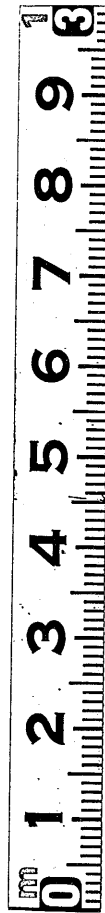


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FREEDOM OF TRADE.

BY

JAMES CARRICK MOORE, Esq.

Le chien, voyant sa proie en l'eau représentée,
La quitta pour l'image, et pensa se noyer;
La rivière devint tout-d'un-coup agitée,
Et n'eut ni l'ombre ni le corps.—LA FONTAINE.

SECOND EDITION,

CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

MDCCCXXVI.

TO THE
LORD CHANCELLOR.

MY LORD,

To whom can an appeal be made from those who have suffered wrong, but to the Guardian of the law, the Dispenser of equity?

According to the annals of British history, it was the practice of Parliament to redress the grievances of the people. But the silk-manufacturers, when innocently occupied in their business, under the sacred sanction of laws enacted for their protection, without having committed the slightest transgression, have been inflicted lately with a most heavy grievance by Parliament. The glovers also have

been smitten by the same power. Should these measures be extended, as is reported, many other manufactures will be crushed, and all improvement in agriculture repressed.

It is true Parliament imagines that from these proceedings good will ultimately ensue; but it is understood that your Lordship entertains no such hope; and it is certain, that the present Parliament think differently from all those who ever sat in Westminster.

Since the novel opinions of the day are repugnant to those of the highest authorities, and which have been consecrated by time, it may be prudent to deliberate longer before they are put in practice; for it has not yet been satisfactorily proved that public benefit proceeds from private miseries, any more than from private vices; a doctrine which was once inculcated likewise by a celebrated Wit.

The pleading in this Essay is for multitudes, who were never accused, though some of them have been already condemned, and more are about to be condemned to absolute want by a new species of Bills of Attainder. They sue to your Lordship only for justice. Let them not fail from the disabilities of him who has undertaken this task; and who has been prompted solely by pity to the oppressed.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient and

Most humble servant,

JAMES CARRICK MOORE.

FREEDOM OF TRADE.

THERE are certain words so captivating to British ears, that whoever employs them is listened to with pleasure; and whoever expresses even a doubt of the wisdom of the principles included in these fascinating terms, can hardly find a hearer. The word freedom is a striking example of this: its sound touches the heart, and fires the imagination: our warriors have fought for it, our patriots died for it. Orators seeking popularity, aware of this, use it frequently, applaud it continually, and urge its extension far beyond the limits of prudence. Hence it is that personal freedom and freedom of the press have long been favourite topics, and now freedom of trade is extolled equally in Parliament, and on the Royal Exchange.

Yet entire freedom, which is so adored, only exists in the savage state, in which mankind are miserable. The history of the world evinces,

that complete liberty and slavery are both unhappy conditions; and that men have more enjoyments in the medium between these opposite extremes.

A seductive writer, however, of the last century was induced, by the love of paradox, or by the ambition of displaying the strength of his genius, to maintain that the sciences, the arts, and civilization, corrupted the human race, and rendered them vicious and unhappy. He eulogized with so much eloquence the virtues and the uncontrolled liberty of savages, all possessing equal rights, that France was moved. And the works of this extraordinary man are considered as one of the chief causes of a revolution, which threatened the overthrow of civil society.

It was about the same period that Adam Smith, an ingenious metaphysician, turned his thoughts from moral contemplations to the consideration of the pecuniary pursuits of men of business. He explained the advantages resulting from a division of labour, and analyzed the sources of profits, throwing much light on subjects which had been before little attended to by philosophers. In this investigation he discovered many instances of injurious restraints that had been laid on commerce by government, which prompted him to recommend

greater freedom of trade. The useful truths contained in this excellent work are universally admitted; but it is natural that the inventor of a system should carry his principles farther than would be found beneficial in practice. There have arisen, since, many political economists, disciples of Adam Smith, whose admiration of their master seems to have hindered their remarking any of his mistaken positions; and tempted them to admit even some of his vague suggestions as established axioms.

To shew to what extremes certain individuals of this sect have been led by following his theories, the opinion of one of the most distinguished, on the habitual absence of Irish landholders, shall be noticed*.

It has been calculated, that the annual rents of the landed proprietors of Ireland who live abroad, amount to three millions and a half; which the writer above alluded to conceives on the first blush to be no loss whatever to the country. He afterwards, by an intricate train of fine-spun arguments, has convinced himself, and tries by them to convince his readers, that if the whole nobility and gentry were to return to their country, and spend their incomes upon their estates, it would not add one farthing to the wealth of Ireland.

* Edinburgh Review, No. lxxxv., p. 86.

Had Mr. M'Culloch succeeded in demonstrating this incredible position, he would have merited the eulogium which was paid by David Hume to the Bishop of Cloyne, on his proofs of the non-existence of matter, who said he had proved, by the most uncontrovertible arguments, what no man in his senses could believe. Luckily, however, questions on mercantile transactions of daily occurrence are more easily sifted and solved than abstruse metaphysical difficulties; but Mr. M'Culloch has not taken advantage of this, for his statements are neither arranged with sufficient simplicity, nor discussed with perspicuity. Indeed, so complex are the arguments, that the reader, at length, finding himself in an obscure labyrinth, willingly accepts the clue offered by the author—glad to get out any way. Were he to be dragged back, before the erroneous and ambiguous path could be retraced, he would assuredly be devoured by the monster Ennui. In mercy to the reader, he shall be treated more mildly, and the question stated in the plainest manner.

The annual rent of an estate usually amounts to a full third part of the produce of the land; and Mr. M'Culloch conceives that when this third is transmitted to an Irish absentee, residing for his pleasure at Paris, the whole three-thirds still remain in Ireland—this is the

opinion I mean to contest. The produce of an Irish estate consists chiefly of cattle, hogs, and corn: these articles are bred and raised by the farmers, and then sold, partly in Ireland, but principally in Great Britain. Two-thirds of the price obtained are employed in paying the labourers' wages, the tithes to the clergyman, the various expenses requisite in farming, and the remainder for the maintenance of the farmer's family; and whether the landlord is at home or abroad, all this money is equally expended in Ireland. So far, Mr. M'Culloch is in the right; but the distribution of the other third part of the produce, which is the absentee's rent, is next to be considered. This is always paid to his agent, who, when the principal is at Paris, transmits it thither, either in the form of a bill of exchange, or by a letter of credit to a banker. By whatever mode the rent is sent, it is paid to the absentee in French money. Owing to the diversity and intricacy of commercial affairs, the rent may have assumed various forms, and may have been scattered circuitously through various countries, before it reaches Paris. It may have been converted into cottons, woollens, or hardware; it may have been exported to Holland or Germany, or have been transferred in payment of a debt due to French

