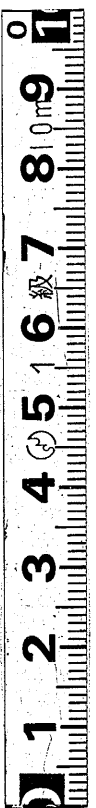


0091

140-10



LETTER,

&c. &c.

[Price One Shilling.]

0092

A

LETTER

FROM

THE HON. THOMAS BRAND, M. P.

TO

W. WILSHERE, Esq.

ON

THE SUBJECT OF THE CORN LAWS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JAMES RIDGWAY, 170, PICCADILLY,
OPPOSITE BOND STREET.

1814.

LETTER,

&c. &c.

The Hoo, August 1st, 1814.

DEAR SIR,

I MUCH regret that I have it not in my power to send you the Report of the second Committee upon the Corn Laws. If the report had been made, and if it had been accompanied by a full discussion of the entire subject, I might have abstained from troubling you with those observations, upon a very minor part of the question, with which I threatened you when we last met.

The impressions which have been made upon many of my friends, by the line which I adopted in Parliament upon

W. Flint, Printer, Old Bailey, London.

the subject of the Corn Laws, have been, to me, matter of very serious consideration—I certainly acted most advisedly upon that great and important subject; and however much I may lament that my view of the question, has exposed me to animadversion, I must candidly acknowledge that all subsequent discussion has tended to confirm me in the opinion which I had, long since, formed upon it.

I have felt, and I still feel, the greatest regret and disappointment, at perceiving that the country should have been misled by misrepresentation and misapprehension, to form a hasty judgment upon a subject, which, perhaps of all others, demands the coolest and most dispassionate investigation. If I could hope to arrest the attention of any portion of my constituents to an unprejudiced examination of the question, I should be

most desirous of finding some opportunity of explaining the grounds of my opinion upon it. How to catch such an opportunity, I know not; but I should be the more anxious to avail myself of any that might offer, because I should then hope to clear myself from those personal imputations, which have been unjustly and unfoundedly insinuated against me; and I should not despair of convincing the most strenuous opponents of my conclusions, that they have, at least, been formed, without receiving any bias from personal, or self-interested motives.

Corn Laws can be contemplated by a Statesman but in one point of view. They are mischievous, and in every way impolitic, if they produce any other effect, than that of securing a certain, constant, abundant, and therefore cheap,

supply of bread corn to the population of a country. No partial interests ought to be admitted into the consideration of their policy or propriety. The claims of landlord or tenant, of manufacturing or agricultural interests, are to be considered but as those of *integrant* parts of the entire community, which is to receive supply. The landlord and tenant ought to be identified—in other words, the argument upon the expediency or in expediency of Corn Laws, ought to be conducted in the same manner as if every occupier were possessed of the freehold of his occupation. Omitting then all interests, except those of the consumer, the question is brought within a very narrow range. All agree in the importance of securing a supply of bread corn at a moderate and steady price, and of guarding (so far as human care can guard)

against the recurrence of that enormous and distressing increase of price, which has twice, at least, within the last fifteen years, arisen from unfavourable seasons—the inquiry, is how this may best be effected; and that question resolves itself into the following points.

In the first place we must determine under what degree of encouragement, at what remunerating price to the grower of corn, the internal supply can be insured.

In the next place we have to consider, whether the foreigner can, and if he can, at what price *he will*, fill up that deficiency of supply, which must be the necessary effect of refusing to the internal cultivation such remunerating price as shall ensure its continuance.

