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TRACTS <sup>from</sup>  
ON THE <sup>The Author</sup>  
CORN LAWS  
OF  
GREAT BRITAIN,

CONTAINING,

- I. An Inquiry into the Principles, by which all Corn Laws ought to be regulated.
- II. Application of these Principles to the Corn Laws of Great Britain, now collected into one Act of Parliament.
- III. Inquiry into the Expediency of Repealing all our Corn Laws, and laying the Corn Trade entirely open.
- IV. Outlines of a new Corn Bill, or of a Bill to amend the late Corn Act, which commenced Nov. 15th, 1791.

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BY  
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1792.

## I N T R O D U C T I O N .

*THE unusual keenness with which the late Corn Bill was agitated in the House of Commons, induced me to examine it very minutely. I shall now lay before the public the result of that examination, with this remark, that as it has now passed into an Act of Parliament, every good subject ought to obey it while it is in force, yet may at the same time inquire, whether it should be amended, or even repealed.*

*A system of Corn Laws has no necessary connexion with the support of Ministry, or with the strengthening of Opposition, though it unfortunately happens, that the enacting of public laws sometimes divides the representatives of the nation, nearly in the same manner in which they are divided by political disquisitions, or rather the contentions of party. In these tracts no notice will be taken of the conduct of those who supported, or of those who opposed the late Corn Bill; but as it does not appear to me, from the imperfect account given in the newspapers, that the subject of the Corn Laws was properly understood by either the promoters or opposers of the Bill, I shall give, with the coolness of a philosopher, and the freedom of a British subject, who is not a discontented man, as comprehensive a view as possible of the Corn Laws of Great Britain, arranged under the following heads.*

*I. That the reader may be able to judge for himself, whether my strictures, in the subsequent tracts, be well founded, I shall lay down, as shortly as I can, the principles by which all Corn Laws ought to be regulated.*

*II. I shall examine how far these principles have been attended to, in the collection of our Corn Laws into one Act, and establishing those new provisions, which are collected and established, by the late Corn Act.*

*III. I shall inquire whether all our Corn Laws should be repealed, and the Corn Trade laid entirely open, without being either encouraged, or restricted.*

*IV. I shall give the outlines of a new Corn Bill, or of a Bill to amend the late Corn Act, having one object in view, and regulated by those principles which shall be established in the first tract.*

*I apprehend that under one or other of these heads, every thing that regards Corn Laws in general, or the late Act in particular, may be included.*

I.

*The Principles by which all Corn Laws ought to be regulated.*

**T**HE great principle by which all public laws ought to be regulated is a regard to the general good of society. Whether any act of favour, or any particular indulgence be shown to an individual, or to any class of men; or whether any hardship seems to be imposed on one person or profession, still the general good of the nation, rather than what any individual or class of men may gain or lose by any great public measure, ought to be regarded by every wise legislator.

To supply a great nation, in which the money price of labour is high, in which the public taxes are heavy, and in which the united industry of all classes of men is necessary, both to the individual and to the nation at large, with provisions of every kind that our island produces, at a price which is most equitable to every class of inhabitants, either to receive or to pay, and to have every chance for raising and possessing abundance of food in all seasons, whether favourable or unfavourable, ought to be the object of all our corn laws. And of this object our legislature should never lose sight, when they judge it necessary to interpose their authority in any thing that relates to this matter.

Different methods have been devised for attaining this object. It has been thought proper to encourage the raising of corn in Great Britain, by granting a bounty for exporting our superabundant grain in fruitful seasons, when the money price of corn is so low, that a British farmer cannot get it disposed of to other nations, at a price which will repay the labour of raising and the expence of transporting it. It has also been accounted reasonable, to allow him to export without any bounty, when there is a surplus of grain in this Island, and when at the same time the prices are so high in other countries, as that without any encouragement, he could sell to foreigners, what he could not dispose of to the inhabitants of Great Britain. On the other hand it has been considered as just, that he should be prohibited from exporting any corn to other countries, and that other nations, under various provisions and restrictions, should be allowed to import their corn into this country, when the prices are very high in Britain, or when there is a scarcity or an appearance of a scarcity of provisions in this island.