merchants, or exported directly to France in gold: whatever form or course it takes, *it never returns to the Kingdom of Ireland*, but terminates at last, with or without discount, in the pocket of the absentee. This money, wherever it travels, was the production of Irish labour, and when the landed proprietor is at Paris, is expended by him there, according to his inclination. The maître d'hôtel, the valet de place, the traiteurs, and the tailors are certain of some portion; the opera managers, and perhaps the opera dancers of another, and the remainder is usually lost at rouge et noir, or reversis. Certain it is that the whole goes among the Parisians, who profit by it as much as by the rents of any French Peer, who resides in the capital. Mr. M'Culloch disputes none of these facts, yet persists in the opinion that notwithstanding this waste of the money, the rent still remains entire in Ireland: if this could be proved, it would necessarily follow also, that the rents of every Norman or Gascon nobleman, who lives in Paris, go to Ireland likewise. When an opinion is once firmly fixed in a strong mind, it is apt to extend, rather than yield to opposition: accordingly, it is concluded by Mr. M'Culloch, not only that absenteeism is no way detrimental to Ireland, on pecuniary grounds, but, "on the

contrary, it is in the great majority of cases, decidedly advantageous*." This exculpation of the absentees, has a strong resemblance to a reprobation: but if any doubts remain of the evils produced in Ireland by the absence of the landed proprietors, some of the benefits shall be pointed out, which would naturally flow from their presence.

In the first place it is to be presumed, that men of fortune would consume a certain quantity of goods which pay taxes. This would contribute to augment the revenue of Ireland, instead of that of France. Secondly, these persons would employ a number of tradesmen, shopkeepers, labourers, and servants for use or ostentation, whose gains and wages would enable them to live more comfortably than they could without these helps. Thirdly, some of the wealthy proprietors might feel an inclination to build better houses for themselves, and also for their tenants; likewise they might be induced to expend some portion of their income advantageously in agricultural improvements. All which would give a decent support to multitudes who exist at present in rags and squalid misery.

Lastly, some mites of the three millions and

* Edinburgh Review, No. xxxv. p. 66.

a half would be bestowed to mitigate the distresses of the aged and infirm by charity; which would assuredly give more relief to the suffering Irish than squandering the money at Paris.

These are a part only of the benefits that would accrue to Ireland from the residence of the landholders. The deplorable state of that country astonishes all who consider it. It is a fine island, favourably situated for commerce, with excellent harbours, navigable rivers, and a rich soil. But those whose duty it is to cherish, to protect, and to rule the lower orders, desert them, and consume abroad the fruits of their labour. Dean Swift, above a century ago, was a spectator of these miseries; he deprecated the absence of the men of fortune as the principal cause, and strenuously urged their return. Had his advice prevailed, a vast augmentation of capital must have been by this time accumulated. Agriculture, commerce, and manufactures would have increased proportionally; and who can doubt but that by the presence and example of the well-educated, the condition of the peasantry would have been ameliorated, their manners softened, and their turbulence quieted? But Dean Swift is angrily reproved by the learned political economist, who having read the voyage to Laputa, was,

perhaps, stung by the anticipated ridicule cast on visionary philosophers.

Manufactures are now to be considered, and whether they have hitherto prospered in consequence of freedom of trade. It cannot be shewn that this ever happened at any period, or in any state. In Holland and England, the greatest trading nations in the world, a contrary policy was always adopted.

It is well known that, for ages, the warlike English were ignorant of trade and despised it; and that their manufactures were of the grossest kind: but when, by communication with the Continent, their utility began to be understood, they were wisely encouraged by the government.

Uninformed as the English were at first, they chiefly followed the practices which they learnt from the experienced Flemings. It became the custom to send young men destined for mercantile and manufacturing business to the Low Countries for instruction. England also became an asylum for those foreign merchants and artisans who were driven from their homes by civil and religious warfare. Englishmen profited by all these means, gradually acquired the knowledge and habits of business, and by close attention to their interest, found out what regulations would tend to their advantage.

It appears from our statute-books, that in very early times, the merchants and manufacturers had recourse to parliament, and many laws were enacted expressly for their benefit. For no man had then heard what is now taught, that laws for the encouragement and protection of commerce and manufactures were infringements of freedom of trade, and hurtful. Merchants then thought differently; to leave trade free, would have appeared to them to abandon it to neglect; as they observed, wherever this was done, trade languished. The English took example in many respects from the experienced Hollanders. Numerous trading companies were formed, on whom privileges were bestowed, as without which their commerce could not have commenced. Protecting duties, prohibitions, regulations, rights, and sometimes bounties and drawbacks, were granted at the solicitation of those concerned; and the rapid increase of commerce which took place, proves that the merchants understood something of their own affairs.

Parliament and the nation, perceiving the utility of commerce and manufactures, cultivated them assiduously, and the laws for their advancement multiplied. By one celebrated act during the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, a large portion of foreign trade was wrested

from the Dutch, acquired by the English, and retained ever since.

But it could not be expected that the opinions of the merchants should always be correct, or that the acts passed should always be judicious. Errors, inseparable from human judgment, were often committed, which, when detected and clearly ascertained, were usually amended by parliament; for the city of London and traders in general are sufficiently active and clamorous where their interests are concerned.

To prevent misapprehension, the assessments enacted and levied for the expenses of government are not here alluded to. These are burdens upon commerce, and are imposed for the support and defence of the state. But as money is absolutely necessary for these purposes, it is just that mercantile men should pay their proportion, like other subjects.

Whoever inspects our statute-books must be convinced that the protection and extension of trade and manufactures were favourite objects with our parliaments. Men of the highest capacity, and of great experience, have exerted all their faculties in reflecting upon them, and their opinions had weight in the decisions; and the measures enacted and amended according to exigencies, and the effects produced, are very numerous. In fine, strict laws, instead

of total freedom, have been found so essential for commercial affairs, that it has been deemed requisite to admit the customs and usages of merchants as a part of the common law of the land.

What has been the general result of these complicated plans and codes? A true judgment on the whole can only be formed by their success or failure.

Have commerce and manufactures been extinguished, or have they declined in Great Britain? Had either of these events occurred, no candid mind would have defended our measures; all would have agreed to cancel our commercial statutes, and to make trial of an opposite system. But as the trade and manufactures of this country have risen to a height of prosperity which excites the envy of all other nations; and as they continue expanding and penetrating through every quarter of the globe, the wisdom of the general policy ought not to be questioned, still less to be reversed.

Were anything more requisite to confirm us in the impression that the British system is a good one, it would be the conduct of the Dutch, French, Russians, the Hanse-towns, and indeed of every mercantile state, who all act upon the same general principles; and on rules diametrically repugnant to the novel doctrine

which has been set up of freedom of trade. Even the Americans, those ardent declaimers on freedom, restrain it prudently in trade within just bounds. Their negotiators on commerce stipulated stiffly with the French and British for reciprocal advantages; and however glibly the word liberty flows from their mouths and pens, yet their government restricts and prohibits their own merchants from importing a single article of French or British manufacture, except on paying protecting duties to favour their own. Their decrees are patriotic—they are consonant to the British.

