

124-13



0150

A LETTER
ON
THE CORN LAWS,

Addressed to the Legislature,
SHEWING THE AMOUNT OF DUTY NECESSARY FOR
AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION:

CONTAINING ALSO
MR. HUSKISSON'S LETTER

TO HIS CONSTITUENTS AT CHICHESTER, IN 1814.

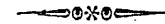
By **MR. JOHN ELLMAN, JUN.**

LONDON:
JAMES RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY.

PRINTED BY W. J. RUFFY, AT THE FARMERS' JOURNAL OFFICE,
29, BUDGE ROW.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

TO THE
MEMBERS OF BOTH HOUSES OF
PARLIAMENT.



MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I MAKE no apology for this Address—being a Farmer, and having all my property dependant on Agriculture, is a sufficient excuse to all liberal minds.—I shall endeavour, as concisely as possible, without omitting any thing material, to notice the different arguments which have been urged against the Corn Laws, and then leave the case in your hands, earnestly entreating you to remember that it is a question momentous beyond all others ever introduced into Parliament; and that on your decision rests the happiness of millions of your fellow-countrymen, nay, as I in my conscience believe, the existence of the State.

I cannot do better than proceed at once to the main question; and, therefore, I demand, in the name of Agriculture, that to which the Right Honourable President of the Board of Trade, in the Report of the Parliamentary Committee of 1821, acknowledged we were justly entitled; nay, which, he said, was indispensable. These are the words of the Report.—*“It would be INDISPENSIBLE, for the JUST*

“execution of this principle, that the duty
 “should be calculated FAIRLY, to countervail
 “the difference of expence, including the or-
 “dinary rate of profit at which Corn, in the
 “PRESENT state of this country, can be grown
 “and brought to market within the United
 “Kingdom, compared with the expence, in-
 “cluding also the ordinary rate of profit of
 “producing it in ANY of those countries, from
 “whence our principal supplies of foreign Corn
 “have USUALLY been drawn, joined to the
 “ordinary charges of conveying it from thence
 “to our markets.”

The question is, therefore, one merely of amount of duty; if this difference be only 5s. per quarter, 5s. is all we are entitled to—if it be 25s., if it be 35s., in fact, whatever be this difference, that we have a right to claim, even in the opinion of Mr. Huskisson.

Before discussing the amount, it will be necessary to clear the way, and, therefore, I make the following assertion, which appears to me indisputable, viz.—*That when we are in want of foreign Corn, the prices abroad rise to the price here; but that, on the contrary, when we are not in want of it, the price here, if the trade were free, would fall to the price abroad. This is a distinction, beyond all others, necessary to be made, because on this hangs the whole question.*

To take, as has been done, and, no doubt, will be done again, the price abroad during the present century, as any criterion of the future price, is palpably absurd. If the average of the price abroad, for the last twenty-five years, is to be taken as that for which it can be grown *there*, we must also take the average of the last twenty-five years here, as that for which it can be grown *here*; at the absurdity of which all the opposers of Corn Laws would instantly exclaim, and both stand precisely on the same ground. It must be remembered that the nineteenth century began with *very high prices*; 1800 and 1801, were years of great scarcity,—Wheat sold higher than ever was known in England; *the price abroad, THEREFORE, rose to the price here.* In 1814 and 1815, we stood in no need of foreign supply; but, as the ports were open previous to the passing the Corn Bill in 1815, *the price here fell to the price abroad.* The year 1816, was the wet, late harvest: in 1817, we wanted foreign aid, and the price rose again abroad to the price in England.—In 1818, owing to the imperfection of the law of 1815, the ports remained open after harvest, and we were inundated with foreign Corn, when we did not require a bushel; and the price here again fell to the price abroad till the ports were closed. If we have sufficient of our own growth, it is clear

that all import is a superfluity; and Mr. Tooke, in his evidence in 1821—evidence thought so highly of as to be embodied in the Report, made, to the following question, reply as under:—

Question—“Why should a different principle apply to Corn than to any other general production?”