Every one of these regulations, either has, or ought to have

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in view the general good of the nation, as far as this can be promoted by any positive laws. Yet while their tendency is to promote the general good of the nation at large, they may seem to an unskilful observer only calculated to serve a few individuals, or to excite party spirit, and to raise one class of men on the ruins of another, equally deserving the favour and protection of the state. And on the other hand, while our corn laws are framed in such a manner, as to serve only a few interested persons, and to oppose instead of promoting the general good of the community, they may be represented by designing men, as wise, necessary and beneficial regulations.

Let us therefore consider separately the encouraging of exportation of corn by bounties, the allowing it to be exported without any bounty, and the prohibiting it to be exported at all in certain cases—also the permitting of importation on the payment of various duties, and under different restrictions.

I. As to giving bounties on exportation.

To encourage the industry of the farmer, and by encouraging this, to procure a constant supply of food raised within the island of Great Britain, for the use of its inhabitants, it has been the practice for more than a century past, to allow a bounty on the exportation of corn, when it fell below a certain price in the market. Whether it be owing to the increase of our national industry, to the introduction of a better system of agriculture, to the use of a greater proportion of animal food, to the operation of this bounty, or any of our former corn laws, or whether all those causes have concurred to produce the effect, experience has shewn that the money price of corn has fallen considerably, though the value of money is not now one half of what it was in the end of last century, when a bounty was first given on the exportation of corn.

It is not for the sake of the farmer, but for the good of the nation at large, that this bounty is granted. The idea is, that it is more advisable to have food raised at home, than to trust to other countries for the necessaries of life; and the bounty is held out as a temptation to the farmer, to induce him to raise at least a sufficiency of corn.

The bounty is granted for two different purposes—for defraying the expence of exporting corn to other countries, and for paying that part of the price of raising it, which the corn merchant cannot get from other nations; and the money expended on bounties may be considered as a kind of drawback of part of the land tax, when the produce of the land is exported to foreigners.

But as the granting of a bounty on corn is taking so much of the general stock of the nation, and giving it to a certain number

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ber of individuals, partly to encourage their industry, but chiefly to promote the general good of society, all bounties ought to be given in such a manner, as shall be most beneficial to the particular persons whom it is meant to favour, and not only do the least possible injury, but the greatest possible good to the community at large. A bounty may be given in so injudicious a manner, that the farmer may not receive one farthing of it; or it may be given to our corn merchants, when the nation ought not to give any bounty at all. Here it deserves to be noticed, that though the price of corn taken at an average for this century, is 12 per cent, or nearly an eighth part less than it was the preceding century, yet for some years past we have imported instead of exporting grain; and as it is not improbable, that this is in some measure occasioned by our late corn laws, it behoves our legislators to take care that the money of the nation be not expended improperly on bounties.

The bounty on exportation, that it may not be abused, should only be given, when the price of corn is below what is thought to be a reasonable price; and this bounty, when it is given, should not be the same in all cases, but should be gradually increased, as the price of corn becomes lower in the market.

The bestowing of the same bounty in all cases, in which any bounty is allowed, does the least possible good to the farmer, and often the greatest hurt to the nation. When a part of the expence of exportation to a foreign country is sufficient to enable the farmer to sell it to other nations at the price they will pay, then that part only should be given him; otherwise, the greatness of the bounty will occasion the corn merchant to export more than the nation should encourage him to export. When the whole expence of exportation is necessary, a bounty equal to that expence should be allowed; and when a small part of the price of corn exported is requisite, a larger bounty may be given. But the bounty or encouragement given by the nation should never exceed the need there is for such assistance, otherwise the money of the nation is thrown away to no good, and often expended to a bad purpose.

The bounty on ground corn should also be properly proportioned to that of unground corn. As corn may be exported either ground or unground, it is necessary to fix what should be the weight of a certain measure or quantity of grain or unground corn, and what bounty should in certain cases be allowed for that quantity, also to determine how much meal or flour should be accounted equal to a certain quantity of unground corn, and what bounty should be allowed on a certain weight of meal or flour, or any kind of ground corn. These things may be so very improperly proportioned, as that more money may

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may be given in bounties on corn, or on meal and flour, than ought to have been given, if the proportions between them had been nearly just.

In estimating these proportions, however, something more than their respective values, the only thing considered by a merchant, merits the attention of the legislature. For the sake of encouraging not only agriculture, but every species of British industry, and whatever adds to the wealth or strength of the nation, the quality or the kind of labour bestowed on the corn or meal that is exported, ought to be considered.