After treating the question generally, the truth will be elucidated more evidently by considering a single manufacture; and as the champion for free trade* has selected the silk manufacture, to exemplify the superior advantages of his system, that shall now be examined.

This writer, in order to prove that restrictions are unnecessary, notices that the importation of foreign silks was only "occasionally prohibited during the reigns of James I. and Charles I., the Protectorate, and Charles II. The prohibition was not strictly enforced; and generally speaking, their importation was quite free."

* Edinburgh Review, No. lxxxv. p. 76.

This deduction illustrates the mode of arguing of a systematic theorist, who, having broached an universal principle, and finding one fact, in one case, at a distant period, which appears to favour it, he applies it to all cases, times, and circumstances, however discordant they may be. But, without the utmost attention and discrimination towards all these points, conclusions as erroneous as those already noticed on absenteeism are inevitable. From the history of the silk trade, when more accurately scrutinized, it will be found that this trade never was free; that restrictions always existed; and prohibitions were occasionally imposed at a very early period.

It was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth that silk was first manufactured in England; who, according to Howel*, was presented, in the third year of her reign, with a pair of black silk knit stockings by her silkwoman; and, during her lifetime, no act was passed positively prohibiting the importation of foreign silks, because none was requisite. For the Edinburgh Reviewer has kept out of sight the restrictions on foreign trade which then existed, and also the peculiar circumstances of that age, which were nearly equivalent to a prohibition.

* History of the World, vol. ii. p. 222.

He takes no notice of the duties on the manufacture, which were paid in Italy, nor of the tonnage and poundage levied in England, and which were charged double to foreigners. He also passes over the practice of embargoes on merchandise for extorting money, which was so frequent at that time. Hume* mentions a temporary prohibition of the sale of imported crimson silks; and adds, "the Queen expected, no doubt, a good pennyworth from the merchants while the silks lay under this restraint." Yet at this time the Reviewer considered the silk trade to be quite free.

The relative condition of Italy and England at that period, which was a complete contrast to that of the present, is also omitted, though of the utmost importance on this question.

Italy, in the sixteenth century, was by far the richest country in Europe. Wealth abounded from prior civilization; from commerce, and manufactures, which had been long established there; and from excessive exactions, drawn from all Catholic countries by the church of Rome. The consequence of which was, that the necessaries of life bore a high price, and the wages of labour were proportionate. England, on the contrary, as is related by his-

* Hume's History, vol. v. p. 442, Appendix.

torians, was in a very different condition. From the recent suppression of the monasteries, every county swarmed with beggars, and an idle, starving population. Robberies and murders, by the multitude of strolling vagabonds, were so common in the reign of Henry VIII., that two thousand criminals were executed annually. In such a state of things, it was easy to find workmen at a very low rate. Poor people, for the smallest pittance, would be glad to be employed; so that the English silk manufacturer ran little risk of being undersold by the Italian. And what rendered him still more secure, was the Spanish war which raged for the last eighteen years of Elizabeth's reign, and in which Italy was implicated. This must have rendered the importation of Italian silks nearly impossible.

But in the peaceful reign of James I., when commerce and manufactures were attended to, and the wages of industry began to improve, it appears that the restraints on the importation of foreign silks, formerly mentioned, were found inadequate. Acts to prohibit this injurious traffic were therefore occasionally passed; and also in the reigns of Charles I. and during the Protectorate; for Oliver had much too sound a judgment to obstruct the industry of his subjects superfluously. The same useful policy

prevailed until the latter years of Charles II., and the whole reign of James II. Both these Kings, as is well known, submitted to receive pensions from Louis XIV.; and even our parliaments, in that disgraceful period, were tainted with bribes. Then, when traitorous counsels swayed the cabinet, and when Britain was, in effect, ruled by France, the trade of foreign silks became, to a certain extent, free.

The consequence was what Louis foresaw. French and Italian silks, to the value of between 600,000*l.* or 700,000*l.* sterling, were annually imported into England. This proves to whom the permission was beneficial; and a proportionate loss necessarily fell on the home-manufacturers, which evinced, also, to whom it was detrimental.

Is it not strange that the renewal of an iniquitous act of the profligate Charles, and the bigot James, urged by a French king, should be recommended in the Edinburgh Review? Whence comes it that there are individuals here striving to enrich France, and to impoverish Britain? And why do they not only favour the manufactures, but also (like James) the religion of France? For Irish tithes are already demanded!

These things should make ministers reflect,—and warn them to pause.

To return to the times when the silk trade was free, and our manufacturers in misery: as the whole state was then in agitation and alarm, there was no leisure to take into consideration the distressed condition of the silk manufacturers, until some time after the abdication of James and the coronation of William. But in the year 1692, William granted a patent for manufacturing lutestrings, and a peculiar kind of silks, not before made in England, which invention was brought here by the Protestant refugees who were driven from their country by the revocation of the edict of Nantes. At length, in 1697, the parliament most mercifully restored the ancient policy, by passing a bill to prohibit the importation of European silks; and in four years afterwards the prohibition was extended to the silken goods of India and China, which completed the national monopoly.

Thus we find that King William, and that patriotic Parliament, which so nobly maintained our constitutional liberties, destroyed that freedom of trade which had been so iniquitously granted to foreigners by James, the pensioner of France; and this was done after its miserable consequences had been ascertained by the experience of twelve years. The wisdom of King William's prohibition was fully proved, both by the distress which was suffered while

the trade was free, and also by the flourishing condition of the silk manufacture which followed. Fortunately the facts on this point are not disputable.

In the first place, the manufacture of silks in England has been brought to such perfection, as to rival those of Italy and France. So beautifully are the stuffs wrought and dyed, that the best judges frequently cannot discriminate whether they are English or Foreign.

Next, it is ascertained by a parliamentary document, that in the year 1662, there were only forty thousand persons engaged in this business; whereas now there are half a million; and by their industry and skill, the British dominions are supplied with any quantity of silken goods, of excellent quality, that is required: this saves to the country immense sums of money, which, if there were a free trade, would be drained out of it by foreigners.

In these proceedings we may remark the plain sense of our forefathers, directed by straightforward observations on matters of business. Refined speculations on appropriate subjects were then abandoned to metaphysicians and theologians.

But we have now changed all this: the present is an illuminated age, in which the intellectual powers of men are discoverable by tu-

mours on their skulls; and national wealth is to be accumulated by impoverishing our manufacturers. Experience is not to be rejected; it is to be noted, for the purpose of acting in contradiction to its dictates. For example, in the year 1824, when commerce, manufactures, and agriculture were flourishing to a degree never before known, and hardly contemplated, a resolution sprung up in the country to alter the whole system. Does it proceed from the gloomy fogs of the atmosphere; or from the darkness of the intellectual rays, that, among the rare productions poured from the cornucopia into Britannia's lap, she never finds content? The characteristic temper then broke out with extraordinary violence. Bankers, merchants, authors, doctors, lawyers, and ladies, all became speculators; all were seized with an insatiable avidity for boundless riches; and freedom of trade was one of the newly-discovered paths that was to lead to the cave of Mammon.