Answer—“Because a fall in the price of any other commodity, not of general necessity, brings the article within the reach of the consumption of a greater number of individuals; whereas, in the case of Corn, the average quantity is sufficient for the supply of every individual: all beyond that is an absolute depression of the market for a great length of time, and a succession of even two or three abundant seasons must evidently produce an enormously inconvenient accumulation.”

Mr. Jacob's Report, although EVIDENTLY drawn up to *prove* nothing more nor less, than that 12s. or 15s. per quarter on Wheat would be a sufficient duty, completely *disproves* his own conclusion. He shews that Wheat is grown entirely for export—that the labourers employed in raising it consume no part of it, but live on the coarsest food, leaving the whole grown for export.

Referring to the evidence given before the

Committee of Parliament in 1814, we find Mr. Scott, and others best acquainted with the foreign market, candidly acknowledging that they can name no price sufficiently low, to prevent export from those countries which have Corn to spare; and that Poland, and other countries in the north of Europe have annually Corn to spare, Mr. Jacob's Report most fully proves.

In the year 1814, Mr. Jacob published a very well written book on the subject of Agricultural Protection, proving the advantage of relying on our own growth, in preference to a dependence on foreigners, for the first necessary of life. In drawing, therefore, the conclusion which Mr. Jacob has now done so contrary to the Report itself, I trust I may say without impiety, “The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”

Looking dispassionately at the evidence in 1814 and 1821, and at Mr. Jacob's Report in 1825, I think we arrive at this conclusion:—

“That cultivation will go on abroad, if a market be opened for it, although Wheat then should sell at only 25s. per quarter and, also, that cultivation will not go on here, as at present, if Wheat averages less than 65s. per quarter. This is deducting 15s. per quarter from the year 1814. To the 25s. price abroad, say at Dantzic, I add 5s. freight, 5s. profit, or 20 per

+ a high Price

cent., making 35s.; the lowest duty therefore, "in the present state of this country," [the very words of the Report drawn up by Mr. Huskisson] is 30s. per quarter; and to this we are fully entitled, even by the Right Honourable Gentleman's own admission. It may be said—if you open the ports here, and create a demand, the price, as has lately been proved in Oats, will rise abroad. True; but it will only do so, unless, as in the case of Oats lately, we really require it.

There is no doubt that Great Britain, with the assistance of Ireland, would, on an average, grow enough for our consumption, if the land at present in cultivation is not thrown out. The Parliamentary Report of 1821, distinctly states the present state of the kingdom, clearly proposing to throw none out of cultivation; and, indeed, if it be, how are the poor to be employed?

My Lords and Gentlemen—Permit me to recall your attention to the evidence given before the Committee in 1821. You will find most of the agricultural witnesses, myself amongst the number, asked, if part of the land at present in cultivation were thrown out, and the people then employed in agriculture were transferred to manufactures, would it be any loss to the nation at large?

The question was put by a gentleman now

no more, the late Mr. Ricardo, of whom I should wish to speak with respect, believing him to have been sincere in his theory of Free Trade. Allow me now to ask—Suppose 500,000 men employed in agriculture had been turned into manufacturers, what would have been their state at present? Do we not know, that since the year 1821, when this question was asked, times have improved for farmers, and more hands, instead of less, have found employment in agriculture? and yet, without any addition, the manufacturers have not been able to employ their hands. Allow me also to ask—If the views of the Honourable Gentleman had been carried into effect in 1821, would not the misery of the manufacturers have been much increased? Is there not some reason for doubting the correctness of those views? Is there not some ground for hesitating, even at the risk of being supposed to have been "*crasso sub aere nati*," before throwing ourselves at once into the arms of the enchanting Syren, Free Trade, of whom it may truly, as relates to this country, be said, "*Nihil tetigit quod non spoliavit*," to the truth of which the Shipping Interest, as well as others, can bear ample testimony.

There exists, in the minds of many, a strange idea, that were we to have a Free Trade in Corn, the prices would be more steady. By Free Trade, I mean what the orators at some of

the meetings call Free Trade, that is, open ports, with little or no duty.

