ones, suppose, *communibus annis,* only one hundred and fifty thousand bolls to be exported: This, at the very moderate value of ten shillings *per* boll, will bring in a clear revenue of seventy-five thousand pounds Sterling *per annum,* which, says the author of the Farmers' Letters\*, would be equal to two hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds Sterling of manufactures exported, if wrought from foreign materials. Silk for instance †.

I shall next consider what would be the probable situation of Scotland if the desire of the Glasgow merchants, &c. was to be complied with, in order to run a contrast betwixt the one  
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\* Vide p. 13. and 43. of said letters.

† The importance of this commerce arising from the exportation of grain was well known to the M. de Miribaud, the friend of mankind, who, in vol. IV. p. 233. of his work entitled L'Ami des Hommes, puts the following questions: "Quelle est la nation qui gagne le plus dans le commerce réciproque? N'est ce pas celle qui achete des autres nations plus de marchandises de main-d'œuvre, que des marchandises de leur cru, et qui leur vend plus de marchandises de son cru que de marchandises de main-d'œuvre, et où l'achat des marchandises de main-d'œuvre procure la vente des marchandises de cru?" This passage may be translated thus: "Which is the nation that gains the most in its trade with others? Is it not that one which purchases from other nations more of their manufactures than of their commodities of the growth of these countries, and which sells to them more commodities of its growth, than of its manufactures, and where the purchase of manufactures procures the sale of grain, and other articles of its produce."



and the other, that the due preference may be given to that which is the most eligible.

The Glasgow traders, &c. have exclaimed, that the raising the import-rate of oat-meal from thirteen shillings and fourpence to sixteen shillings *per* boll, was cruel and oppressive, was grinding the faces of the poor. It has been shown above, that, upwards of a hundred years ago, the import-rate of oat-meal was thirteen shillings and fourpence; therefore, nothing less will please these gentlemen than that the import-rate of oat-meal should be eternally kept at the same rate; if the raising it now be cruel and oppressive, it must be the same if this was to be done a hundred years hence. That the price of every other commodity, that the wages of all kinds of labourers have been greatly increased, within these hundred years past, no one will deny; nay, that the wages of all labourers in Scotland have been considerably augmented within these twenty years, is equally true. Improvements hitherto have made a slow progress in Scotland: Therefore, if now, when improvements on land can only be made at an expence much greater than formerly, the price of grain thereby raised is to continue the same, who will be so mad as think of improving their barren fields? These then will lie waste and uncultivated. This is not all; it is well known that, within these thirty years past, or little more, the prices of black cattle and sheep have been greatly raised above their former value; and even the making the law allowing the importation of Irish beef,

beef, &c. perpetual, has not prevented this great advance in the price of these bestial. If the raising of grain then, instead of being encouraged, is to be severely checked from the import-rate of oat-meal being continued always the same, the infallible consequence will be, that much of the land now employed in the raising of grain will be laid out and kept for the breeding and fattening of black cattle and sheep; for which cause, the quantity of grain raised in this country will gradually decrease, and the nation become at last absolutely dependant on Ireland and the neighbouring countries for her daily bread; hence, all the very mischievous and ruinous effects, above pointed out, must necessarily follow: The sinews of commerce and manufactures is money; when the nation is exhausted of this, from that greatest of all drains, the importation of victual, commerce and manufactures will necessarily decline apace, and at last be sunk with agriculture in the common ruin; which may propitious heaven avert! by defeating the machinations and devices of these enemies to the bill; and whom, for the reasons above, I must regard as real enemies to their country, though I hope they are not intentionally so.

*A Friend to Agriculture, Trade,  
and Manufactures.*

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P. S. After finishing the present essay, I saw a late publication, entitled, "*Thoughts respecting the new Corn Bill presently depending in Parliament.*"

What the author aims to prove is, that it would be for the benefit of the landlord and tenant, as well as of the trading and manufacturing part of this nation, that there should be a free importation of oat-meal, the effect of which would be, in his opinion, that it would not reduce the price much under ten shillings *per* boll.

Having considered his arguments, I did not think it necessary to add one word to what I had said, to refute so strange a doctrine.

*Copy of the 83d Article of the Covenant betwixt the King of Spain and his Subjects in 1650, and alluded to above.*

"**H**AVING found, by experience, the many evils and inconveniencies, which result from the importation of wheat, barley, and rye into this kingdom, to the prejudice of its inhabitants, and of the prosperity and preservation of this monarchy, on account of its being a detriment to health, and an occasion to the plague, because what they bring is in general very much damaged: And as, by this means, they have extracted, and do extract, very large sums of money in gold and silver, and *there has been, and is an utter destruction of husbandry in this kingdom, which is the main concern and support of it, and the lands lie uncultivated,*

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and the churches and convents lose their tithes, and private persons the rents they used to have in corn; and are liable to this misfortune, that, in times of necessity, if foreign countries shall not think fit to supply us with wheat, this kingdom would be ruined: And in order to prevent the aforesaid, and many other inconveniencies that are very evident, it is stipulated, that his Majesty order, that no wheat, barley, or rye come into these kingdoms by sea from foreign countries, in order that husbandry may be restored to its former state; and, in the years we have a middling harvest, there may be a surplus of wheat that shall suffice to supply the wants we may suffer in years of scarcity, without being obliged to fetch it by sea; since it is not reasonable, that, when there is wheat in the kingdom *at a moderate price, we should suffer it to be imported from abroad, to clog the sale of that of the natives, destroy our own tillage, and enrich the enemies of this crown, that drain us of our money; and, if at any time there shall be a want of wheat, barley, or rye, which cannot be supplied at a reasonable price by any other province in this kingdom, that in such case (and the province which shall labour under the said difficulty, shall apply for it), his Majesty will be pleased to grant a licence, that, for a limited time, and in such places as there shall be a want of it, there may be imported the said wheat, barley, and rye by sea, and in no other manner, excepting that nothing contained in this covenant be understood*

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to extend to the kingdom of Murcia, Galicia,  
 the Asturias, Biscaya, Guipuzcoa, and Alaba:  
 Thus these kingdoms recovering by this means  
 the riches and wealth which they formerly en-  
 joyed, there will be a revival of their ancient  
 trade in all sorts of merchandise, and the reve-  
 nues of the ports and custom-houses flourish as  
 formerly.

**F I N I S.**