Some short time previous to this, by an incidental concurrence of circumstances, the spirit of innovation had reached even to the cabinet; and as cabinet secrets, like domestic ones, are ill kept, it transpired that sallies of wit sometimes overruled ancient prudence. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is a man of shining

abilities and great acquirements. Free trade was urged upon him; its plausibility seduced him; or, perhaps, he was fired by the ambition of being the first to bring into practice a new theory of finance highly vaunted by ingenious men. In fine, he resolved to bring it to the test of experiment. The manufacture of silks, being an article of mere luxury, was fixed upon for the chief trial. Doubtless he was not aware that the same experiment had been already made under far more favourable circumstances, at the era of the revolution, and had entirely failed. Accordingly, two years ago a Bill was brought into Parliament, and rapturously applauded by the opposition, to repeal the prohibition of importing foreign silks. Thus returning to the old scheme imposed upon England by Louis XIV.; but certainly not this time from the influence of French gold.

It is pretty certain, from the hesitation about the project, and from some cautionary clauses, that there were doubts and differences upon the subject among the ministers. For instead of proclaiming at once freedom of trade in silks, several taxes on the raw materials were lessened, the dreaded importation was postponed for two years, and a protecting duty of 30 per cent. on foreign silks was imposed.

There is obviously a great inconsistency in

these half measures. Were freedom of trade a wise decree, it ought to be established unfettered; and if fetters are necessary, they should be efficient. If the 30 per cent. duty is adequate to the exclusion of foreign silks, the Bill would be useless; and if foreign silks, notwithstanding this duty, can be sold cheaper than British, the clause is unavailing.

But the Bill passed, in spite of the entreaties and prayers of those concerned. The inconstancy of human creatures is lamented by religious writers, and reprobated by satirists: Shakspeare in a song taunts men for being to one thing constant never: women are reproached for mutability by the divine Virgil,—and Samuel Johnson says, that “inconstancy is in every case a mark of weakness.” The British Parliament was formerly not only exempt from this reproach, but renowned for steady wisdom. It is painful to note that the fickleness and vacillation which has been exhibited on the business of the silk trade must detract much from that praise; for, after finding that the plan devised for the prosperity of that trade had succeeded, Parliament reversed it: then, on discovering that the change was for the worse, the original scheme was restored; but now, after this had succeeded beyond all expectations, it is again overturned, and that sys-

tem, which was proved to be ruinous by experience, resorted to.

Now mark the consequences. The news of this Act of the British Parliament quickly diffused joy over Lyons, Marseilles, Genoa, and Leghorn, and all the cities of France and Italy where silks are wrought. Every loom abroad was plied incessantly, and new ones were set up; every weaver that could be got was hired, and other workmen were instructed, to finish as soon as possible silks in abundance. Already the warehouses of the sea-ports are filled with them; and ships freighted to pour into this country, on the first day permitted, foreign lutestrings, *gros de Naples*, and ribbons, and silks of every species.

Now turn to the reverse of the medal. Behold England! The looms stand unmoved, the workshops are shut; some master-manufacturers are bankrupts, others have retired in time from a lost concern; while the discarded work-people, men, women, and children, are crowding at the doors of the parish-workhouses. Our gracious Sovereign, pitying their unmerited distress, has munificently commenced an eleemosynary subscription. Surely all ministerial and opposition members who supported the Bill, as both equally erred, will contribute largely to mitigate and to atone for the calamity they have undesignedly caused? Had the silk

manufacturers, like many others, been disorderly and riotous, their contumacy might have provoked punishment; but having conducted themselves quietly and loyally, they expected the continuance of that parliamentary encouragement, which had induced them to embark their capitals, and to exert their skill in bringing the manufacture to the excellence it has acquired. It could not enter their minds that they would be again sacrificed to the interests of the French, as their Sovereign was in no danger now of falling under the thraldom of a Bourbon king, whom he had placed upon his throne. Their misfortunes have emanated from a strange source; from an ideal system invented for enriching the whole world. The golden age, however, is to begin by impoverishing the silk manufacturers, and then the glovers. Other devoted classes are to be ruined afterwards in quick succession; for in establishing a grand principle, from which future good may be hoped, the present misery of multitudes is entirely overlooked. The promulgator consequently boldly avows, that "if (the British manufacturers) cannot stand the competition of the Italians on this footing, then certainly the sooner our silk mills are annihilated the better*."

* Edinburgh Review, No. lxxxv. p. 87.

Our ministers, however, are too humane to entertain these sentiments, and too noble-minded not to retract. Their characters bear no resemblance to the bigoted theologians of old; they will not look with dry eyes on the martyred manufacturers, nor will they refrain from stopping their persecution.

It may be inquired by some, what are the causes which may enable the foreigner to undersell the home-manufacturer, though protected by a 30 per cent. duty?

In the first place, the comparative conditions of the people of England and the Italians are entirely reversed since the sixteenth century. England has become rich, and the inhabitants are industrious. Italy is poor, and the people are idle. France is superior to Italy in the above particulars, but far inferior to England. It therefore follows, that the wages of labour and the necessaries of life are at a much higher price in England, than either in France or Italy.

The second cause is the national debt of Great Britain, amounting to eight hundred millions. Every workman pays by direct or indirect taxation his proportion of fifty millions, the annual revenue. It is impossible for the most thrifty labourer to avoid this, as every thing he eats, drinks, or wears, is in some

way taxed. His dwelling, however humble, his fire, candle, and salt—nay, the very water with which he washes his hands, is either taxed or enhanced in price by taxation. It is, therefore, demonstrative, that no workman in England can maintain himself and his family, without receiving higher wages than in countries where no such public debt exists.

Thirdly. Silkworms being reared in Italy and in the South of France, the raw material is cheap and at hand. Whereas it is imported from a great distance, principally from India into England, and at a heavy expense.

Fourthly. Many of the dyes and other materials used in manufacturing silks are cheaper in France and Italy than in England.

All these causes combined, will prevent the English manufacturer from being able to compete in price with the foreign, even when aided by a 30 per cent. duty. But this superior cheapness, which is so continually brought forward as a motive for freedom of trade, requires some consideration.

When an article like silk is manufactured and consumed at home, of what mighty importance is the price? If it is cheap, the ladies will buy more; if it is dear, they will buy less: but whatever money they expend that way, it goes from the pockets of the ladies to the manufac-

turers', and circulates at home. It is evident, likewise, that the more is expended in silks, the less will be expended in cottons; so what one manufacturer loses the other gains: consequently, the price is of little moment, for however dear, the same money circulates in the country.

But it is very different when goods are purchased from foreigners. The money then goes abroad, and perhaps never returns; and with certainty, the employment of the foreign manufacturers is augmented, and that of our own diminished—an evil no way compensated by any cheapness.