Unground corn is more bulky than meal or flour, and requires both more tonnage and more ship-room, than it would require if ground, and properly dressed; therefore a preference in this respect should be given to unground corn, as the exportation of it gives more employment to our sailors, and to all connected with shipbuilding. On the other hand, the grinding of corn employs our mills and millers, and frequently requires as much of the national labour by land, as the difference of tonnage or ship-room between ground and unground corn can be estimated. These two articles nearly balance each other, if we calculate from the medium distance to which corn is exported; only as our sailors add to the strength, as well as to the wealth of the nation, a little preference may be given to unground corn.

So much for the principles which ought to regulate those laws, which offer a bounty on the exportation of corn;—next, as to the permitting of its exportation without any bounty.

British corn may be exported without any bounty, when the prices are so high, as will without any aid recompense the industry of the farmer; and the exportation of corn ought to be permitted, when there is a scarcity in any foreign nation, and more than a sufficiency in this country. Good policy requires that we should not throw away the public money in bounties, when the price of corn amounts to a sum adequate to repay the labour of raising and the expence of transporting it. No bounty should be given in this case; but humanity and good policy both require, that when we can spare any part of the produce of our lands, without any danger of a scarcity at home, we should leave exportation free and open, tho' the price in the market be pretty high. By allowing the exportation of corn, when there is a demand from abroad, and a surplus at home, we have the pleasure of relieving our neighbours, and the advantage of enriching ourselves; for the nation derives far more benefit from the exportation of corn than from exporting an equal value of any other commodity. But while

while there is no danger of a scarcity, the nation at large is benefited by exporting the produce of our lands to foreigners, and the manufacturers derive as much advantage from the increased wealth of the kingdom, as they derive loss from paying occasionally a higher price of provisions. The principle of our legislators in regard to corn laws being to attend to the general good of society, and their object to obtain a sufficient supply of provisions, our superabundant grain should be allowed to be exported, though the prices are pretty high, owing to a demand from abroad, not to any scarcity at home. But as this scarcity, or at least the apparent danger of scarcity, can only be concluded from the high price of provisions, therefore when that rises to be very high, exportation of corn ought to be prohibited. If the quantity of grain at any period remaining in the kingdom, and the time it would serve the inhabitants, were once ascertained, exportation might, under proper regulations, be permitted, when the price, owing to great scarcity in other countries, was very high, and a surplus remained in Britain. But till this be ascertained by actual survey, the high price is the only criterion of scarcity; therefore when the price becomes very high, the exportation of corn should be prohibited.

In short, the principles by which our corn laws, in regard to exportation of corn, ought to be regulated, are briefly the following. The leading principle is the promoting of the general good of society, and the object in this case to procure a constant supply of provisions on reasonable terms; therefore when the price of corn is low, to induce the farmer to continue to raise it in great quantities, a bounty proportioned to the need there is for such aid, may be given to enable the farmer to sell our superabundant grain to foreigners, at a price which they will pay for it—and this bounty should be granted both on unground and ground corn, so as to encourage not only agriculture, but every species of British industry employed in raising, dressing, and exporting corn or meal. Also, when our superabundant corn can be sold to foreigners without any bounty, it should be permitted to be exported, when the prices are moderate, and even though they should be pretty high, owing to a great demand from abroad; but when the price of corn is so very high as to indicate an approaching scarcity, or at least an appearance of scarcity, exportation ought to be prohibited.

The principles which should regulate our laws in regard to importation of corn are next to be considered. They are also founded on the general good of society, and their object is also to procure a constant supply of provisions on reasonable terms.

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When the prices of corn are so low, that a bounty is allowed on exportation, the importing of foreign corn ought to be prohibited—for it would be absurd to admit any foreign corn into the kingdom for supplying its inhabitants, at the same time that we give a bounty to send away our superabundant grain.

When the price is so high, that a bounty is judged unnecessary, and corn so abundant, that exportation is allowed without any bounty, foreign corn should be permitted to be imported, upon payment of very high but not prohibitory duties, and these duties should gradually fall as the prices rise in Britain. These duties will give the corn raised in Britain a decided preference over that which is brought from other countries, and by giving the manufacturers gradual access to the market for foreign grain, will keep a proper balance between them and our farmers, and oblige the farmer to ask and the manufacturer to give a reasonable price.

When the price of corn becomes very high in Britain, and when all exportation of corn is prohibited, then the duties on importing foreign corn should be very moderate, and also fall gradually, till the prices become extremely high, and the duty is merely nominal. These low duties are useful in preventing too great an importation of foreign corn.