The fact would be diametrically the reverse.—Let me here remind you of the correctness of the views of these orators. In 1815, the then Lord Mayor of London declared, (and he was good authority, for he was a pastry-cook on Corn-hill), that if the Corn Bill for 1815 passed, *the quartern loaf could never be under one shilling*. In the same way, and with equal sagacity, do some of the city orators now prophesy; and to cure them of their folly, I would punish them with *birch* till they were beaten to a jelly.

Suppose the present Corn Laws to be abolished in the ensuing Session, and the trade in Corn made free as air—aye, to the very heart's delight of the free traders, and Corn to be imported free of all duty; the effect would be this—that, owing to the very deficient crop of Spring Corn in the United Kingdom, and the immense consumption of Wheat, which is so much increased in consequence of its being cheaper than any thing, Wheat would rise abroad as near to the price here as would pay the importer. The price for the last six weeks, by which import is regulated, is 54s. 6d.; from Dantzic the freight would be 5s., merchant's profits 10s., leaving 39s. Dantzic would immediately be filled with British orders to pur-

chase all that could be bought at a price not exceeding 39s.; and we should have foreign Wheat introduced, to compete with our own, selling at 30 per cent. less than was thought a remunerating price in 1815, and 10 per cent. less than is a remunerating price now; calculating all expences, rent, labour, poor's-rate, &c. to have diminished 20 per cent. since 1815. The truth is, that owing to the vacillating policy which has been observed towards agriculture the last two years, the English market is in a state of the greatest uncertainty. All are afraid to buy lest some new scheme should make them purchase dear. Indeed, by this morning's post, the factors in Mark-lane state the price of Wheat in bond rose 5s. per quarter, from an idea that Government will let it out at a low duty. I can scarcely believe it possible that such a thing can be thought of for a moment. When the quarterly average, ending the 15th instant, was only 54s. 6d., or 25s. 6d. per quarter lower than the law allows Wheat to be imported, will Ministers dare to propose this? And here, *en passant*, let me recall to your attention the consequences of letting out the bonded Wheat last spring—a measure as unjust as it was uncalled for—a measure calculated to array the manufacturing against the landed interests, and to make the lower order of manufacturers believe that all their ills were to be as-

cribed to the price of Corn;—a measure by which some millions were taken out of the pockets of the farmers and other holders of British and Irish Corn, and some hundreds of thousands put into the pockets of the holders of foreign;—a measure which was proposed avowedly, for the relief of the manufacturers, but which put large sums of money into those of a few holders of foreign Wheat at Liverpool, and other places, without any comparative relief to the manufacturers. If Government had intended to give relief to the latter, a high duty should have been imposed, and the amount added to the private subscription; the bonded Corn would have sold at precisely the same price, and the difference would have been distributed where wanted. In fine, it was a measure proposed on the grounds of the stock in hand being short, and the harvest being late, both of which proved erroneous—a measure refused to argument, and pusillanimously yielded to clamour.

The late Order in Council I look at with a different feeling, believing it to have been necessary; and I should be ashamed to find fault, merely for the sake of doing so, considering it to be as much against the interest of the farmer to have Corn extravagantly high, as to be compelled to sell ruinously low.

I will suppose the harvest of 1827 to be an average one, for all descriptions of Grain, how,

then, would the Free Trade system act, that is, supposing, as before stated, the Corn Laws to be repealed, and a duty of only 12s. or 15s. per quarter imposed? We should, growing enough for ourselves, not want a single bushel of foreign Corn; but, as the foreign Corn wants only a market, England affording this would be inundated with it, aye, though the price here were to fall to 40s. per quarter. All rent would cease—all, except the very best lands yielding five quarters per acre, would cease to be cultivated; labourers would be unemployed; poor-rates increased in proportion to the inability to pay them—in short, it would end in revolution.

As a tenant farmer, I say *decidedly*, either give us a duty high enough to protect us, which cannot be less than 25s. or 30s. per quarter, (and to which even Mr. Huskisson allows we are entitled, if the difference, &c. be that which we can prove to be the case), or let us have no duty at all. Let the import be duty free—let us have no half measures, no dying by inches—let the Free-Trade theorists, in defiance of all experience, carry their plans into full effect; but on their heads let the awful responsibility rest.