Now let the case be summed up.

Half a million of subjects have been encouraged, on the faith of numerous acts of parliament, to pay for apprenticeships, to spend their days in the exertion of every faculty of body and mind to acquire skill in the silk business, to enable them to subsist their families by honest industry. Is it just after this, that parliament, by an unforeseen and sweeping act, should reduce all these harmless subjects to mendicity?

This would be monstrous.

The second experiment on the silk trade has, then, failed in a far greater degree than that made in the reign of James II., because there was then no national debt. And every

reflecting man should now be convinced of what must happen, were similar experiments to be made with other manufactures. Indeed, already French gloves have been imported, and vast packages with more are daily entered at the custom-house, in consequence of the diminution of the duty. London, Worcester, Woodstock, and many other towns, will soon feel the effects of this. Thousands of glovers, especially females, who have so few employments, will soon be deprived of their livelihood.

Suppose for a moment, that this grand principle of Free Trade were extended to all those wares which can be fabricated cheaper in France than in England. The following list occurs at once, but is quite imperfect:—

Watches and Clocks,
 Cambric,
 Lace,
 Plate Glass,
 China,
 Jewellery,
 Cabinet Work,
 Upholstery of all kinds,
 Book Printing,
 Engraving in all its branches,
 Shoes,
 Gloves,
 Millinery,
 Embroidery,

Perfumery,
 Artificial Flowers,
 Bronzes,
 Marble Carvings,
 Gold and Silver Plate,
 Paper of all sorts,
 Paints,
 Dyes,

and numerous Chemical preparations. If all these articles were suffered to be freely imported from France, two or three millions of our manufacturers at least would be forthwith cast out of employment.

This measure would be preposterous, and cannot be apprehended; but theorists are not driven from their tenets by trifles. They say coolly, "Let us have the goods cheap wherever they come from, and let the discarded workmen go to other trades." In what trade, or in what other business can those brought up to one craft hope to find employment? Is not every manufacture fully stocked with hands? Sometimes, on a particular pressure, there is a temporary want of sufficient numbers; but this is soon supplied. It oftener happens that the masters cannot find employment for them above three or five days in the week. It is the boasted excellence of our improved machinery to execute an immense quantity of work with few hands. Thence more goods can now be

wrought than can be sold. The orders in our most flourishing manufactures are inferior to their power. It would therefore be a mockery to desire our workmen, when turned adrift by a ruinous measure, to seek for work elsewhere; they would search for it in vain: and consider into what dishonest and desperate courses men, who are deprived of their habitual occupation and subsistence, may be driven. Reflect also most seriously upon the fate of women, when reduced to the same shocking circumstances. There are few kinds of business fitting for the female sex, and all are overstocked; consequently, the wages of their industry, even in this opulent country, are very low indeed. Virtuous women striving to maintain themselves, or to aid in the support of aged parents or infant sisters, are often unable, by assiduous toil through the whole day, and part of the night, to earn more than eighteen-pence, or a shilling a day, even in London; and in the country the wages are still less. This is a most pitiable fact; yet, from peculiar circumstances, and the prevalence of fantastic fashion, most of the superior articles, worked by women, can be procured at a cheaper rate, or in a preferable taste, from France. If these are suffered to be imported free, the instantaneous consequence must be, a further reduction, and

often a total stoppage of female wages, sinking some hundred thousands of decent women and innocent girls into absolute despair.

This is no theory; and if it were stated in Parliament, without any rhetorical ornament, but simply with truth, there could not be a single individual so sordidly thrifty, so hardened to the cheap-ware doctrine, as not to give it up, and to prefer purchasing our home-made goods at such prices as our poor women can work them. Nothing is more certain in political economy than this,—that if Freedom of Trade were enacted by the legislature, the country would be plunged into vice and misery!

Yet there is another argument, a feeble one indeed, which is sometimes alleged in favour of the new system, and is usually put categorically.

Since cottons, woollens, cutlery, and a variety of other goods are certainly manufactured cheaper here than elsewhere, why should not silks, gloves, and the other articles before enumerated, be so also? One answer to this has been already given; and it is not a little presumptuous for Britons to imagine that they can excel all other nations in all things. It is true that, encouraged by patents and monopolies, several men of genius in this country have

invented machines of surpassing power and excellence. These, added to our superior capital, have given us such decided advantages in many branches of manufacture, as to overbalance all the embarrassments formerly noticed. But let not an overweening vanity mislead us: there are in Italy, France, and Germany as inventive minds as here, searching out and making useful discoveries. It is from abroad most inventions have been brought; there they originated, and we have only the merit of improving them. In some things we surpass all other nations; in many we are surpassed.

It is apprehended that the above objection is answered, but another remains. The advocates for Free Trade assert, that by taxing highly or prohibiting foreign goods, the fabrication and sales of those articles are granted to one part of the community, and the rest are prevented from making their purchases where they please, which is establishing monopolies, and all monopolies are bad.

Here again is the dogmatic theorizing system; because monopolies were formerly often granted for private advantage and on frivolous pretences, to the detriment of the public, all are to be condemned and annihilated at once by Free Trade. But before this decision is irre-

vocably fixed, it may be prudent to examine a little what has been manifested on this subject by experience.

In the early part of our history, the Crown had the power, and exercised it most oppressively, of granting to favourites the exclusive sale of many commodities, and no other persons were permitted to vend them. This became an intolerable grievance, and was loudly complained of. Redress, after a violent struggle, was at last obtained, and all these monopolies were withdrawn. At present there are few granted to individuals, except by patents for new inventions, which is found to be an admirable mode of rewarding meritorious men. Authors also have the monopoly of their own works, but never for a term exceeding fourteen years.

The case, however, is widely different with regard to national monopolies; nor ought these to be treated with the same opprobrium that was justly cast upon those first mentioned. For as the monopolist is commonly the gainer, there can be no harm, but much good, in our conferring upon the British nation many monopolies. Every nation does so that can; and we should soon become their dupes were we to act differently. It is especially reasonable to grant to all our own people the monopoly of

our own business. Our own manufacturers may naturally expect a preference to strangers; and when they can furnish us amply with what we want, our Parliaments have usually protected them from foreign interference. As to any danger that the prices will by this means become exorbitant, experience refutes this; for whenever any business or manufacture becomes unusually profitable, other persons engage in it, and the evil is corrected: Great Britain and Ireland are sufficiently populous to ensure ample competition at home.

Indeed national monopolies, like patents to individuals, have been the appropriate and deserved rewards for superior talents, achievements, and discoveries.

It was by monopolizing the trade of the East, that Venice became for a time the greatest maritime power of Europe. Portugal wrested from them that monopoly, by doubling the Cape of Good Hope, and rose to distinction; Holland, by monopolizing the trade of spices and the herring fisheries, was enabled to defend itself against Spain, and secure its independence; and did not Great Britain, during the last war, almost monopolize the commerce of the world, by which she was empowered to liberate Europe from the French usurper? When Britons are inclined to fall from their

pre-eminence, they may repeal their monopolies and enact free trade.