It is most evident that unless the grower of corn can calculate upon a return which will replace his expenditure, and compensate him for the use of the capital advanced, and the risk incurred, he will cease to cultivate. There may be some difficulty in ascertaining the extent of the protection necessary to ensure internal cultivation. Much must depend upon the quality of the land. The rich soils are of such easy cultivation and abundant produce that they might (oppressed even as they are by charges and taxation) compete with the foreigner in our home markets; but every information which I have collected upon the subject, confirms me in the opinion that it is far otherwise with the average lands of England. It is calculating upon a very high average of the land of this country to assume its produce to be equal to twenty bushels of wheat, and thirty-

two bushels of barley per acre—To every statistical and agricultural writer, I appeal as authority for this position. There is no person conversant with agricultural inquiries, who will argue, that wheat grown upon such lands, can in seasons of ordinary produce, be supplied, (after the deduction of the tithe) at a less price than nine shillings per bushel. To those who are not unacquainted with the necessary expences and charges attached to the cultivation of land, this will not appear a high average price. Who can be so uninformed of the present state of this country as to disregard the charges, and taxation, to which land is exclusively liable; the support of the poor, the maintenance of the ecclesiastical functionaries, the repair of the parochial churches, and of the public roads, the land tax, and seven and a half per cent. income tax, are all charges exclusively applicable to the land.

When I assume that the average land of England cannot be cultivated but under the probability of a remunerating price of seventy-two shillings per quarter of wheat, I by no means intend to state that such must be its minimum price. In seasons of abundant produce the price will naturally fall. Quantity of produce will in that case compensate for the deficiency of price. If I am correct in the above positions, it remains undeniably proved, that if the foreign grower can, and is allowed, to superadd his surplus to our home produce of corn in our own markets at a price below seventy-two shillings per quarter, the average lands of this country must be thrown out of cultivation. We must, then, depend upon foreign supply, to replace that deficiency which will necessarily arise from the subtraction of the produce of all the land of

England which is below the assumed average. Before I proceed to the next point of consideration, I must indulge in one observation. It must be evident that in the exact proportion in which the direct charges may be hereafter withdrawn from the land, ought to be the reduction in the importation price of corn—If the community at large were to contribute *directly, according to their means,* to the support of the poor, to the maintenance of the roads, &c. &c. the land-holder would be relieved to the extent of that contribution; and in the exact proportion of such increased charge upon the community at large, and consequent reduction of the charges upon land, ought the importation price of corn to be re-

duced.—It does, indeed, appear to me, a most extraordinary system, a most fanciful theory, which contends that enormous charge and taxation shall be accumulated upon one commodity, and that commodity be undersold in every market. In what manner such charges and taxation are in this case to be levied, I leave to the supporters of such a theory to resolve.

I now proceed to the consideration of that part of the subject, which I never contemplate without the most painful and unfeigned alarm.—No evidence has ever been produced, I have never been fortunate enough to collect any, that the present surplus of foreign produce is by any means equal to replace the produce of those lands, which must, as I have proved, be ultimately thrown out of cultivation, under a system of uncon-

trouled foreign importation. It is possible that by the application of British capital to the soils of Poland and America, those countries may, in common years, yield a supply of bread corn, which shall equal that which by the operation of wiser measures might have been produced by our native soil—But, let me ask, what will be our security; what our certainty of this supply? I do not here allude to national differences, and possible future war—No; England must cease to controul those powers upon whom she has made herself dependant for subsistence—-I merely refer to the probable effects of unproductive seasons on the continents of Europe and America. ---When the rulers of those states, upon which we are to depend for the existence of our population, shall be called upon to withhold their produce for the maintenance of their own people, then

shall we experience the fatal effects of our prejudice and delusion.—Good God! what will then be the state of our unhappy land! Then will the people of this country vainly call upon those who have misled them, for that supply which they are now taught to reject—then will those theorists who now contend for systems inapplicable to the present state of the world, lament that, to their direful experiments, they have sacrificed the deluded people of this country.—Positive famine may not be the early consequence, but difficulty of procuring food, and corresponding high prices, must be the almost immediate effect of our dependence upon the foreigner for subsistence.

Assuming that there exists no real scarcity in foreign countries, is it possible to imagine that foreign governments will remain unobservant of our dependance

upon them? Can it be supposed that they will abstain from levying those contributions upon this country, of which we tender them the ready means? Will they not impose duties upon the export of their corn?—But why should I state doubtfully that which is in demonstration before us? In the present moment the government of France has closed her ports against the exportation of French corn. In the course of the late war, Prussia levied a duty of forty per cent. upon all grain exported to this country.

