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THE
NATIONAL INTEREST
CONSIDERED;
OR,
THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE
OF
AGRICULTURE
AND
FOREIGN TRADE.

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THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE
OF
AGRICULTURE
AND
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ON
THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE
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AGRICULTURE
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FOREIGN TRADE.

In discussing so momentous a subject as that of the Corn Laws, which, though in different ways and degrees, affects the interests of so large a portion of the people, the most dispassionate men, in general, find it difficult to divest themselves of that partiality which they naturally feel for the individual interest with which they are more immediately connected. Thus the national welfare is neglected, and the minor interests eventually suffer from the very attempts which are made by their several partisans to raise each above its due level. Agriculture, manufacture, home-trade, and commerce, are

so united, that the depression of either of these leading sources of wealth must immediately be communicated to the others; and any successful attempt, to give an undue preference, must be injurious to the whole. We should always recollect, whatever our natural bias may be, that we best serve our favourite interest, by taking the more extended view of the subject, and by directing our attention wholly towards the public good.

If then it can be proved, that a free trade in corn, which means the admission of foreign corn without restriction, and without duty, would be advantageous to the public, the immediate interest of the proprietors of the land must not be regarded as an obstacle to the measure, though they would be entitled to some equivalent for the injury they might sustain. Compensation can be given to the landholders, by relieving their property from exclusive taxation, or by an *equitable distribution* of that taxation. In short, public as well as private justice, should ever be adhered to. It is unjust to deprive any one of property which has been assured to him by law and long usage, or to depreciate his property by any legislative act, without first securing to him a fair compensation. The right, then, to legislate for the admission of corn, *as free of duty as any other article of home-production*—provided a fair re-

duction of *land-burdens* be first made—being granted, let us examine the probable effects of such a measure.

Will the free admission of corn from foreign countries occasion a *permanently* lower price of corn in this country, than the natural price at which it can be supplied to us by home growth, under an effectual prohibitive system of law? This is the first of several questions proposed to be discussed.

It will be allowed, that grain can be imported at less than *half* the price which it has borne here for the last ten years, and probably at which, with the present taxation on land, it can be grown in this country.

The first effect, then, of open ports would be, an overpowering glut of foreign grain in the British markets, and a consequent reduction of price, far below the cost of home production, *exclusive of rent*, except on the higher classes of soils. The immediate effect of this *forced* low price would be, the neglect of a large portion of our inferior land, and the cessation of its cultivation to a very considerable extent; a vast amount of capital, which by the labour of many years has been fixed in that land in buildings, draining, fencing, chalking, marling, and other improvements, would be sacrificed; and thus those persons who are now engaged in the cultivation of the inferior land, would

suffer a great loss of property. It may be said this effect would be counteracted by reduction of rent; but this argument will not avail, for the price of corn, with a restriction on importation, is regulated by the cost of its production on the lowest class of soils, which it may be found necessary to cultivate to supply the demand, without allowing any surplus or rent; consequently, where no surplus or rent exists, no reduction under that head can take place; though, on the more productive classes of land, a great diminution of rent might induce a continuance of its cultivation.

But by free importation, the price of corn must at once be lowered to the average of other countries, and this circumstance would be an immediate, although a temporary benefit to the annuitants and fundholders, because their fixed money incomes would then give them a larger share of the productions of labour than they are justly entitled to; it would be a benefit also to the manufacturers for exportation, as it would enable them to reduce the wages of their workmen, and thus by cheapness force their goods on the foreign markets; when goods of British manufacture would be exported in exchange for foreign corn, thus greatly extending their export trade. The low price of corn might also, at first, be hailed as a blessing by all the labouring classes, and inferior me-

chanics and tradesmen, who are apt to follow the stream of popular prejudices without much reflection; but let us enquire, whether the low price so obtained could be permanent.

If a permanent low price of corn could be secured to us by importation, then the destruction of agriculture and all its dependents, and a forcible transfer of the property of those who are engaged in it, to the annuitants, moneyholders, and foreign corn-growers and merchants, might, on public grounds, find some justification; but the reverse would be the case. Free importation would soon render this country dependent on foreign supply for the first article of necessity, either to a greater or less degree, according to the action of price in the reduction of home-cultivation. The importation would very shortly become habitual, and necessary to our subsistence. The foreign growers of corn and the importing merchants would then have the power, which they would at once exercise, of raising the price of corn in proportion to our necessities; and in the event of a deficient crop in this country, they would exact from us what might be termed a famine price. This would frequently be the case in times of general peace; but in the event of war, which must create a continental demand, and render the purchase and import of corn more difficult (as we have heretofore experienced) the

distress for food would probably be so seriously alarming as to raise its price *far beyond* what we have hitherto known. This effect of dependence on foreign corn must occur so frequently, as to occasion an *average of price* much above what can be experienced under a fair system of protection; which, by securing to the British farmer the home-market, would ensure to us a sufficient supply of the first article of necessity, food for man, by home-growth, *at the cost price.*

It may be objected, that a high price would create a reaction in regard to home-cultivation; and this would be found correct, were the high price likely to continue long enough to become remunerating to the British grower. But it must be observed that land, when put out of cultivation, cannot again be reclaimed without very considerable expence, trouble, and time; that the preparation for, and production of a crop of wheat, will occupy two seasons or years; and what is still more obvious, capital and labour, when they shall have taken another direction, in consequence of the decline of agriculture, will not readily return into their former channel; added to this, the farmer would have to begin his new cultivation with a high price of seed corn, and with but little chance of a remunerating price for the product of his labour, when at the end of two years he might

bring it to market. For as the high price of the foreign corn would be wholly *artificial*, not being regulated, in any degree, by the cost of production, but by the *necessity* of our demand, so would it again be as suddenly reduced by a reaction to a price too low to remunerate the British grower.

It may be said, corn would be imported from so many countries that the competition to sell would prevent the artificial rise of price beyond its cost price of production, with the expences and fair profit on importation; and it might be argued, in regard to the effect of war, that it is very improbable we should ever be at war at the same time with all the countries from which we might draw our supplies of corn. To this it may be replied, that the foreign corn would pass through the hands of merchants, and those corn-merchants could not be very numerous, as the trade would require great capital, in consequence of the variations of price, which must necessarily and frequently occur. For, in the first place, the home demand would be varied by the state of the home crop, as we cannot suppose that under any circumstances the higher classes of land would not be cultivated. The demand would again be regulated, in some measure, by the state of manufacture and trade. It would also be increased or diminished by war or peace. Under such a

state of uncertainty, no prudent man could engage in the corn trade without a very large capital, which might enable him to hold his corn, in the event of a low market, on its arrival in this country. Thus the corn trade would be subject to the controul of a few wealthy individuals, and those few would be able to raise the price at their pleasure by combination.

Again, in answer to the objection, that even during war we should always find *some* countries willing to supply us. They may be willing to let us have their corn, but the waste of war would increase our demand, as well as that of other countries, and the price would rise even beyond what the increased demand might justify. Our *necessities* in that case, also, would regulate the price, and not the fair value, or cost and profit of fair trade on the article.