There are, however, certain commodities with respect to which it would be desirable that trade should be free, and unencumbered with the slightest duties, or even forms. These are all those fabrics and wares which are manufactured here cheaper and better than in other countries.

But unfortunately in these things we have it not in our power to establish any thing like freedom of trade. The French in particular, guard every port, and will not suffer the entrance of a single bale of goods that would affect the sale of their own manufactures in the slightest degree. Last summer, a celebrated financier attempted to persuade their ministers to change their system. They listened to the arguments for the universal principle of free trade with approving smiles; but confessed, that their manufacturers were not sufficiently philosophic to comprehend them; and they were under the necessity of yielding to their prejudices, and declining our propositions. Then they heard with astonishment that our ministry had voluntarily bestowed upon them what victories could not have extorted. But it is natural to inquire what have the French yielded in return for the wines, silks, gloves, and a long

list of their goods which are to be received into England, with diminished duties? What articles of British manufacture are to be admitted into France in compensation for our liberality? The reply is pithy, but not courteous. "Not one!"

"Not one!" That is incredible. Permit me to correct that brief negative: for in re-perusing the commercial treaty just concluded with France, I observe that British ships have obtained the privilege of sailing into the French ports—on paying the same dues that are paid by French ships in British harbours. This is just, and would be a valuable privilege, provided the British ships were freighted with our manufactures; but that is quite out of the question—not a Birmingham pin is admissible.

However, as our sovereigns and silver coin are not prohibited, the captains may load with them, and purchase any quantity of French commodities they have a mind to. Another indulgence is also granted; British ships instead of taking stones for ballast, may carry coals to France, where they are much wanted for the amicable purpose of casting cannon. Such is the philanthropic or rather the Christian system of the new political economists, to give to our neighbours whatever they wish, and never to require the slightest return: to employ and en-

rich the manufacturers and agriculturists of France and Italy, and to say to our own—
"Look out for other trades."

The commercial treaty concluded with France in the year 1787, was of a very different character, yet it was furiously opposed by Charles Fox, as too advantageous for France. By that agreement French wine, oil, millinery, and a few other things (not silks or gloves) were imported into Britain, on paying moderate duties; and, for compensation, we deluged France with cottons, woollens, cutlery, and almost every species of British manufactures. But this was the work, not of a theoretic, but of a practical statesman—it was the act of William Pitt.

The application of the new doctrine of Free Trade to the nutritious productions of the earth, is last to be considered; and it is to them that the speculative philosophers are most eager to affix it. This demands the deepest reflection; for although many of the pleasures, all the elegances, and most of the comforts of life, are procured by commerce, the arts, and manufactures, yet it is by agriculture that we obtain food. Flocks, herds, and cultivated land, are our real wealth, without which life must cease. Many of the other products are extremely useful and agreeable, and highly requisite; and

some of them fictitious and conventional: but those of agriculture are indispensable.

The British parliament, like every sage legislature, always encouraged agriculture. Sometimes it mistook the means; but the errors, when found out, were carefully corrected, as the grand object is to raise and diffuse plenty through the land.

Formerly when the population was much thinner than at present, more grain was often raised than the people could consume, and exportation was occasionally allowed. But when the people had multiplied faster than the produce of arable land, the exportation of grain was strictly prohibited; and when there occurred a scanty crop, or any deficiency of this most necessary article, all our ports were opened for the importation of grain; and large bounties sometimes granted, as additional encouragement to the importers. Parliament thus varied their measures, adapting them to the exigencies and necessities of the people by legal enactments; for it has ever appeared to our best statesmen the height of imprudence to intrust the control of the subsistence of the country to the varying conduct, opinions, and caprices of landholders, farmers, corn-factors, and speculating capitalists. Some pretend that

interest is the best regulator, and that the merchants would always convey grain where it is most required. True; but not in time. Let it not be forgotten that scarcity is the harvest of corn-dealers, and that interest prompts them to produce an artificial want, when nature has been bountiful. To trust entirely to interest would be little better than confiding in fortune; and the stake is too deep for such a cast—for on one side of the die is engraved, "Famine."

How often has this disaster occurred in the East; how often even in France, a country abounding in arable land? In Louis XV.'s reign an attempt was made to allow greater freedom than formerly in the internal trade of corn: for a short time there was a vast accumulation in some provinces, and a sudden deficiency in others; mobs rose in frenzy, and scattered and destroyed their own subsistence. Even in Ireland, only two years ago, when the people were starving, the grain was exporting, until government interfered. Corn certainly demands the most watchful attention, and hitherto it has been guarded by strict laws: the question is—have these been wise? Those who judge by facts, cannot refuse their approbation to the general policy which has been followed by the British parliament; for, during the last century, abundance of grain has com-

monly been raised; on a very few occasions only, from bad seasons, a deficiency and distress have occurred. Such contingencies, not to be prevented by human power, having been foreseen, the evil was alleviated, and abridged by the laws regulating importation, which permitted and encouraged the entrance of foreign grain.

Then, with regard to agriculture in latter times, the improvement and extension has been great indeed. It appears even to have kept pace with population; so that as much grain as is required for the annual consumption of the people continues to be raised in average harvests.

But this prosperous and improving state of tillage, and the plenty which springs from it, does not content some of our political economists, who have stirred up the merchants, the manufacturers, and the mob, to clamour for a repeal of the corn-laws, and for the establishment of free trade in corn. The advantages and the disadvantages which would result from such a total alteration of our present system shall be impartially stated. It is of considerable moment, as it must affect the subsistence of the people, and the culture of the entire surface of Great Britain and Ireland.

The advantage of permitting a free import-

ation of foreign grain would certainly be to sink the price of bread. This cannot be doubted. For the same causes which operate in enhancing the price of many manufactured wares, also act upon the products of agriculture: besides which, soils of greater fertility, and the warmer suns of other climes are so favourable for ripening wheat, that it can be grown in such countries at a cheaper rate than in Great Britain.

How low the reduction of price might fall cannot with certainty be ascertained, and it would be different in different seasons. Were the importation immense, it seems possible that bread would become nearly as cheap as in France, which is a very fertile corn-country. Yet the expenses of a long sea-voyage, insurance, and the merchant's profits, would, in all probability, keep the price above the average in France.

At this moment bread at Paris is only half the price of the London loaf; and this is not unfrequently the case, though not always. The loaf here of four pounds' weight costs tenpence, that is twopence-halfpenny the pound. It seems then possible, though by no means probable, that, by free trade in corn, the price here might sink to three-halfpence the pound.

One pound of wheaten bread is found to be

a full daily allowance for a seaman or a soldier, and more than the greater number can consume. It must, therefore, be reckoned sufficient for a sedentary manufacturer, and from the preference often given to potatoes, it is probably double what they commonly eat. Those, then, that consume a full pound of bread, might possibly pay daily one penny less for their provisions, and others who are satisfied with half-a-pound might save a halfpenny.