I quite agree in the imperfection of the Corn Law of 1815; indeed, I may add, I was the first to point it out publicly, and my remarks were copied nearly *verbatim* into the

Report of 1821. The sudden change from entire prohibition to unlimited importation must be wrong; but, at the same time, it is incumbent on Parliament, if it takes away the mode of protection, not to take away the amount, unless good reason be shewn for doing so.

I now come to the general policy of the measures in contemplation, and I propose to enquire whether it be wise to depend on foreign nations habitually, for any considerable proportion of the first necessary of life. In pursuing this enquiry, I shall not rely on my own opinion, but call in aid the opinions of men who are allowed, by those most friendly to Free Trade, to be very great authority.

First, I find Mr. Huskisson, in 1814, when he was Member for Chichester, had given offence to a few of his constituents by the part he took in the Corn Bill of that year; and, in order to do away with any erroneous impression, the Right Honourable Gentlemen sent the following Letter to one of his friends, wishing him to make it public. Many hundred copies of it were printed, one of which fell into my hands, and I am, therefore, abusing no private confidence in referring to it, and as the sentiments it contains so completely coincide with my own, in order to prevent the possibility of garbling, I think it best to give the whole Letter.

Mr. Huskisson's Letter, written in 1814, to a Constituent at Chichester.

MY DEAR SIR,

A REPORT has reached me from various quarters, that the part which I have taken in the House of Commons on the Corn Laws, has given offence to some of my Constituents. I have heard this report with great concern, but, considering the misrepresentations which are industriously circulated throughout the country, without much surprise.

In opposing, as I did, the scheme of Sir Henry Parnell, for laying a prohibitory duty on the importation of foreign Wheat up to 84s. per quarter, and that of Mr. Foster, for prohibiting it altogether up to 100s., I have incurred the displeasure of many, who think that the British grower will not be sufficiently protected by the much milder system which I have substituted. On the other hand, there are many others who think that the scale by which I have proposed to regulate the import is too high. I will not pretend to say that the circumstance of some condemning my suggestion, as not doing enough, and others, as doing too much, is any proof (though I think it affords some presumption) that the middle course which I have steered between the supposed opposite interests of the

grower and consumer, is fair to both. But of this I am quite sure, that the far stronger measures which were proposed in the House would not have been rejected, if an attempt had been made simply to negative them, without substituting some other measure in their stead.

It is unnecessary for me to trouble you with my reasons for opposing the stronger measures of Sir H. Parnell, and Mr. Foster; because I apprehend that, whatever objections are felt at Chichester against my plan, they are founded on the supposition, not that it does not go far enough, but too far for the protection of the British grower, and that the effect of it will be to press hard upon the consumer and the poor.

If I were not fully convinced that the consumer in general, but more especially that class of consumers whose subsistence depends on their own industry, would be benefitted by the proposed alteration, it would not have had my support. My sole object is to prevent (as far as human means can prevent) bread-corn from ever again reaching the late extravagant prices. Can any man have 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 present 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 for one, I 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 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 own 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 in 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, 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. This combination was formed

with the vain hope to break our spirit by starving our bodies. We struggled hard both at home and abroad, but by the struggle we have gained much. Abroad we have subdued our enemies—at home we come out of the war with our agriculture so extended and improved, as to make us at this moment independent of foreign supply. We are so at this moment; and shall I, who, to the entire conviction of my own judgment, have traced the long sufferings of the people to a contrary state of things, be deterred from using my honest endeavours in Parliament to prevent the recurrence of such sufferings? For that purpose we must go back to the principles of our forefathers; and by reverting, as much as possible, to their system, we shall secure to ourselves and our posterity all the benefits which they derived from it.

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 farmer would be ruined,—improvements would every where stand still,—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 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 in-

crease 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.