These, I apprehend, are the leading principles which should regulate our laws in regard to the importation of corn—it may be proper however to explain them more fully.

It has long been a matter of dispute between our merchants and landed gentlemen, our manufacturers and farmers, whether the importation of corn should be free, or under restrictions. One party has maintained that commerce and manufactures have been much benefited, and the other that they have been ruined by the high price of provisions. The truth is, that both parties have run into the most unjustifiable extremes in their disputes about this matter; it is equally the interest of the farmer and manufacturer, of the landholder and merchant, that every member of society should have a reasonable recompence for his labour; and this price must be such as will stimulate his industry, but not encourage or even tolerate his indolence—such as will render it necessary for him to prepare raw materials for another manufacturer, who is to work them up into articles of luxury, or to prepare a store of the necessaries of life for all descriptions of manufacturers. The general good of society requires that the price of provisions be such, as will be a reasonable recompence to the labours of agriculture, and not require more labour from the manufacturer or mechanic than it is reasonable he should exert, yet will render it necessary

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cessary for all classes of men, who have not independent fortunes, to work at some employment, either in the house or in the field.

In a great inland country like Poland, which has never attempted to extend its commerce, or much regarded manufactures of any kind, it may be thought that the interests of the farmer should be preferred to those of the manufacturer; and in a narrow state, like the Seven United Provinces, where the land, by no industry or exertion, can maintain one half of its inhabitants, it may be imagined, that the interests of the farmer should be sacrificed to those of the merchants and manufacturers, who compose the majority of citizens. I am satisfied, that even in these cases, the interests of the inhabitants, though different, are not opposite. But surely in a country like Britain, of sufficient extent and fertility of soil, and so fitted by nature both for internal and foreign commerce, the leading principle of every statesman should be to attend equally to the interests of all descriptions of inhabitants, by permitting under proper regulations the importation of foreign corn, when the price of provisions rises above what is thought a moderate rate, and when the general good of the community renders this importation a matter not perhaps of necessity but of expediency.— When corn laws are introduced into any country, their object should be to establish, as far as is in the power of human laws, such a price, such a demand, and such a supply of provisions, as shall encourage the industry of all, prevent the indolence and dissipation of some, and the murmurs and despondency of others, and at the same time not hurt the population of any class of useful citizens, or induce too great or too small a proportion of the inhabitants, either to lay aside entirely, or to prosecute in too great numbers any one occupation in society. The policy of the legislators of some countries has divided the inhabitants into casts or tribes, which follow from father to son their family occupation. To encourage genius, which is not hereditary in any family, it should be the policy of this free and commercial nation, neither to debar any useful citizen from an office for which nature has qualified him, by rendering that office unfit to support him creditably, nor to excite a covetous man, from the hope of acquiring great wealth, to follow an occupation for which by nature he is not qualified. When either the farmers or manufacturers have no stimulus for labour, they will generally be indolent, and where they are oppressed by too much labour, they become dispirited, and their population decreases insensibly. It is therefore the interest of the nation at large, that the importation of provisions, though prohibited when provisions

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are very low, should be allowed when the price of corn rises above a medium rate, even though there be no scarcity or apparent danger of a famine. This is expedient for promoting the general good of society, and for preserving a proper balance between our farmers and manufacturers. But as there are different degrees from moderate to high prices, and from sufficiency to scarcity, it may be proper to make a few necessary distinctions.

That our farmers, in a season not very favourable, as long as there is a sufficiency of food in this country, may get their corn disposed of at a price, which will in some measure indemnify them for the partial failure of their grounds, importation of foreign corn should be subject to a very high duty, amounting nearly to a prohibition, if the price of British corn be not higher than what the manufacturer, with his usual labour, can afford to pay for a decent subsistence to himself and family for that year. When a greater exertion is necessary for procuring a decent subsistence, then importation of foreign corn ought to be permitted. But that the British farmer may not be straitened in his circumstances to procure a competency to the manufacturer, a duty should be imposed on foreign grain, which should give British corn a decided preference in the market; and this high, but not prohibitory duty, should be gradually lessened, as the price of provisions becomes higher. The object of these high duties should be to give a preference, not a monopoly, to the raising of corn in Britain.