It is not, however, to be concluded that the whole saving would go to the manufacturer; for it is a fact admitted by Adam Smith* and all writers on these subjects, that the wages of workmen are apt to fall according to the price of provisions. As soon, therefore, as the bread fell in price, the master-workmen would sink the wages to preserve the equilibrium. Neither would this profit be suffered long to remain with the masters; for by the competition of rival manufactures to undersell each other, the price of the manufactured goods would fall nearly in proportion to the fall of the bread.

This series of effects will be admitted by most persons who have studied these matters; but there are individuals who might hope that

* Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p. 131.

a fraction of the reduced penny would be actually retained by the workman: this is, however, exceedingly doubtful.

The beneficial consequence then that could arise from free trade in corn, would be a fall in manufactured goods, proportionate to the fall of bread, and consequently a very trifling one. For all the other causes which enhance their price in Britain would remain as before, so that the diminution to the buyer would hardly be perceptible.

The disadvantages which a free trade of corn would occasion to Great Britain and Ireland shall now be mentioned.

First. It is certain that the importation of grain from foreign countries would be immense. In the scarcity that occurred in 1801, upwards of ten millions sterling was in that year paid for grain; but as the price in ordinary years would be much lower, perhaps not more than half that sum would be annually expended for foreign corn; which would subtract an equal sum from the British and Irish agriculturists.

Secondly. A complete stop would be put to agricultural improvement, and tillage would retrograde. It is commonly known, from the nature of our climate and the circumstances of the country, that wheat especially can only be grown at a very heavy expense; and the cost

is always greater in the poorer soils: from which it requires both great skill and labour to obtain in average seasons a tolerable remunerating price. It is therefore quite certain that if the price of grain were lowered, even one-sixth or one-eighth of the present rate, a remuneration could not be obtained, except from the richest lands. On all the poorer and middling soils, tillage would necessarily be abandoned, and pasturage resorted to. This effect was lately experienced, on the fall of grain which occurred at the resumption of cash-payment; and a stop was only put to it by the moderate rise of the price of grain which has since occurred.

Thirdly. As pasturage requires only a few men or boys to watch the flocks and herds, the farmers would be compelled to discharge great numbers of their ploughmen and labourers. These, added to the discarded manufacturers, would augment the multitudes of the unemployed. This consequence would be felt to a frightful degree in Ireland. For as grain is the great staple of the trade of that country, a fall of its price, and the discharge of numbers of Irish field-labourers, might be productive of alarming consequences.

Fourthly. The diminution of the rents, that is of the incomes of all the landed proprietors,

would force them to lessen their establishments, and their expenses generally. Thus a decrease of the consumption of goods would be felt by the manufacturer, and a declension would occur in the public revenue; while the number of servants out of place would be very considerably augmented.

Fifthly. The number of persons thrown out of work would occasion a great fall of the wages of labour, and render the condition of the working class much worse than before.

Sixthly. After a considerable portion of our arable land should be converted into grass-fields, this nation would in a great measure depend upon foreign states for the principal article of food; a predicament neither advantageous nor safe. For should America declare war against us, (no improbable supposition,) or should the Swedes and Russians become hostile, and shut us out of the Baltic, an enormous rise in the price of bread would immediately ensue, and famine be threatened.

When these disadvantages from granting to foreign nations freedom of trade to this country in grain, are compared with all the advantages which can possibly be gained, there will be no difficulty in deciding which preponderate. Yet there is a remark in Adam Smith's work*,

* Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. p. 183.

which many conceive to be a refutation of all the detailed evils. He writes, "Capital is certainly not employed to the greatest advantage, when it is directed towards an object which it can buy cheaper than it can make." Were this maxim adhered to, and all trade rendered free, one-third at least of our manufactures must instantly be destroyed, and three-fourths of our cultivated lands converted into pasture. It would appear that, profound as Adam Smith undoubtedly was, he took too partial and contracted a view of this subject; he paid minute attention to the temporary profits arising from capital, forgetting the grand interests of the whole nation, and the sources of its general prosperity. The merchants of the city of London, in a late petition to Parliament, expressed similar sentiments, in these words, "That the maxim of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, which regulates every merchant in his individual dealings, is strictly applicable as the best rule for the trade of the whole nation." This was happily retorted by the President of the Board of Trade on a distinguished merchant, who had set forth the miseries of the silk-weavers. Certainly it is uncandid first to urge forward a political maxim, and afterwards to complain of its effects; yet it is a virtue to be

open to conviction, and to retract measures which have frustrated expectations.

Had the plan always been followed of only employing capital where it could bring the greatest immediate returns, manufactures could never have been established in this country, and the land to this day would have continued covered with briars and rushes. For some manufactures have been a losing concern to the original projectors; and many required privileges and immunities to rear them. The wares fabricated at first were bad and dear, and might have been procured at a cheaper rate elsewhere. Without legal restrictions and aid, many undertakings must soon have failed, which afterwards flourished, and became eminently useful. Improvements in land, also, seldom repay the improver. Yet surely capital in no other way could have been laid out so beneficially to the country. It is by these modes of directing capital that England has become what it is.

The practice of the savage Indian tribes in North America is strictly consonant to the maxims of the modern political economists. Inhabiting a territory abounding in game and fur-bearing animals, and possessed of unrivalled skill in hunting and fishing, they barter with the white traders, the furs and feathers of the animals they kill, for articles of

food, clothing, utensils, arms, gunpowder and rum. Thus employing their capital to what is termed the greatest advantage, by purchasing from others, what they could not raise or fabricate themselves at so cheap a rate: but the citizens of the United States, their neighbours, pursue a conduct diametrically opposite. They despise the notion of always purchasing from others, by reason of cheapness, what they can learn to fabricate. They have, therefore, established manufactures of numerous kinds, and are cultivating sedulously every art and science: and their Government is so blind to the new doctrines, as to check by duties and prohibitions all articles of foreign produce, and reduce the people to the necessity of consuming home manufactures of the same kinds, of a far worse quality, and bought at a dearer rate. Yet it is found (strange to say), that in spite of this mistaken policy, these States are advancing, with the most rapid progress, in population, wealth, power, and general prosperity; while on the other hand, many of the Indian tribes are become absolutely extinct through misery and famine: and those that remain are dwindling away so fast that in all likelihood they will also have disappeared from the face of the earth ere the expiration of the present century.

So completely does the evidence of facts and

experience refute the doctrines of the theorists, and confirm those of common sense.

But the visionaries shut their eyes on what is passing in the world, and fix their attention exclusively on their own conceptions: then perceiving their mercantile opinions of profit and loss to be repugnant to the conduct of the Americans, they condemn it strenuously, and counsel them to employ all their capital in growing wheat, maize, rice, and tobacco, and to buy at the European market clothing and every utensil they want. But they are either not so simple, or not so profound as to take this abstruse advice. They follow the old example of those states which have prospered, and their republic flourishes.