I have troubled you already at great length; but the subject is far too extensive to be properly discussed in any hasty communication which my numerous avocations here will afford me leisure to hold with any of my constituents. For years it has occupied my attention; and for years, I can truly say, I have foreseen the necessity of adopting the principles on which the House of Commons is now acting.

If my constituents, upon mature consideration, should differ from those principles, I shall deeply regret that I cannot concur in their opinions. To them I owe every respect, and to their wishes it must be my first wish to shew every possible deference; but, on an occasion in which, after the most anxious reflection, my own conscientious judgment is satisfied that the course which I have pursued is calculated to promote the best interests of the country, and

to place the subsistence of the people upon a footing more stable and secure, more conducive to regular industry, and individual comfort, I should hold myself unworthy of the trust which has been confided to me, and should indeed feel that I had betrayed it, if I were to put even the risk of losing the good will of part of my constituents (a momentary loss I should trust) in competition with the discharge of a sacred public duty. They know and value their own independence; but, in proportion as it is dear to them, they ought to respect mine. I must frankly say, if I cannot be their unfettered representative, I cannot, to any useful purpose, represent them at all. To their services, which is that of the public, my time and attention in Parliament, are steadily and cheerfully devoted. The only reward I look for is the kindness and confidence of those who have sent me there; but that reward, however valued, I can neither consent to purchase at the expence of truth, nor to retain by flattering the people to their ruin. If, unfortunately, this be the price which a Member for Chichester is expected to pay for that seat, which I deem it the proudest honour to owe to their free choice, it is a price which neither duty nor honour will permit me to pay: for I should then hold that seat by a tenure not less injurious to their interests, than degrading to the character of their representative. These

feelings you are at liberty to make known, in any quarter, you may think proper. I have thought that the occasion called for them—I have stated them without reserve; but with an undiminished sense of gratitude for the many favours and friendly offices for which I am indebted personally to you, and many others, and generally to all my constituents.

Believe me, my dear Sir, very faithfully yours;

WILLIAM HUSKISSON.

Hertford Street, May 28, 1814.

I now refer to another authority, Mr. Jacob, who is also considered an oracle on the subject of Agricultural Protection. This gentleman, as before stated, published a very able work on the subject, tending to shew the folly of depending on foreign aid for the support of our population. The following extract is so appropriate to the present times, that I copy it for your perusal:—

“The diminution of agricultural capital, which, though it has yet but begun, and its operation is not very extensively felt, will, if the present state of the markets continue, operate with increasing rapidity. The first to suffer will be the labourers in agriculture: as the capital of the farmer diminishes, he will, from having less to expend, employ fewer hands. This is

the first, and, to him, the most obvious step, in the progress of economising his resources. The want of employment, by those who can turn their labour to no occupations but those of agriculture, will be felt in the increase of pauperism, and its consequence the advance of the poor-rates, which will take place in a degree scarcely to be calculated. It would be easy to shew, that a depressed state of agriculture—a state in which the price of its productions is regulated, not by the cost to the British grower, who is charged with heavy imposts and expences, but by the cost to persons in a distant country, freed from his expences and burdens, and who, consequently, are enabled to produce it cheaper than he can—must extend its baneful effects far beyond the immediate sphere of its operations. The Landed Proprietors, the Clergy, the Merchants, and the Tradesmen whom they employ, must all, generally, become involved in the sufferings of the farmer; and with them will be involved, ultimately, the inhabitants of our manufacturing and commercial cities, who, when British agriculture is so depressed as to be deficient in the means of supply, will look in vain to that scanty assistance which importation can furnish to relieve their necessities. In the state of things we are now antici-

“pating; and to which we must come, if our agri-
 “cultural interests are to be sacrificed for the
 “supposed encouragement of our manufactur-
 “ing exports, the increase of our population,
 “which we have been accustomed to consider
 “as a proof of our increasing prosperity, will
 “become an augmentation of our misery. The
 “check to population will not be felt till a
 “scarcity of aliment has made the evil irre-
 “mediable; and a numerous unemployed popu-
 “lation, without sufficient subsistence, will be
 “a calamity far beyond any we have ever felt.
 “If to this should be added a foreign war—a
 “circumstance which no man in the present
 “state of Europe, will put entirely out of his
 “calculation—we may anticipate a period of
 “woes of the most alarming kind, brought on
 “by abandoning the system pursued in this
 “country till 1766.”