Admitting the correctness of the foregoing arguments, it seems evident, that the variations in the price of corn would be more frequent and excessive, and that the price, on an *average of years*, would be *higher* under a system of law, which shall allow of any material importation of foreign corn, than under a protecting system of law, which shall secure to the British farmer the supplying of the British market with that necessary article.*

* Mr. Huskisson in a Letter to his Constituents at Chichester, in the year 1814, says, "Can any man have,

The second inquiry on the effect of free import of corn is, what its consequences would

witnessed the scarcities and consequent privations of the people during six or seven different seasons of the last twenty years, without feeling anxious to guard the country against the return of such severe distress? But if we wish to cure an evil of this alarming magnitude, we must first trace it to its source. What is that source? Obviously this—that, until now, we did not, even in good years, grow corn enough for our own consumption. Habitually depending on foreign supply, that supply was interrupted by war, or by bad seasons abroad. The war, it is true, is now at an end: but peace is, at all times, too precarious not to induce us to guard against the repetition of similar calamities, whenever hostilities may be renewed. But even in peace, the *habitual* dependence on foreign supply is dangerous. We place the subsistence of our own population, not only at the mercy of foreign powers, but also on their being able to spare as much corn as we may want to buy. Suppose, as it frequently happens, the harvest in the same year to be a short one, not only in this country, but in the foreign countries from which we are fed—what follows? The habitually exporting country, France for instance, stops the export of its corn, and feeds its people without any great pressure. The habitually importing country, England, which, even in a good season, has hitherto depended on the aid of foreign corn, deprived of that aid in a year of scarcity, is driven to distress bordering upon famine. There is, therefore, no effectual security, either in peace or war, against the frequent return of scarcity, approaching to starvation, such as of late years we have so frequently experienced, but in our maintaining ourselves, *habitually*, independent of foreign supply. Let the bread we eat be the produce of corn grown among ourselves, and I, for one, care not how cheap it is; the cheaper the better. It is cheap now*, and I rejoice at it; because it is altogether owing to a sufficiency

* 72s. per quarter.
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be in regard to agriculture, and to what extent would these consequences be felt by its dependents and the country at large?

of corn of our own growth. But in order to ensure a continuance of that cheapness, and that sufficiency, we must ensure to our own growers that protection against foreign import which has produced these blessings, and by which alone they can be permanently maintained.

“The history of the country, for the last one hundred and seventy years, clearly proves, on the one hand, that cheapness produced by foreign import is the sure forerunner of scarcity; and, on the other, that *a steady home supply is the only safe foundation of steady and moderate prices.*”

“During upwards of one hundred years, up to the year 1765, the import of foreign corn was restrained by very high duties. What was the state of the country during those one hundred years? That, in ordinary seasons, our own growth supplied a stock of corn fully ample for our consumption;—that, in abundant seasons, we had some to spare, which we *exported*; that, in bad seasons, we felt no want, and were under no apprehension;—that the price of corn seldom varied more than a few shillings per quarter;—that we had no years of inordinate gain to the farmer, and of starvation to the consumer;—that prices, instead of rising from year to year, were gradually diminishing, so that at the end of this long period of a century, during which we never imported foreign corn, they were actually one-fifth lower than at the beginning of it. Would to God that we had continued this salutary system! But, in 1765, it was most unfortunately abandoned. What has been the result? Precisely the reverse of the former system. Instead of a steady supply, afforded at steady and moderate prices, we have witnessed frequent and alarming scarcities. Every year our dependence on foreign supply was increasing, till the war came, and by interrupting that supply, greatly aggravated all our evils; for a country which depends on enemies or rivals for the food of its people,

We must presume, that with the low price of foreign corn, when compared with that of our own growth, the importation would be very large, and the prices in this country be instantly and greatly reduced. The inferior classes of our land, as before observed, would in that case be abandoned, so as to reduce the home growth as much in quantity as the amount of the importation. On this inferior land the rent would cease, and be lost to the landowner; and all other rent on the higher classes of land, on which cultivation would still go on, be greatly reduced. This would not only be unjust to the landowner, provided he must continue to bear the same enormous burden of exclusive and partial taxation, but also injurious to trade: for by a great reduction of the income of the landholder, without any corresponding reduction of the annuities his land might be charged with, or of mortgage interest which it might be subject to, he would be deprived of the power to retain his station as a consumer both of labour and the products of labour. It must be ad-

is never safe in war. In the first eighteen years of this war, we were forced to pay sixty millions of money (to nations, every one of whom has, in the course of it, been our enemy) for a scanty and inadequate supply of foreign corn; and when, for this purpose, we had parted with all our gold, and even our silver currency, combined Europe shut its ports against us, and America, co-operating, first laid an embargo, and then went to war.”

mitted, the same circumstance would, after a while, increase the power of others to consume, but their power could not immediately come into action, even were their habits and inclinations the same, and during the interval very severe distress must ensue, to say nothing of the injustice of thus violently shifting property from one class of men to another.

The *farmers* constitute the second class which would suffer by the decline of agriculture. They would lose the property which they had expended in the improvement of inferior land, by draining, manuring, &c. Property so expended cannot again be withdrawn from the land, and the interest, or annual profit on money so *vested*, can only be obtained by *continued* cultivation. The farmers, also, would suffer severe loss by the reduction of the value of the crops and stock, which must of necessity be sold in consequence of the decrease of cultivation, and this they could not again recover.

A third class of sufferers would be the *labourers* in agriculture. Their condition would be truly deplorable for a very long period of time, or until many of the rising generation might, by a new direction of their labour, become working manufacturers; which those who had been bred up to work in the fields, never could fit themselves for, even could they endure the necessary confinement.

The reduction of the number of acres in cultivation, as well as the decline of active cultivation over the whole kingdom, would cause such a surplus of labour as to reduce its price, even *below* the price of corn, which has hitherto, with the exclusive system of corn laws, regulated the price of agricultural, and, in a great measure, all other labour. The *lower* the price of corn, the greater would be the *surplus* of labour; but, even with a high average price of corn, provided, as has been before observed, a large portion of our supply shall be drawn from foreign countries, the surplus of labour—to the extent of what would have been engaged in the production of the same quantity of corn at home, as that which may be imported—must ensue.

Thus, it is contended, that on an average of years, though corn would be dearer under a free trade in that article, than under a protecting system of law, still labour, under similar circumstances, would for a long period of time be much cheaper. The difference would have to be made up to the labourer, as far as necessity might require, from the *poors'* rate.*

* Mr. Huskisson, in the same letter to his constituents in 1814, goes on to say, "I admit that if unlimited foreign import, which the war had suspended, were now again allowed, bread might be a little, though a very little, cheaper than it now is, for a year or two. But what would follow? The small farmers would be ruined,—improvements would every where stand still

It may here be argued, that this distress of the agricultural labourers would only be of

—inferior lands now producing corn, would be given up, and return to a state of waste. The home consumption and brisk demand for all the various articles of the retail trader, which has so much contributed, even during the pressure of the war, to the prosperity of our towns (and especially of those which are not connected with manufactures or foreign commerce), would rapidly decline; farming servants, and all the trades which depend on agriculture for employment, would be thrown out of work; and the necessary result of the want of work would be that wages would fall, even more rapidly than the price of bread. Then comes some interruption to the foreign import, coinciding with the decay of agriculture at home, and corn is suddenly forced up again to a famine price. Such, I conceive, would be the inevitable consequence of again placing ourselves in a state of habitual and increasing dependence on foreign supply. Who, upon the long-run, would profit by such a state of things? Certainly not the consumer, but precisely those who have profited too much already from a similar state of things—namely, the overgrown farmers with large capitals; they will be enabled, for two or three years, to bear up against the foreign import, and whenever that import is interrupted, the extravagant prices they will then be enabled to command, will more than repay the temporary losses which their poorer but not less industrious neighbour, had not the means to withstand. Every acre thus forced out of cultivation, will ensure to them an ultimate increase of profit, and in proportion to that profit, will inflict an increased pressure on the consumer. To protect the small farmer, therefore, at this moment, is ultimately to protect the people. This is my sole object; and, whatever may be the fate of the Bill now in the House of Commons, I can most conscientiously declare is, in my opinion, the sole tendency of the plan which that Bill is calculated to carry into effect."