It may not be devoid of utility to scrutinize in some degree the above opinion of Adam Smith, who was a man of vast capacity and of unwearied research.

It has appeared so reasonable, that philosophers have maintained its truth, merchants have petitioned to have it sanctioned by the legislature, and Parliament has begun to act upon it as a state axiom. Yet, with all these corroborating supports, perhaps, if it is closely analyzed, it may be found to rest only upon an hypothetical basis; and then this system will have

the same fate as all others which are not established upon facts.

Adam Smith appears to suppose, or to take it for granted, that men who are discarded from one employment can always find wages and work to do in another. The destruction of a manufacture, and the dismissal of a multitude of industrious men seems of no consequence to him; or to those who entertain the same supposition; but experience in human affairs, from the savage to the most civilized state, evinces that it is not only difficult, but impracticable to find profitable employment for the whole population. Had Adam Smith been as observant of matters of fact as ingenious in metaphysics, the numbers of hungry Scotsmen sauntering about from having nothing to do could not have escaped his notice. When he travelled up to England, rich and flourishing as it was, he might even there have seen too much compulsory idleness; for in every town, village, or hamlet, there are usually artisans, labourers, or servants out of place, and eagerly seeking for masters.

Had he inquired of the most prosperous manufacturers, he would have learnt they were rarely in want of hands; but that often, from defect of orders, there was work only for a part of the week. Nay, any parish overseer could

have given him assurance of the impossibility of finding work for all the poor.

Ireland certainly had never been visited by the learned writer; for in that forsaken island, where few manufactures have been set up, the numbers of unemployed people are excessive. Clothing even of the worst description is often wanting; and the distress from poverty and want of wages is so great, that multitudes are anxious to emigrate, to seek for food in foreign climes. Women, also, in every part of the British dominions, find great difficulty in earning their livelihood by reputable means; and many, from want, sink into vice.

Whoever travels to the Continent, will perceive there abundant proofs of the fallaciousness of the notion, that work and wages are always within reach;—there are millions of Spaniards and Italians pining in unwilling idleness, and ready to work, if hired, for the smallest pittance.

When these facts are duly weighed, no one will talk slightingly of annihilating the silk or any other manufacture. To destroy a business by which some hundred thousands of industrious subjects gain their maintenance, is a most serious calamity; but to establish Free Trade, which (as has been shown) would destroy many manufactures, and reduce agriculture to decay,

and consequently eject some millions of people out of work, is a scheme too horrible to be contemplated.

How opposite was the plan of our ancestors, who sought with earnestness to find honest employment for every well-disposed person! The knowledge that the goods and wares could be purchased or fabricated abroad cheaper, did not arrest their patriotic exertions in extending commerce, founding manufactures, and improving the agriculture of Great Britain; and, by all these means, finding work and wages for the people. It never entered into their conception, that the gains of any of those classes were too great, and that it would be advisable to reduce them by the admission of foreign productions, when a sufficiency could be obtained at home. They well knew that the prosperity of each class conduced to that of the others; and none were inflamed by envy to pull each other down. The nation is, in fact, one grand copartnership—it is the interest of the whole that each should thrive; and it would be injurious to all, that any class should be thrown down by admitting a foreign competition, which, from peculiar advantages, could intercept the profits, and ruin their business. Free Trade with foreigners in corn is only popular from its consequences being unknown:

it would be peculiarly fatal to the working class, as the rate of wages must decline by the diminution of national wealth. Adam Smith's judgment on this point is incontrovertible: he says, "The demand of those who live by wages, therefore, naturally increases with the increase of national wealth, and cannot possibly increase without it*."

Agriculture has hitherto been viewed, like other business, chiefly in a pecuniary light. But money is not the greatest good, although avidity for gain prevails in this country to excess; is diffused through all ranks and conditions—absorbs their thoughts, and has raised up an universal spirit of mercantile gaming. Even loans for liberty, proposed for nobler ends, are debased to usurious investments; and writings, above all price, are wrought up and flowered, like Scottish muslins, merely for commercial speculation.

But in agricultural pursuits, there are peculiar excellences of a higher order: those engaged in them are the healthiest and most contented of mankind. Sobriety, orderly habits, and cheerfulness, fit them for the tasks of peace: early rising, exposure to the weather, and field-labour, strengthen them for the hardships of war. The crimes and vices so common

* Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p. 104.

in towns, where crowds are promiscuously congregated, are, comparatively, rare in the country; where the peasants live retired in the bosom of their families.

Most writers on wealth have had their minds, unfortunately, so intent on this subject, as to put aside all moral considerations. In their calculations, money, interest, and capital, are alone thought of; and, for a trifling temporary profit, they often propose the expulsion of happy ploughmen from their rustic huts and simple pleasures, to shut them up in airless, deleterious workshops, where a portion must annually be struck with the palsy. It must be admitted, that manufactures of copper, lead, and mercury, whose noxious fumes paralyze the limbs and hasten death, are requisite in the multifarious business of human life. The unquenchable thirst for gain, and higher wages, are, however, sufficient excitements for those undertakings. Avarice requires no political aid. An enlightened and benevolent legislature will rather meditate on measures tending to promote the power and happiness of the people; and nothing can so much contribute to these superior designs, as converting barren heaths into cultivated fields, draining fens and morasses; enclosing and screening from storms exposed plains, and clothing the bare hills with wood:

by which employments of capital, plenty of food will be grown; the strongest and best race of men multiplied; the real power of the state increased; and, in fine, human happiness augmented. The superior virtue and contentment of those engaged in country pursuits is not the invention of romance. It is recorded by historians, explained by philosophers, and celebrated by poets, who are the closest observers of nature. Ought it not, therefore, to be one of the primary objects of government to extend agricultural improvements over the whole surface of the British isles, and thus multiply the hardy peasantry? Is not this wiser than devising means to force the reluctant cottagers into smoky towns, to seek for their maintenance in smelting-houses?

Before concluding, let me deprecate that sombre discontent which darkens the verdure of England, and clouds the minds of its inhabitants. No victories—no prosperity, cheer up the political hypochondriac. His anxiety, brooding over imaginary ills, will not suffer him to leave things, when well, to take their natural course; but prompts him to listen to every empiric, and to try every novel proposal. Freedom of Trade is a plausible term, flattering to the love of change, by raising up extravagant expectations. But should the experiment be

persisted in, and extended further, in spite of the evils produced and impending, the disappointment that would inevitably follow, together with the multitudes in England, Scotland, and Ireland, who would be discarded from work, and deprived of subsistence, might, in the present temper of the world, be most disastrous. The effects of two words in France—"Liberty and Equality!" are fresh in our remembrance. They were applauded by every mouth, sculptured on palaces, affixed to prisons, and stamped on newspapers. The implied principles were unhappily fostered (avert the omen!) by a popular and well-meaning minister of finance, who repented too late—when the reign of Terror had begun.

THE END.