In another place Mr. Jacob says—“In the
 “years 1800 and 1801, the greatest scarcity was
 “experienced in England that has been known
 “since;—from an exporting we became an im-
 “porting country. The average price of Wheat,
 “in these years, was 18s. the bushel; at one
 “period, March 1801, it was as high as 22s.;
 “and yet the whole quantity brought into this
 “country, during these two years, amounted
 “but to 2,689,286 quarters of Wheat, and
 “1,855,992 quarters of other grain, which is, to

“our present consumption (1814), in the pro-
 “portion of about one-eighth of Wheat, or six
 “weeks supply, and one-fortieth, or less than
 “two weeks supply of other Corn.”

From what Mr. Jacob has said, I will suppose
 an average crop now equal to our consumption.
 Let part (and a great part of the land now in
 cultivation would be given up,) be thrown out,
 if a duty of only 12s. or 15s. were imposed; let
 the crop be only deficient one-fifth on this di-
 minished and deteriorated cultivation, and no-
 thing could prevent a famine;—the whole world
 could not supply our wants.

If any thing more be wanting to shew the
 impolicy of relying on foreign import, I would
 refer you to the Report of the House of Com-
 mons in 1814.

The Committee state,—“That it is a fact
 “not undeserving the attention of the House,
 “that a considerable duty appears to be levied
 “(1814) on all Corn exported from the Baltic.
 “Your Committee have reason to believe, that
 “this duty has been greatly increased on some
 “occasions, when the wants of this country
 “were most pressing. Indeed, it cannot
 “escape observation, that revenue being the
 “object for which a duty is imposed, and the
 “prices in the Baltic being governed by prices
 “here, the scale of such a duty admits of
 “being increased in proportion to the degree of

"scarcity and consequent high price existing
 "in this country. From a consideration of
 "this and the many other inconveniences, both
 "domestic and political, which, in a country
 "like this, cannot fail to grow out of a state of
 "habitual and extensive dependence on a sup-
 "ply of foreign Corn, your Committee have
 "great satisfaction in observing, that of late
 "the export of Corn from Great Britain and
 "Ireland has nearly, if not fully, balanced the
 "importation. Looking to this important
 "change in our situation, to the abundance we
 "now enjoy, and to the great and extensive
 "improvement made in agriculture, both here
 "and in Ireland, your Committee cannot but
 "indulge a hope that we have nearly arrived at
 "that state, in which nothing but a discour-
 "agement, and consequent falling off of our
 "own agriculture, can again drive us to the
 "necessity of trusting to large importations of
 "foreign Corn, except in unfortunate seasons,
 "when it may be necessary to resort to this
 "resource to supply the deficiency of our own
 "harvest.

"Should this expectation be confirmed, as
 "they trust it will, by the experience of future
 "years, it will be highly gratifying to the view
 "which your Committee take of this important
 "national concern. They are convinced that a
 "reliance on foreign importation, to a large

"amount, is neither salutary nor safe for this
 "country to look to as a permanent system;
 "and that many of the sacrifices and privations
 "to which the people have been obliged to
 "submit, during the late long and arduous
 "contest, would have been materially allevi-
 "ated if their means of subsistence had been
 "less dependent on foreign growth. If com-
 "pelled by the frequent recurrence of those
 "sacrifices and privations, the country has at
 "last made exertions which will enable us, un-
 "der ordinary circumstances, to hold ourselves
 "independent of the precarious aid of foreign
 "supply; your Committee, without venturing
 "to suggest the mode, cannot doubt that it
 "will become the wisdom, and will conse-
 "quently be the policy of Parliament, on the
 "one hand, by protecting British Agriculture,
 "to maintain, if not to extend, the present
 "scale of its exertions and produce; and, on
 "the other, consistently with this first object,
 "to afford the greatest possible facility and in-
 "ducement to the import of foreign Corn,
 "whenever, from adverse seasons, the stock of
 "our own growth shall be found inadequate to
 "the consumption of the United Kingdom."