short duration,—that the increase of demand for manufactured articles, caused by the exchange of those articles for foreign corn, which must necessarily follow, provided free importation be permitted—would soon absorb the surplus labour thrown on the market by the decay of agriculture, and, that though we might cease to be a great agricultural nation, our extended manufacture would give employment to our whole population:—added to which, it might be said, in an economical point of view, such a change must be desirable, for by applying our capital and labour to that branch of production which is best suited to the genius of the people, and nature of the country; and by exchanging with foreign countries those things which we can produce with the greater facility, for others which are more easily produced by them, we should enrich both the parties so engaged in commerce; and thus should we employ our capital, skill, and labour to the greatest advantage. It is contended, in support of this position, that corn cannot be grown in Britain so cheap as in many other countries: and, therefore, agriculture should not be considered a source of wealth to us; that numberless articles can be manufactured at a cheaper rate in this country than in many others, and, therefore, manufacture being more productive of wealth to us, is most entitled to our attention. To prove this

latter assertion, the relative prices of corn and manufactured goods are often quoted.

Without doubt the agriculture of this country might be destroyed, and the whole people eventually be engaged in manufacture, trade, and commerce, and the taxes might still be sufficiently productive to meet the necessary national expenditure. But is this a desirable state for the country? would it add to the national wealth, or to the permanent comforts of the mass of the people?

If the position were correct, that this country is not by nature so well suited to the production of corn as many others, and that in consequence of its mines of coal, and minerals, &c. it is better calculated for manufacture than most other countries, then, indeed, by a change in the mode of employing our skill, capital, and labour, by the abandonment of agriculture, and directing our whole energies to manufacture, we should best economise our labour, and thus increase our national wealth, admitting, for the sake of argument, wealth alone to be our object. But the premises on which this assertion is attempted to be proved, are not sound. The soil and climate of Great Britain is as congenial to the growth of corn, as that of any country from which we can import it. Our inexhaustible sources of artificial manures, our rivers for irrigation, and other natural advantages, together

with the attachment to rural occupation inherent in the people of this country, afford us a certain degree of superiority of *productive* power in regard to our soil. The supposed advantage, then, of manufacture over agriculture, is not to be attributed to any causes adherent to the country.

It is the overpowering influence of *exclusive* taxation on agriculture, which keeps the money-price of grain above the money-price of manufactured articles, when that price is compared with the quantum of labour expended in the production of each; and to this *exclusive* taxation alone should we attribute this circumstance in the *relative* situation of the two interests.* Remove the *exclusive* taxes on agriculture, or *distribute those taxes equally between agriculture and manufacture*, and it would soon be discovered that agriculture would require *no greater protection* than manufacture. One of our most extensive manufactures for export is that of cotton, and we are told (no doubt correctly) by Mr. Huskisson, that two-thirds of our cotton goods are exported. Now, it may fairly be asked, what has forced the manufacture of cotton to so unnatural and dangerous an extent? the term *dangerous* being meant to apply to the happiness of the labourers employed in

* Tithes, poors'-rates, county-rates, &c. as well as the land-tax, are meant to be included in the term "exclusive taxation."

that manufacture, and the peace of the country. The evident reply is, that the manufacture of cotton has not only enjoyed ample protection by law, but, further, it has not been burdened with *tithes, poors'-rates, church-rates, county-rates, land-tax*, and several other imposts, known only to the cultivators of the soil. Equalize these burdens, and it would soon be found, that the growth of corn is as well suited to this country as the manufacture of cotton.*

Thus it is contended that manufacture, as a source of wealth, is not superior to agriculture. Again, if we look solely to wealth, or the eco-

* To show the superior fertility of our soil, it is only necessary to observe, that those who have made calculations on this subject, say that in England the labour in agriculture of two persons will raise food sufficient to support five persons; the labour of seven persons in France is required to raise sufficient food to support ten; and in other countries visited by Mr. Jacob, he supposes it may require the labour of nine persons to support ten. Thus have we a vast superiority of fertility in our soil which is *wholly overcome by excessive land burdens*. The *poorest soil* which we *can* now cultivate, must yield eighteen bushels of wheat per acre, while the average yield of Prussia and Poland is not *more* than twelve bushels per acre, and the average yield of England is far above that of all other countries. If the cost of production, even on our poor soils, were to be measured by the amount of labour employed in comparison with that amount in other countries, the result would be highly favourable to us; but when we take the price of labour, and the *amount of taxation* in the account, the result of the comparison is very unfavourable to British agriculture.

nomy of labour, which in its meaning is the same, though differing in terms, we must recollect the waste of labour by the double freight and cost of shipping caused by the exchange of manufactured goods for corn, which is saved if we grow our own supply of corn, and suffer other countries to manufacture such articles necessary to their comfort or wants as they might otherwise take of us in exchange for corn. Commerce will always exist between civilized nations, in raw materials and articles of *luxury*, as well as *use*, to the mutual advantage of the exchanging parties, and the higher the state of civilization, the more extended will be the commerce; but no exchange can be carried on to *mutual* advantage, or with profit to either party, of such articles as can be as easily produced by both, in fact, such articles as are the natural production of both the exchanging countries, on account of the expence of freight or carriage.

No exchange, then, from agriculture to manufacture could increase the national wealth,—the term *wealth* being understood to mean the *permanent* power of production and consumption.

For the sake of argument, let us suppose, that by a change of system, or by increasing our manufacture at the expence of our agriculture, we could increase our national wealth.

The object of all governments ought to be to

secure to the mass of the people the greatest possible amount of enjoyment, or comfort. Wealth alone would not necessarily give comforts to the mass, or large body of the people; for wealth may be enjoyed by a few, the many or great majority, being as slaves, administering to the pleasures of those few who may possess the powers of commanding their labour. It is the mode of direction or employing, and general distribution of wealth, which affords and assures the comforts of life to the mass of the people.

The labouring class (meaning those who are not possessed of any peculiar skill or trade) never can, as a body, possess property, except it be their bodily power or labour; and that labour will never be worth more than may be sufficient to afford to them the common necessities and comforts of life. *Their wages will ultimately be regulated by the price of food;* for though the variations of the demand for labour, occasioned by the fluctuations in trade, may at times affect the price of manufacturing labour; yet it will be found that the price of corn will, on an average of years, regulate the price of all sorts of common labour. The cause of this is obvious. If by any stimulus given, either to agriculture or manufacture, the demand for labour should be increased, the price of that labour would rise *for a time*, and afford a greater

share of comforts and enjoyments to those who live by their labour. But this improved condition of the labourers would induce an increase of population, till the supply of labour should equal, if not exceed, the demand; and thus, again, reduce the value of labour to that standard which will, as before stated, afford them merely the common necessities of life.

Thus the *value of labour*, in all countries which have been *long settled and cultivated*, is regulated by the price of food for man; and though the rate of wages may be varied by temporary causes, yet *wages*, on an average of years, must be governed by this fixed principle, which regulates the *value* of labour.