When a still greater exertion must be made by the manufacturer to procure a moderate subsistence, the farmer also should be contented with the necessaries of life; and a very moderate or low duty, also gradually falling, should be exacted on the importation of foreign corn. The object of this duty is to prevent the importation of more corn than is necessary for the inhabitants. But when the utmost exertion must be made by the manufacturer, and all his industry is only sufficient to preserve himself and family alive, the free importation of foreign corn ought to be permitted; if any duty is exacted, it should be merely nominal, and importation should not be subject to any restriction.

These principles ought to regulate the importation of corn, whether ground or unground. But as the importing of ground corn gives less employment to our ships and sailors, and none to the mills or millers of Britain, ground corn should not be allowed to be imported till there is appearance of a scarcity, or till the low duties take place, and even when imported, should be subject to a little higher proportional duty than what is imposed on unground corn, till the prices become very high, when importation is open.— On the whole, in very plentiful seasons, when

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prices are very low, a bounty, gradually increasing with the necessity there is for such aid, should be granted on exportation; and that bounty should be properly proportioned between unground and ground corn. In moderate seasons exportation should be permitted, but without any bounty, both to ground and unground corn; and importation, on the payment of high duties gradually decreasing, should be allowed to unground corn, for preserving a proper balance between the farmers and manufacturers. But in very bad seasons, importation both of ground and unground corn should be allowed, on the payment of several low duties, the last of which should be merely nominal.

To these principles which ought to regulate our laws, in regard either to exportation or importation, it is necessary to add a few other rules, which are common to both these cases.

The first is a principle of justice, and superior to any regulation merely political; it is this—Whatever be the proportions between the weight and value of any kind of corn, in the rules for exportation, let the same be observed in those for importation; and let this weight, measure, or value, be distinctly pointed out in our corn laws. This may be thought so obvious, that it ought not have been mentioned—But it has not been always so obvious.

The second is a principle of good neighbourhood. In importing from Ireland and our colonies, a lower duty may be imposed on the corn of these countries than on that of other nations, and exportation to these countries may occasionally be permitted; when the prices are so high, and provisions so scarce in Britain, that exportation should not be allowed to foreign nations.

The third principle to be laid down, is a maxim of policy. While the raising of corn in Britain obtains a decided preference, and the importation of it, when necessary, is permitted under various provisions, let not the carrying trade of Britain be so cramped, as to prevent the carrying of corn as a branch of that trade, nor let it be allowed to interfere with the raising of corn in Britain. Let it be encouraged as a carrying trade only—but let it be subject to such restrictions as shall be the most effectual for preventing its doing any injury to British agriculture, and receive all the encouragement due to it as a branch of the carrying trade.

II. *Application of the above Principles to the late Corn Act.*

HAVING now laid down the leading principles, according to which, if corn laws are at all proper, they ought to be regulated, I shall now examine how far these principles have been attended to in the collection of our corn laws into one general Act of Parliament, and in establishing those new provisions, which are collected and established in the late Corn Act. The first thing to be considered here is the table in the act, marked A, allowing bounties on exportation.

T A B L E A.

Under per quarter.

Wheat 44s.	Rye 28s.	Barley, Beer, or Bigg, 22s.	Oats 14s.
Bounties, in such cases, payable on the following articles exported.			
On Wheat, 5s. per quarter.	On Rye, 3s. per quarter.	On Barley, Beer, or Bigg, and on Malt made of Barley, Beer, or Bigg, 2s. 6d. per quarter.	On Oats, 2s. per quarter.
Wheat meal, 1s. 3d. per cwt.	Rye-meal and flour, 9d. per cwt.	Barley-meal, and Beer-meal, or Bigg-meal, 10d. per cwt.	Oatmeal, 12d. per cwt.
Wheat flour, and Biscuit made of Wheat, 1s. 6d. per cwt.			

On this table it will be necessary to make several observations.

1st. In laying down the principles by which corn laws ought to be regulated, we shewed that the bounty should not be the same in all cases, when provisions were below a certain price, but should be greater or less according as there was need for such aid—but the bounty granted by this, and all by our former acts, is the same in every case. For example, if wheat is 44s. per quarter, no bounty at all is granted, if it is 43s. 11d. a bounty of 5s. is granted; if it fall to 20s. per quarter, no more than 5s. is given. This, Dr Anderson, and several other intelligent persons, have long since pointed out as a great defect in our corn laws—and the remedy, viz. increasing the bounty from a small sum at first to a larger sum, is so obvious, that it is astonishing so great an error should have found a place in the late corn act.