"My Lords and Gentlemen,—Let me beseech
 "you to reflect well on this extract, and I ven-
 "ture to believe you will acknowledge it to be
 "true wisdom. If you are of opinion that it

would be impolitic to impose a fixed duty of 30s., because, whenever the price should rise here, the Privy Council must interfere and take off the duty, in consequence of the prejudices of the people, impose a graduated duty. I call them prejudices, because to me it is quite clear, that a duty is not an *increase* of the price here, but a *decrease* of the price abroad; it operates only as an addition to the freight. For example:—Wheat sells at 70s. per quarter here; a duty of 30s. would leave 40s., and the importers would buy it abroad as much below that sum as would pay them, deducting freight and profit: let the duty be only 15s., and the importer would then buy it as much below 55s., paying freight and profit. I am aware, that if the price were high here, it would be difficult to make the people believe that the high price was not owing to the duty. I would, therefore, (and it is in strict accordance with the last paragraph of the Report of 1814,) suggest a fixed duty on a graduated scale.

This is what Mr. Huskisson recommended in 1814, and it appears to me free from the objections to which a fixed positive duty, and the present average system, are both subject. I consider that in 1822, the alteration of the amount of import price, when the ports should have once opened, was framed with a view to a future duty; and, therefore, taking that as

my guide, I propose that the duty, when Wheat averages 86s., should be 1s. per quarter, adding 1s. per quarter duty as the price falls 1s. Thus, at 80s., 7s. duty; at 70s., 17s.; at 60s., 27s.

The difference between Lord Londonderry's proposition in 1821, and this plan is, that under 70s., by the present laws, it would be excluded, while, by my plan, import would always be allowed. The plan of Mr. Huskisson, in 1814, was to have a duty of 24s. at 63s., and no import allowed of under that price. I would have the ports always open; put on a duty high enough, when the price is low, to protect British agriculture, and, by remission of the self-adjusting duty, afford every possible facility and inducement to import it when the price is high. A great improvement, also, in taking the averages, would be to take them weekly, for the last six weeks, instead of quarterly, as at present; and the averages would be returned much more correctly than at present, because they would be under the care of the Custom House, forfeiting the whole in case of fraud.

I have hitherto said nothing as to Ireland, but I call on the Noble and Honourable Members, who are connected with that country, to make a stand, and prevent the sale of their surplus produce being supplanted, as it will be, if the doctrines of Free Trade prevail, by foreign Corn. What is the great cause of the present

unsettled state of Ireland? Certainly, want of employment. In vain would demagogues rant to an employed people—they would have no hearers: it is only to an idle population that they can preach with effect. Oh! if agriculture had been fully protected,—if Ministers had manfully avowed their determination to make no alteration in the Corn Laws, at least, only such as should vary the mode, and not the amount of protection,—or, if half the money sent to work foreign mines had been employed in cultivating that unexplored mine of wealth, Ireland, how different would have been her situation now! But who will invest capital in improving the agriculture of that country, seeing that he will lose all return for it, by having the English market taken from him by foreigners? Ireland is agricultural, England agricultural and manufacturing. Let us receive the Corn of Ireland, and she will take back our manufactures. The proprietors of Ireland spend their incomes either here or there. Let but ample encouragement be given to cultivate that country, she would not, as at present, be a source of uneasiness, but would rival, in a few years, this country, and become the main sinew of the empire.