The price of corn, therefore, if it be a *natural one*, is of little importance to the labourer, since *that price regulates the price of his commodity—labour*. But he suffers by an *artificial* low price of corn, for the price of his labour will be reduced with the price of corn, and if the low price of corn be the consequence of importation, (and consequently a forced or artificial one,) his labour will be reduced in a greater degree, though the price of many other articles necessary to his comfort would not be reduced in the same proportion. For the *artificial* low price of corn, caused by importation, would lessen the demand for agricultural la-

hour, thereby creating the greatest distress by the reduction of agricultural wages, far beyond what the price of corn would warrant, were that price a natural one, which distress would eventually be communicated to all other labourers.

Although the surplus of labour, arising from the decline of agriculture, might, after a while, be absorbed by the increased demand for manufacturing labour, it is still for us to inquire, whether such a change in the nature of the employment would not greatly interfere with the happiness and comfort of that numerous class of the people. Let any one who has given his attention to these interesting subjects, and has taken the trouble to enter into the detail of the condition of the working people, say, if he has not observed a decided difference between the substantial comforts of the agricultural and manufacturing labourers. The agricultural labourer, though his earnings can do no more than support a moderate family in necessary food and common comforts, has always a cottage or tenement wholly to himself; he also holds a garden of sufficient extent to supply himself and family with potatoes and other common vegetables. If he is industrious, he keeps a pig on the refuse of his garden, and makes it fat with the corn which his wife

and children collect by leasing at harvest. His additional wages, at the time of hay-making and harvest, afford to him some minor comforts, which, as they are somewhat above the common routine of his mode of living, add much to enjoyment. But what, perhaps, is of more importance to him than all these things, though not so much valued or thought of by him, as he has not felt or known, in his own case, the converse, his labour is performed in the fields, he breathes clear air, he enjoys the greatest of all earthly blessings—health; he sees his children, though fed on the cheapest food which nature has given to man, growing up in health and vigour, to a stature and strength which will enable them to follow his steps in the path of industry, relying on their own exertions alone, and independent of all the world. This, it may be said, is a delineation of the condition of the agricultural labourer in the last century, but not applicable to the present period. It must be allowed, that the many fluctuations in the price of provisions, by which they were often bearing very different relative prices to those of labour during the late war, very much altered the condition of the labourers, and compelled them to depend more on the poors' rate than they had been accustomed to do. This checked their industry, and in some measure

changed their character. But during the last ten years, when prices both of corn and labour have, except during three of those years, been more steady, the agricultural labourers have been gradually returning to their ancient habits of industry; and though they have no excess of income, and have been under the necessity of attending to their work, without indulging themselves with any idle days, they have enjoyed more comforts, and their families have been better supported than when they were generally assisted from the poor's rate, though the allowances were, in many instances, exceedingly lavish. The manufacturing labourer, on the other hand, resides, with his whole family, either in a single garret or a cellar, with no garden or outlet, except a dirty street, where his squalid children sprawl in a gutter for air and exercise. He has no place in which to keep a pig, or means of feeding it. Thus, although his wages are generally much higher than those of the agricultural labourer, yet his expences exceed even the difference of wages. He first pays a high rent for his lodging-room, he purchases all his vegetables, instead of growing them himself, he pays a higher price for fuel, he breathes foul air, he drinks foul water, he labours, for the most part, in hot workshops. If any increase should occasionally take place in his earnings, in consequence of

excited trade, and the consequent permission of his master to work additional hours, it adds nothing to the comfort of his family. He lives in the midst of temptations too strong to be resisted by man worn down by excessive toil. The pot-house and gin-shop are before his eyes, he must pass them in the way to his miserable lodging, where no comforts await his return at night; he falls into drunkenness and vice, the effect of which is soon communicated to his wretched family. The children of a manufacturing labourer, at the age of twelve, or sometimes younger, are compelled, by the necessities of the family, to work from twelve to fourteen hours each day in rooms at a temperature destructive to their health, without one resting-day or hour of recreation, except the Sabbath, and just sufficient time to take the necessary food; their constitutions are broken at an early age; their lives are shortened, and they seldom attain the natural size or strength of man. They become the wretched slaves of their masters, on whom they are wholly dependent for employment. The manufacturing labourers are also subjected to occasional extreme distress, owing to the fluctuations of trade. A cotton-spinner or silk-worker cannot perform any labour, except that, which he has been bred up to from his infancy; and

as such trades are subject to caprices, either of foreign consumers in the one case, or home consumers in the other, more especially when they depend on exportation they all must at times be greatly depressed, if not wholly stopped. Thus are a multitude of people at once deprived of the power of earning their bread by their own labour, and rendered wholly dependent on charity or the poor's rate for subsistence. These are the evils which attend the labourer in manufacture; but still it is necessary, for the good of the whole community, that a large portion of the people should be engaged in manufacture. All that is desirable; in fact, what is *just* to those who of necessity must earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, is, that we should not, by any new legislative enactment, deprive them of that variety in the nature of their employments, which enables them to choose whether they will work in the fields, and enjoy health, which is the consequence of rural habits; or whether, tempted by the bribe of higher wages, though with fewer comforts, they will confine themselves to live in miserable lodgings, work in hot rooms and impure air, thus shortening their lives for the sake of higher pay.

Thus, it is contended, on the strength of the foregoing arguments, that agriculture conduces

more than manufacture to the happiness and comfort of the mass of the people; and, that consequently, any measures which tend to reduce or restrain the cultivation of the soil, are calculated to deprive the mass of the people of the greatest source of their happiness and comfort.

We are now arrived at a very important part of our subject. We have to inquire, whether the exchange, in any great degree, from agriculture to manufacture, will affect the national security.

It will not be supposed that the population of this country can be supported wholly by *imported* food, but undoubtedly a large portion of the corn necessary to feed the people might and would be imported were the trade free. The supply, as we have before observed, would soon become *habitual* and necessary to us; what then would be the state of this country were that foreign supply to be suddenly withdrawn, which must be the case in the event of war between us and those countries from which it might be imported? A war between other countries, though we might not be engaged in it, would place great difficulties in the way of importation; but in case we should be ourselves engaged in war, the withdrawing of our accustomed supplies of corn, at the time we most stood in need of such assistance, would force us to accede to terms with the enemy, compromising our independence as a nation.

No country can be truly independent and secure, which does not produce, *internally*, a supply of the first article of necessity—*food for man, in sufficient quantity to feed its people*. An extended population is a source of wealth and national security, *so long as that population can be fed by home productions*; and the population will, in all well regulated states, accommodate itself to the power of producing food for man. But if by *artificial* means the population should be made to extend itself beyond the power which the country possesses of supplying its food by internal production, *then that extended population is the cause of weakness, and must endanger the independent existence of the nation to which it belongs*.