From such self-evident propositions it appears to me most clearly deducible, that a certain, and cheap supply of bread corn can be insured to the consumer by the sole means of our internal produce, checked in price by external supply on the one hand, and enabled to compete with it by protecting duties, or relief

from taxation, on the other. It were easy to corroborate this opinion by the evidence of long and unerring experience. I am, however, so anxious to avoid occupying your attention by a re-statement of these facts, which may be seen in every publication upon the subject, that I feel it a duty to resist my inclination to enter into an historical confirmation of principles which to me appear incontrovertible.

You must perceive that I have confined myself closely to the question of a *cheap supply of bread corn*. I have not touched upon any of the very many points of political economy to which I might naturally have been led. To my mode of argument it cannot be replied that the high rate of rents is involved in it. In fact, it is something singular to hear it seriously argued by any reasonable man, that the rent affects the price of

corn. Does not price depend upon demand and supply? And does the corn grown on land highly rented sell for more to the consumer than that which is grown on land for which no rent is paid?

If I were to express an opinion upon the mode in which rents are likely to be affected, I should not hesitate to give it very decidedly as mine, that the unlimited introduction of foreign corn, and the consequent dependance upon the foreigner for supply, would in the course of a very few years, enhance the value of such lands as shall remain in tillage, to an incalculable extent. This position would be capable of positive demonstration, but I abstain from entering into it, because the effect of rents upon the main question, is wholly inapplicable to any point of view in which I have ever permitted myself to consider it.

I feel shocked at having troubled you at so much length upon a subject in which we have arrived at the same conclusions. I am aware that to yourself the major part of this long letter must have appeared superfluous; but I am sure that you will pardon me when I state that I feel real satisfaction in depositing in your hands, the true grounds of my conduct in relation to a subject which has exposed me to much unfounded calumny. In doing this I have experienced a gratification to which I willingly yielded. I feel confident that to you no other apology is necessary.

If I have succeeded in placing the subject before you, in a mode which you think likely to remove prejudice, or to lead to conviction, upon this important, I had almost said vital, question, you

will communicate my opinions upon it to any friends who may honor me with their consideration.

Ever yours, most sincerely,

THOMAS BRAND.

To William Wilshere, Esq. Hitchin.

THE END.

The Publisher of this Pamphlet respectfully requests permission to observe, that he punctually forwards either of the Morning, Evening, or Weekly London Newspapers, to any part of the United Kingdom, post free, by the General Post, and supplies them throughout the West End of the Town, at an early Hour, both in the Morning and Evening.

170, Piccadilly, 20th August, 1814.

Just published, by J. Ridgway, opposite Bond-street, Piccadilly.

- 1. OBSERVATIONS on the CORN LAWS: by *Sir Henry Parnell, Bart.* price 3s.

- 2. Thoughts on the Question of the Alteration of The CORN LAWS, price 1s.

- 3. MR. GREG'S SYSTEM for the MANAGEMENT of HEAVY and WET LANDS without SUMMER FALLOWS, under which a CONSIDERABLE FARM in HERTFORDSHIRE is KEPT PERFECTLY CLEAN, and is MADE PRODUCTIVE. With plates. To which is subjoined a Plan for EX-TIRPATING the FLY in TURNIPS: by the *Earl of Thanet*, price 5s.

The following is a list of the names of the
 persons who were present at the meeting
 held on the 15th day of the month of
 1903 at the residence of Mr. J. A. Smith
 in the city of New York. The names are
 given in the order in which they were
 present at the meeting.

J. A. Smith
 W. B. Jones
 C. D. Brown
 E. F. Green
 G. H. White
 I. K. Black
 L. M. Gray
 N. O. Blue
 P. Q. Red
 R. S. Yellow
 T. U. Purple
 V. W. Pink
 X. Y. Orange
 Z. A. Silver
 B. C. Gold
 D. E. Bronze
 F. G. Iron
 H. I. Steel
 J. K. Lead
 L. M. Tin
 N. O. Zinc
 P. Q. Copper
 R. S. Nickel
 T. U. Platinum
 V. W. Silver
 X. Y. Gold
 Z. A. Platinum