Let me refer to the Wool Trade as an example of what we are to expect by the new doctrine. "*Divide et impera*," has always been the policy of the wisest adversaries; and unfortu-

nately, the growers of long wool were, by representations, induced to believe, that if the duty on wool were taken off, and free export allowed, they would be benefitted, however the growers of short wool might suffer. In this case, as in all, "honesty would have been the best policy;" but the short wool growers were deserted, although, at the time, long wool was selling higher than fine wool, of which it is considered the price ought to be only half. The repeal of the duty took place. What has been the effect? That the import of foreign wool has been so enormous, as to make fine wool here totally unsaleable, to the ruin of the growers of fine wool,—to the ruin of the wool-staplers who had stocks on hand,—and to the ruin of those who imported it,—and also to the ruin of the manufacturers who have bought the wool, but who have not sold five yards of cloth more in consequence, without any benefit to the growers of long wool; because France, to which country it was expected the export would take place, almost immediately imposed a duty on wool equal to that we took off, and has thus put a complete stop to export to that country. The long wool growers have now seen their error, and, I am happy to say, are now as anxious as possible to have the duty replaced.

There is another point also of very great importance, which never struck me so forcibly as it has done since a young man, I am proud to

call my friend, who, with the name, inherits all the talents and energy of his father, Mr. Webb Hall, pointed it out. It is clear that we cannot expect to manufacture for foreign consumption, unless every improvement in machinery be taken advantage of. It were worse than useless to talk of the disadvantage of machinery. It is introduced, and if we do not make use of it, foreigners will: the only chance of preserving our foreign trade is by adopting these improvements. This must tend to throw manufacturers out of work; and how can they be employed, unless by giving additional encouragement to, rather than taking any of the protection from, our agriculture? So far from the two being incompatible, it can only be through the medium of agriculture that we can carry on our foreign trade. The Noble Earl at the head of the Treasury has so fairly admitted the difference between agriculture and manufactures, owing to machinery being applicable to the one and not to the other, that I will not say another word on that subject.

To sum up the whole, I believe that I have answered every argument which has been used for a Free Trade in Corn—that is, a trade at a low duty.

I have proved that we are entitled, from the admission of the highest authority, to a duty of at least from 25s. to 30s. per quarter on Wheat; on the same ground, we are also entitled not

only to a duty on Corn, but to a duty on every article the produce of the soil, to the growth of which the United Kingdom is congenial, equal to the difference on the principle laid down in the Report of 1821. I have proved, from the highest authority, that Corn would be steadier in price, by giving ample protection at home, than by the freest trade we could have. I have proved, that only by giving full protection to our own agriculture, our foreign trade can be carried on.

I am not aware that any other argument requires answering. Allow me, then, my Lords and Gentlemen, to entreat you to weigh well this theory of Free Trade. I entreat you to consider, before it be too late, the policy of making this country more a manufacturing country than at present. When I see those who have always shewn themselves hostile to all order, at once stop short and applaud the measures of Government, I look at them with a distrustful eye. "*Timeo danaos et dona ferentes;*" and I believe the sole cause of the support which many are giving to the new theory, is from a belief that it will accelerate the downfall of the country, and end in general convulsion. I now request your most serious attention to the extract from a work published some years since, which speaks to my mind with a prophetic spirit, and with this I conclude.

"*Governments who found their prosperity*

upon manufactures, sleep upon gunpowder.
“ Do I then think (continues the writer) that
“ England is in danger of revolution? If the
“ manufacturing system continues to be ex-
“ tended, increasing as it naturally does in-
“ crease, the number, the misery, the depravity
“ of the poor, I believe that revolution must
“ inevitably come, and in its most fearful shape.
“ That system, if it continues to increase, will
“ more effectually tend to ruin England, than
“ all the might and all the machinations of her
“ enemies, were they ten times more numerous
“ than they are. It communicates just know-
“ ledge enough to the populace to make it dan-
“ gerous, and it poisons their morals. It will
“ be well for England when her cities shall de-
“ crease, and her villages shall multiply and
“ grow; when there shall be fewer streets and
“ more cottages. The tendency of the present
“ system is to convert the peasantry into poor.
“ Her policy should be to reverse this, and con-
“ vert the poor into peasantry, to increase them
“ and to enlighten them, for their numbers are
“ the strength, and their knowledge the secu-
“ rity of a State.”

I have the honour to be,

Your most obedient Servant,

JOHN ELLMAN, JUN.

SOUTHOVER, NEAR, LEWES,

Nov. 19, 1826.