The theory of the political economists, in regard to the mode of increasing national wealth, though perfect as it respects its own object, yet is often at variance with sound national policy. It must be admitted, that manufacture extended by commerce, or interchange between nations, enriches both the parties to such exchange: this is a truism in political economy. The mode in which it operates is this: one country, for instance, produces coffee, sugar, spices, wines, cotton, &c. with great facility, and can easily produce much more than is wanted for its own consumption; but the same country has not the means, for want of the ma-

terials, of procuring, by internal production, iron or brass goods, pottery, glass, cloths, &c. &c., which articles can as easily be produced by the other country to a greater amount than its internal demand will consume, as coffee, sugar, &c. by the first-named country. Now, from the wants of each party of the articles produced by the other, the people of both countries suffer, in regard to their comforts; and the population of each (which, when employed, constitutes the wealth of nations,) makes no advance. In fact, both countries are in want of inducement for exertion to produce goods, because they have no market, and each country is in want of those luxuries and comforts, the exchange of which would afford them a mutual market for their productions, and, consequently, a stimulus to their mutual exertions. It must be observed, that the articles given by each party to the other in exchange, are, on account of the facility of their production, and the small amount of labour employed in it by the *exporting* country, comparatively of little value to that country; but the articles mutually received in return are exceedingly valuable to the *importing* country, because they are not only necessary to the comforts of the people, but also because they cannot be procured by home production. Thus commerce enriches

mutually the nations which engage in it, and also affords additional comforts and luxuries to the people. Having gone thus far with the economists, it is necessary to explain what may be deemed exceptions in the application of this sound doctrine of economy. All long established nations have originally possessed the means of supplying themselves by internal production with the first article of necessity—food for man: and this general rule is not broken in upon by the circumstance of different climates being suited to different productions, because in all climates man will be found to subsist on, and generally to prefer that species of food which shall be the natural production of his country. Thus, in all countries, as it has been before stated, provided there be no importation of food, the population will increase with any increase of the internal power of supplying food, and with the demand for labour, but will not naturally *precede* it;* and, it must be repeated,

* These positions may be disputed, because it may appear to a superficial observer that we have examples to the contrary. In Poland, for instance, wheat is grown in great abundance for exportation, and is exceedingly cheap, but the people do not increase. In Poland, it must be observed, the persons who labour are vassals or slaves to the great landholders, and are paid, not in wages, nor in wheat, but by the occupation of land, just so much as may be sufficient to grow rye to maintain themselves

the increase of population may be considered as an augmentation of wealth and strength,

in the most degraded state of existence. Thus human laws operate against the general law of nature, which makes man increase with the increase of food. In America, wheat is cheap and labour very dear, and the population is making a rapid advance, in compliance with the general law. America is as yet an infant state, and unincumbered with landburdens; and with its very extensive territory, as well as free government, it is not likely that the increase of its people, and, consequently, the supply of labour will exceed the demand, so as to reduce the price of labour, till it approaches more nearly to that of provisions, for a very long period of time.

Ireland may also be quoted as an example of a population increasing, in defiance of the general law. The lower classes of Irish have, indeed, but few comforts, but they have not been used to them, and like the animals of the forest, they can both feed and house themselves. They are not vassals, like the Polanders; and though there is no demand for their labour in Ireland, they are free to seek it elsewhere. This absence of natural wants, and possessing, as they do, habits of self-dependence, induces them to enter into marriage at a very early age; and again, like the animals of the forest, the natural attachment of the lower classes of the Irish to their wives and families is more conspicuous than that of any other people; the father of a family travels from home to obtain labour, but he always either sends or takes his earnings home to his family periodically. Thus by their own merits and exertions have they some comforts, which induces their rapid increase in defiance of their often recurring distresses. The people in Poland and Ireland suffer, not from the want of cheap food, but from the absolute want of demand for their labour, by which alone can they get the means of obtaining any food, except in one case rye, and the other the perishable potatoe.

provided the internal supply of food shall precede it; but, if national independence be considered, as it ought ever to be, the primary source of the happiness and glory of a people, then will it be the duty of a wise government, to take especial care, *that the population shall not, by the artificial stimulus, caused by the importation of food for man, be forcibly extended beyond the national power of supplying it with food by internal production.*

This seems to be the main point on which the principles of political economy are not reconcilable to the sound system of national policy.

But it is readily admitted, that cheap corn is a national good, *provided cheapness shall be occasioned by excess of home production, or reduction of the cost of home production.*

Cheap and dear are relative terms, and to know whether corn or any other commodity be cheap or not, its price must be compared with the price of other commodities, grown or produced in the same country; and the standard which should measure price is the quantity of labour and material consumed in the production of the article, *with its relative amount of taxation, both direct and indirect.* With a debt of eight hundred millions of pounds in this country, and even with an equal distribution of the taxation necessary to pay the interest, and

to support our establishments, all our home productions must be dearer when measured by the standard of labour and *taxation together*, than in countries unburdened with debt. Taxation is the cause of this difference of cost, and, therefore, it is found necessary in the establishment of what may be *called*, but which is not literally, free trade, to impose a fixed duty *on importation generally*; and this duty should be measured by the amount of our *taxation* above that of other countries.

It may here be said, that in many articles, not peculiarly the production of this country, we can undersell foreigners in their own markets. This is perfectly true; but it is no exception to the rule here laid down. The cause is to be found in the superiority of our machinery, and the superior security of capital when vested in buildings and machinery in this country, over most others. This superiority can only be of short duration, and, therefore, cannot be used in argument against the general position.

Relying on the foregoing arguments, it is contended, that corn cannot be grown at so low a price here as in many other countries, though, if the taxation were equally distributed over all our sources of home-production, corn of British growth would be as cheap *relatively*, as any other of our home productions. Take away the *exclusive* taxes from agriculture, and

corn will be rendered cheap by legitimate means, and by such cheapness all parties will be benefited.

Let us also inquire, whether the decline of agriculture may not very materially affect the security of the fundholder.

The funded debt, whatever it may be denominated, is only *annuity* payable out of the general taxation, and the annual payment is in no way charged on any particular property, as some persons would have it supposed, or secured to the owners of stock, except by the national faith or honesty of the great body of the people.

For the purpose of maintaining this national faith, the legislature is authorised, by the *common consent of the people*, to levy taxes for the annual payment of the annuity.

Now, we will suppose a great national change to have taken place, from agriculture to manufacture, and the consequent abandonment of the land. The taxes would then be wholly levied on the articles of consumption, and chiefly of importation, and, in a prosperous state of trade and commerce, which would enable those engaged in it to be great consumers of taxed articles, the fundholder would be paid his annuity. But we must always calculate on occasional reverses, or stagnation of trade; what then would be the consequence? The persons en-

gaged in that trade, or commerce, must, of necessity, cease to be *consumers*; and, consequently, *payers of the taxes*, to meet the great annuity. It would be useless, then, to have recourse, on a sudden, to the land, which would have been rendered unproductive, and, consequently, that class of consumers which derived its power from the land, would have been annihilated. The fundholders may also be assured, that if at any time it should become impossible to raise by taxation the full amount of the interest of the debt, from whatever temporary cause the defalcation might be occasioned, a compromise with them, in fact, a national bankruptcy would instantly ensue. Thus would they have an *equitable* adjustment, of which they have so much dread. The fundholders would do well to recollect, that, by the change in the currency, from paper to gold, their *great annuity*, or the *nation's debt*, has been raised, nearly, or quite, one-third above what *in justice it ought to be*, being so much above what they originally contracted for, and paid for. They purchased the annuity in *paper*, depreciated about thirty per cent., and will now receive the full annual payment in *gold*, when they ought to have received only the value of the said paper. This cannot fail to be seen, and understood, by the whole commercial interest, and should any great difficulty arise, the

commercial gentlemen would soon reconcile themselves to a reduction of the annuity to its due value, and on sound principles of *justice* would they so act.

It may be said, that, though our debt, for the most part, was contracted in a depreciated currency, and the various sales and transfers of stock have been carried on, for many years, under that depreciation; yet, that some purchases have taken place since the re-establishment of the metallic currency, and, therefore, any departure from the payment of the annuity in a metallic currency, would be unjust to those parties who have purchased in that currency. This is true, and some injustice would here arise. But, let us examine the other side of the question. What is the extent of injury which must be experienced by those individuals who have borrowed money in the depreciated currency; who, having given security for the depreciated *paper money*, find themselves compelled to pay off their debts in *metallic money*, by which the lender receives about one-third more than he is fairly entitled to? When the justice of the two cases is balanced, the result will undoubtedly be favourable to an equitable adjustment. But, it is not intended fully to argue this subject, or to defend any principle which may even be supposed to favour the depriving any parties of their due.

The object of this statement, is, to impress on the fundholder the necessity of his *doing justice* to the landholder, if he expects *more than justice* to be done to himself, and, also, to show him how intimately *his* security is connected with the prosperity of the land. It is a fact, that men in general are honest, when prosperity enables them to be so; but, when in distress, they generally—however honestly disposed—endeavour to discover means and excuses for self-preservation, and, in the case of the funded debt of the country, they have, at least, a plausible excuse for a reduction of its interest, in proportion to the change in the currency. In a country where, by habit, bankruptcy is not considered a breach of honesty, such a feeling would the more readily prevail. It is quite clear, that if the fundholder shall join in the destruction of the landed interest of the country, and should deprive that interest of the power of bearing a share of the payment of his annuity, he has no just right to expect any thing but a general feeling on the part of the landholders, farmers, and others connected more immediately with the land, in favour of a just reduction of his annuity, in proportion to the change of the currency in *his* favour, and against the land.*

* The extraordinary power possessed by the government, conjointly with the Bank of England, over prices, by changing,

It will be seen, by the foregoing discussion, that the importation of corn is considered as a national evil, and should, therefore, be avoided, unless called for by an *extreme* case; but this does not imply an approval of the present corn law. It is conceived, that a fixed duty would be a far better protection against importation, provided that duty were sufficiently high to operate as a general prohibition; and such duty should be accompanied with a drawback, or bounty, on exportation.

at their will, the value of the circulating medium, is of a most dangerous description. No set of men, however honest, and however wise they may be, are fit to be trusted with the means of shifting, at their will, the property of the people from one class to another. To this circumstance may be attributed the greatest part of the evils with which we have so often been visited, since the first departure from a metallic currency. The change from gold to paper, and from paper again to gold; the frequent extension, and contraction, of the amount of the circulating medium, by means of exchequer and other bills, and this being done, not on any fixed principle, or under any announcement of intention, or by law, but almost at the caprice of the moment, or in consequence of some sudden alarm, could not fail to derange all landed and commercial engagements, and to occasion the greatest injustice, and most severe distress. The return to gold, of the ancient standard value, after having so long used a paper circulation, depreciated from twenty-five to thirty per cent., at once increased the burden of the national annuity, or debt, to that amount, being, in effect, greater than all the reduction of taxation which has yet been made since the termination of the war.

It must be observed, that when money and labour is expended in agricultural improvements, or new cultivation, such as draining, clearing land of obstructions, &c. as well as by raising, and laying on permanent manures, so much is added to the *fixed* productive capital of the nation. Money and labour so expended, cannot again be removed, but must continue to give employment to an increased population. The active people required to cultivate waste lands become consumers of manufactures, and, consequently, payers of taxes. By the new cultivation, then, we not only increase our wealth and power, but, by augmenting our production and consumption, we extend the field for taxation, by which the weight of our national debt is rendered less burdensome, and the perfection of this system proceeds from its permanence; nothing can interfere with its operation, but the wildest and worst policy of a speculating legislature. There is no disease more infectious, or which extends itself with more rapidity, than a new theory on practical subjects. Political economy, though it is a science which ought to be a leading feature in the education of every statesman, to enable him, in his general policy, so far to regulate his measures, that they should never be in repugnance to the rules of that science, has been but little attended to since the time of

Dr. Adam Smith, till that of the late Mr. Ricardo. A new light then seemed to burst at once on some members of our administration, and, according to the usual effect of new lights, it made them run exceedingly wild. They had been bitten themselves, and they bit all that came in their way. This infection was communicated with more or less effect, according to the subject on which it had to work. Some of those who were by nature rather enthusiastic, it drove stark mad; others, who possessed more of the reasoning faculties of the mind, as well as caution, it enlightened and confirmed in their opinions; and others, whose powers of perception, or comprehension, were not of the highest order, and who, by nature, as sometimes is the case, felt a great repugnance to mental exertion—These did not comprehend the meaning either of the word or science, or else, in the attempt to understand the *contradictions* of some of its professors, became so bewildered, that they gave it up in disgust, and are now unfortunately its greatest opposers.

The political economists would overleap all bounds of discretion in the application of its principles—they have forgotten the unnatural state of the country, to which they would apply its perfect action—they will not let their newly acquired science bend to circumstances of general policy, but would make all

other considerations fall before its favourite and fascinating theory. The events which have followed their hasty and ill-judged attempt to adopt a system, regardless of the circumstances of the country, will prove the truth of these observations, even should we be fortunate enough to escape from more disastrous consequences. But the danger seems now to be, lest the failure in the rash and premature attempt to force this system on all the leading interests of the country, without first duly considering how it might severally affect those interests, should, by a re-action against the science itself, retard the general and prudent adoption of its sound and valuable principles.

But to return to our more immediate object, the question of the corn laws.

It is now clearly ascertained, that this country can grow enough corn for its consumption, for it has done so for the last seven years, though much of the inferior land has been thrown out of cultivation.* But it is desirable

* When speaking of poor land, we should adopt some fixed principle, to decide what should be deemed *poor land*. Land should be classed according to its fertility, and the quantity of wheat which it might be made to grow per acre, should be the measure of that fertility. It might be taken from sixteen to thirty-two Winchester bushels per acre; but if we take the price of wheat to be at 60s. per quarter, no land would repay its arable cultivation, *without yielding any rent*, with a production of less than eighteen bushels per acre; this class of land then,

to increase our population and wealth, say the economists, and we must import corn for that purpose. To this may be said, why should we not increase the cultivation of our own land? It is stated, by an able writer on these subjects, that the United Kingdom contains about twenty-two millions of acres of uncultivated land; and he estimates the number of acres calculated to produce corn, with a moderate outlay of capital, at eleven millions. Why then, it may fairly be asked, should not the eleven millions of acres be made productive, before we render ourselves dependent on

as well as that below it, must with wheat at 60s. per quarter, go out of cultivation. The lowest class which can be cultivated with wheat at 60s. must produce twenty bushels per acre, and this class would yield a rent of about 9s. per acre. It must be observed, that in these calculations, the land is considered as subject to tithe, and an average of poors' rates and other taxes. Another observation must also here be made, which does not occur to those who are not practical farmers, that what is called *poor land*, by a long series of good cultivation, is *raised from its class* by the mere effect of cultivation: those persons who talk of land being exhausted by long continued cultivation, must indeed be bad farmers. It is often said, that the poor land should be kept in grass for the purpose of increasing the production of butcher's meat or cattle. It is well known to good farmers, that the greater portion of our poor corn land will not bear grass, even to feed a rabbit: but with an alternate system of corn and green crop, will feed cattle as well as produce corn, at the same time *employing the labourers and paying taxes.*

foreign countries? The reply is simply this, *the embargo which our land is subjected to by the tithe system, poors' and other rates, and taxes, prohibits all increase of cultivation.* Money itself is not titheable; but when it is vested in the cultivation of waste land, which afforded neither tithe nor profit in its natural state, it yields a tithe, which may be said to be taken from the money expended; and this tithe consumes all the expected profit of the landholder and capitalist, who so imprudently vests his money. But if money be vested in buildings of any description, or in manufacture or trade, it is not subject to the tithe system, which renders that mode of investment more profitable than the other. Tithe, in fact, though called a tenth, is a *real fourth of the neat produce of land*, thus a fourth of the capital expended on land, or twenty-five pounds in every hundred pounds so expended, is given in *perpetuity* to the tithe owner, in every case of new or improved cultivation.* The poors' rates and county rates, though a severe tax on land, are not so

* Let it not be supposed, that any wish to invade the property of the established church, or to question its legal right to tithe, as a reward for the labours of the Clergy, is here meant to be expressed or implied. Tithe is spoken of as a public evil, without any allusion to its owners. Commutation, either for land, or corn rent, or some other secure property, the income of which shall vary with the income of land, is all that is desirable, and such a commutation would be more conducive to the

mischievous in their mode of operation, but these taxes are almost wholly paid by the land, though as much benefit is derived from their effects, by the manufacturing and trading interests, as by the landed interest. The labourers employed, during their ability to work in manufactures and trade, are, generally, when past their labour, together with the widows and orphan children of manufacturing labourers, thrown on the poors' rates for subsistence: and a full share of the criminal cases and other county expences, arise from the extended manufacture and trade of the country, though paid almost exclusively by the landed interest. It may be difficult, and perhaps impossible, to alter this system, which makes the land the national bank on which to draw for all that necessary expenditure which cannot so readily be fixed on any other property, on account of its fluctuating nature. But while the economists permit such charges to remain on the land, it is the extreme of folly to wish to deprive the land of the power to meet their demands on it. In fact, in their eagerness to

interest, comfort, and security of the churchman, even than the lay tithe-holder; for the churchman, in most cases, finds greater difficulty, under the present system, of obtaining the full value of his tithe, than the layman. Added to which, the larger portion of the great tithes is the property of laymen, held either in fee, or under the church.

pursue their theory, they would cut off the branch on which they rest. They have begun their work at the wrong end. They should first have paid off the national debt, which was the position of the late Mr. Ricardo, who proposed a plan for that purpose. They should next have placed all the other national payments *equally* on all the property of the country, then might they have established, on our parts, a free trade with all the world.

It is impossible to close these observations, without adverting to the extraordinary means possessed by this country of almost immediately increasing its wealth and strength, by the extension of its home production and consumption to a degree quite incalculable.

Ireland, which may now be considered by many as a dead weight on this country, adding greatly to our expences, but yielding nothing to the general stock — Ireland, which requires an army of twenty thousand men to keep its starving people in subjection, which army is paid out of taxes raised in England — Ireland, which many of our legislators, during the last hundred years, would gladly have sunk in the sea, had their power been equal to their will — this same neglected Ireland, or if not neglected, noticed only by oppression and military coercion, would at once become the most powerful limb of the British

empire, were all the obstacles to its improvement removed.

The soil and climate of Ireland is well calculated for the growth of corn, and all other food for man. It is already well stocked with an able-bodied population, which, so far from being averse to labour, seeks employment in all parts of the world. So rapidly, in fact, does the population of Ireland increase, that the very men who now advocate the principles of political economy, not long since, proposed, and supported in parliament, a large grant of public money to encourage emigration from that country. Thus did they prefer spending national treasure to get rid of numbers of active and enterprising labourers, who, according to all economists, are the primary source of wealth, rather than remove the obstructions to national improvement, by doing which they would have created a demand for their labour in their native land. Ireland, in fact, possesses all the qualifications which nature has bestowed on her most favourite spots, to render her a highly productive portion of the British empire, both in agriculture and manufacture: and yet we do not sufficiently estimate the value of that country, we neglect her interest, and with it our own, though we are most anxious to advance the interests of colonies some thousands of miles distant from us, some of which have, by the

nature of their climate, proved the grave of thousands upon thousands of British subjects. Perhaps there is not again to be found a field so inviting to a practical politician, on which to exhibit his knowledge of the science of political economy, and his genius for the internal improvement of a nation, as Ireland; a country where all the great materials for producing wealth are prepared to his hand, and nothing is wanting to bring them into form and action, but the skill of the master in clearing the ground. So rapid would be the effect, that it might be fully experienced even in our own time; and yet, strange to say, this great work is retarded on account of some ancient and absurd prejudices, which often weigh more in the minds of men in power, than the most important national objects.

It is not here intended to touch on disputed points of national policy, except inasmuch as those points interfere with national improvement.

The question of Catholic Emancipation, is, of all others, the most to be avoided in a discussion of this description, except as it may affect the object in view; but the connection of that subject with the welfare, not only of Ireland, but of the whole British empire, is so decided, and intimate, that to avoid it altogether seems impossible.

Why does not the cultivation of the land extend itself in Ireland, till no unprofitable spot shall be found? Why does not manufacture increase in that country, where labour is as cheap as in any part of the continent? The reason is simply this: Ireland has not known internal peace since the time of its conquest. Neither capital nor person is safe in that country. Two parties, both professing christianity, but forgetful of the tolerant spirit of their common Master, continually exhibit, when occasion offers, their inveterate hatred of each other. The Protestants, though comparatively few in number, are armed with the power of government, and supported by law and military force. They not only keep in subjection the large mass of the people, which is Catholic, but also, at times, add insult to the other injuries under which that body labours. The great mass of the nation, because it is Catholic, is deprived of many civil rights, which are usually attached to the possession of property; thus raising a distinction amongst a people which ought on every possible consideration to be united. These things not only cause, but maintain an inveterate hatred between Protestant and Catholic, and few occasions are ever lost, on either side, of giving effect to that feeling. The natural result is, occasional rebellion, and constant occurrence

of nightly murder, for the purpose of revenge or retaliation. Such is the consequence of the physical strength of an oppressed and insulted multitude, when opposed to the legal and armed force of a few, whose constant fear induces them to exercise, with severity, the powers with which they are invested.

In a country in such a state as this, no man having moveable property, sufficient to enable him to engage in a large agricultural or manufacturing concern, would remain: for if he be a Protestant, his property and life are at times in danger; and if a Catholic, he is subject to continual insult, as well as personal violence, besides being deprived of many of the privileges to which property ought to entitle him, and which often affords the means of self-protection.

To this cause alone, may we attribute also the unwillingness of English and Scotch capitalists to invest their money, either in agriculture or manufacture in Ireland. Money would be most profitably employed in that country, in consequence of cheapness of labour; but neither the capital, nor the person who might settle there, would be secure. Thus has Ireland long been held in a state of embargo, with a large potatoe-fed population, producing cattle and corn to a limited extent, nearly the whole of

which is exported to pay rent to the absentee landholder, the people who labour, not having the means to retain any portion of it for their own consumption. It has not been here meant to cast any blame on the Irish landlords, for not residing on their estates, but to state and explain the reason why so many of them do not reside, and which also prevents the flow of foreign capital and skill into that country. There are some other causes which prevent the increase of agriculture in Ireland, the present tithe system being one, and the most powerful; but the foundation of all evil in Ireland,—the prohibition, as it may truly be called, of all good which might otherwise approach her, is the continuation of proscription, on account of difference in points of religion, and mixing religion with the exercise of civil duties, and the enjoyment of civil rights.

Whether the prevalence of the Catholic religion in Ireland, be in itself a national evil or not, does not concern the subject under discussion; but the persecution of that church, inasmuch as it affects the peace and security of persons and property, is a subject which forces itself on the attention of those who are anxious to extend the productive powers of that country; and as that persecution has now been persevered in ever since the Reformation, with-

out having produced the desired effect—conversion—may it not be advisable to try a new mode, that of conciliation, by removing all distinctions, on account of religion, so as to leave no cause of complaint on the part of the Catholic or Protestant; but by giving them equal rights, and admitting them equally into public offices of trust, the whole body of people might be so mixed together and united that no one would feel disposed to inquire, whether his neighbour, or the person with whom he might be discharging some public office, were Catholic or Protestant, or what his form of faith might be. This inquiry, which no man has any right to make of another, would then cease; conversion to Protestantism might be the consequence of this state of society, but the cessation of all those evils which have so long prevailed, in consequence of the adoption and perseverance in a contrary system, must ensue.

Let it not be supposed, that in thus mentioning the state of Ireland, it is meant to consider the interests of that country as separated from those of the United Kingdom. Ireland offers herself more immediately to the view of those who endeavour to devise the means of national advancement: because, though possessing the materials to render herself powerful

and productive, she still remains in a state of degradation and waste, unknown, in so great a degree, to any other part of the British empire. Whatever may increase our agriculture, manufacture, and trade, will have the same effect of advancing our national wealth and power, whether that improvement may be effected in Ireland, or any other part of the United Kingdom.

That this country must ever be burdened with taxes sufficient to pay the interest of the debt, which may truly be called an annuity, will not be denied, except by those who are prepared to deny the obligation to pay the full demand of the national creditors. We have, then, but one mode of rendering that burden more easy to us, and that is, by increasing our national income by the increase of production.

To effect this object, we must begin with agriculture, as the foundation of all production; we must remove every obstruction to its advancement, and afford it that protection which all sources of wealth, in a high taxed country, must require, provided other countries, comparatively low taxed, can compete in the same markets.

Agriculture may well be considered the root of national prosperity; manufacture, trade, and commerce, are the valuable branches which

naturally, and of necessity, spring out of it; and the whole forms, when united, a state of society of the most perfect description. By maintaining this position, and by justly balancing and combining all the national interests, shall we ensure to the mass of the people the greatest amount of wealth, security, and happiness.

In concluding these observations, it may not be considered irrelevant to our subject, to examine the leading principle of the uncompromising advocates for free trade.

The position of the economists, that money, like all other things, is a marketable commodity, and of more or less value according to the proportion of its quantity to the demand for it, being admitted, several conclusions are supposed by the advocates for free trade necessarily to follow. First, commerce between nations, say they, can only be an exchange of commodities, for no balance in money or precious metals can constantly be obtained by any country, because the effect of a continued increase of money in a country would be a reduction of its value, and thus by raising the *money-price* of commodities to *restrain their export*, and the import of money in exchange. The same undue accumulation of money in one country would cause a scarcity of money in another, which, by raising its value, would reduce in that country the *money-price* of com-

modities, and thus *encourage their export*. Thus by the means of commerce will the quantity of the precious metals in all countries accommodate itself to the demand; and the money-balance of trade, to which hitherto so much importance has been attached, will appear to have been a fallacy.

But perfect, in a superficial view of it, as this theory seems to be, some exceptions will arise in practice, which, without destroying the principle, will prove that theory alone must not be too strictly adhered to.

It will not be denied, that by the money-balance of trade in our favour, we have recovered our due proportion of the precious metals in this country, of which we were nearly drained by the late wars. But we may be told, that having obtained our due share of these metals, we shall find it very difficult to go further, in fact impossible, to maintain a balance of trade in our favour—that our foreign trade can now be only exchange of one perishable commodity for another, and that this exchange of commodities is limited by our power to consume foreign commodities, as we can receive nothing else in exchange for our own. Let us now compare this theory with practical experience.

The history of this country, during the last century, or any other given period of twenty

years, if carefully examined, will prove, practically, that a balance of trade in favour of one country, either in money or the precious metals, can be continued for a very long period of time, or until the favoured country shall have attained the highest possible state of cultivation, population, manufacture, and commerce; a state, in fact, very difficult to arrive at or to imagine. It has ever been the policy of this country to support a money-balance of trade in our favour, by encouraging our export, and by restraining our import trade, except it be in the marketable article money, or the precious metals, which has been free of all restriction. The most unceasing attention of every administration in this country, heretofore, has been given to this subject, and numberless have been our laws and regulations, establishing restrictions and bounties to effect our purpose; numberless also have been the commercial treaties for the establishment of reciprocity in matters of commerce between nations, but in which each nation or party has endeavoured, by superior intrigue, to get the advantage. What has been the effect of this policy, in regard to this country? We have always maintained a favourable money-balance of trade, and with it an unceasing and rapid advance of our agriculture, our population, and manufacture, in fact, of our wealth and power; and

this steady advance, strange as it may seem, has been most conspicuous during the period of two wars, extraordinary on account of their duration as well as their nature. Thus the money and precious metals, which have been constantly pouring into this country for a long series of years, in consequence of the balance of trade having been in our favour, have been absorbed partly by the continually increasing demand for its use, derived from our extended agriculture, population, manufacture, and commerce, and partly by the drain of war in foreign expenditure. Thus also has this favourable balance of trade enabled us to support our foreign expenditure in war. Our advance in national wealth may be denied, because of our debt, but it must be observed, that a debt owing to ourselves is no diminution of national wealth.

A second observation here naturally occurs on the effect of undue importation or exportation. An excess of importation, which draws a balance of money from the importing country, raises the value of money, and thereby reduces the money-price of commodities in that country. Thus low prices, which are so much desired by the advocates for free trade, are a sign of the balance of trade having been against the country in which these low prices are found, and of the scarcity of the precious metals or money;

in fact, *low prices are a sign of national poverty, and vice versa, high prices are a sign of a flourishing commerce, with the abundance of the precious metals or money, and of national prosperity.*

Some of the advocates for free-trade deny that our commercial system of restrictions and bounties for the encouragement of commerce, has in any degree been the cause of our national advance in wealth and power, and they say, that our wealth and power has increased in defiance of so great an obstruction; but they advance no arguments in proof of their assertion, nor do they shew any other cause why this country has outstript all others in the race of improvement.

Undoubtedly, our national improvement has been effected *under the operation of a long continued commercial system*, which has now for the first time found many opposers. How much we are indebted to that system, or whether we are at all indebted to it, may be difficult to determine. But when we contemplate the diminutive spot occupied by Great Britain in the Map of Europe, and compare her resources with those of other nations possessing similar or greater natural advantages—when we look back for a century only, and taking a view of her resources at that period, we compare them with what she now possesses—when we recollect that we have long sup-

ported the burden of a debt of eight hundred millions, without having been pressed to the earth by its weight—when we feel that we have, even with this pressure of debt, the power to defend our national honour and security by arms, should it be required of us; we shall pause, in these days of speculative philosophy, before we adopt an entire new theory, on a subject which affects so deeply one of the great and leading interests of the country; to the protection, hitherto, of which interest, we probably are indebted for the long continued advancement of our national prosperity, for our present greatness, our present wealth and power.

THE END.

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