2dly, This bounty is not properly proportioned, according to principles which ought to regulate the proportioning of the bounty between ground and unground corn. It would be tiresome to my readers to enter here into the minutiae of calculation—I shall just observe, that the bounty on wheat and wheat-meal is at the rate of 5s. per quarter, while the bounty on flour and on biscuit made of flour, is only 1s. 6d. per cwt. or 4s. 10d. per quarter, (at the rates fixed in the act) although the dressing a quarter of wheatmeal into flour, and still more the baking it into biscuit, gives more employment to British industry. The bounty on oatmeal also is only 1s. per cwt. when it ought to have been 1s. 3d.—and both in regard to flour or biscuit, and

and oatmeal, the bounty is a fifth part less than it ought to be.

3dly, By allowing a corn merchant, as is done by the 10th section of the act, twenty days to put on shipboard all the corn he can collect after a bounty is granted, there is a temptation, from this high bounty being given all at once, that corn merchants will combine together to pour in a quantity of grain into the market, till they get their corn exportable with bounty, and that they will export all the corn they can load in 20 days for the sake of obtaining the bounty, and sell the rest of their corn which they bought cheap from the farmer, at a very high price.

4thly, This high bounty being given all at once, occasions more corn to be exported, than the nation ought to encourage our corn merchants to export, when the price is only a little below the medium rate.

On the whole, this bounty in the table marked A, does not promote the general good of society, is not proportioned to the farmers need of such aid, is not proportioned properly between ground and unground corn, does the least possible good to the farmer, and the greatest hurt to the manufacturer—while it is often a waste of public money to no good, and sometimes to a bad purpose.

The next thing to be considered is the table marked B, mentioning the prices at which exportation is prohibited.

T A B L E B.

	If under per quarter,			
	Wheat 46s.	Rye, Pease, Beans, 30s.	Barley, Beer, or Bigg, 23s.	Oats 15s.
Then not to export	Wheat, or Meal, Flour, Malt, Bread, or Biscuit made of Wheat.	Rye, Pease, Beans, Meal, Flour, Bread, or Biscuit made of Rye, Pease, or Beans.	Barley, Beer, or Bigg, Meal, Flour, Malt, Bread, or Biscuit, made of Barley, Beer, or Bigg.	Oats, or Oatmeal, Bread or Biscuit made of Oats.

Two things force themselves on the mind of an attentive reader of this table.

1st. Exportation is prohibited too early. In laying down the principles by which our corn laws ought to be regulated, I remarked that exportation ought to be permitted, though without any bounty, in this case, while the prices were moderate, and even when the prices were so high as to indicate a scarcity; but by our old corn laws exportation was not allowed unless the prices were so low, as that a bounty was allowed on the exportation of corn—and by the late corn act exportation is prohibited when the prices are moderate. It is certainly very absurd, that a bounty of 5s. should be allowed, because the price is thought too low, and that when this price rises only two shillings higher than that low price, exportation should be prohibited altogether. It does not appear, that the framers of our corn laws have always attended to the principles by which

which these laws should be regulated. In this case, they have not considered, that the principle on which exportation should be stopped is not the fear of a moderate rise in the price, but the fear of a scarcity of provisions, and that it argues both want of policy and want of humanity, not to allow our superabundant grain to be exported to foreigners, and our country to be enriched with foreign money, because the price of provisions rises a little in the market, not owing to any scarcity at home, but to a great demand from abroad. When a bounty of five shillings is given because the price is so low as to render a bounty proper, exportation should not be stopped till that price rise at least 5s. or as much as the bounty amounts to.—Therefore in every view exportation is prohibited too early.

2dly, By prohibiting exportation when the price of corn is only a little higher than that at which a bounty is granted, our corn merchants are under great temptations to speculate deeply, when the price of any kind of grain is at that sum, at which all exportation is prohibited. What shall they do, for example, if wheat is at 46s. a prospect of its being stationary for a whole season, and a great quantity on their hands, for which there is not a quick sale in the market? They must pour forth a great quantity of grain from their granaries, till they get the price of wheat reduced below 44s. that they may first get liberty to export, and next obtain as much of the bounty, as will indemnify them for underselling part of their corn. What are the consequences? A corn merchant loses 5 per cent, by underselling perhaps one fourth of his grain, gains 12 per cent of bounty on what he exports, sometimes gets that sold to advantage to foreigners, and sometimes meets with a bad market abroad; but seldom fails to draw a very great profit on perhaps one half of his corn sold at home, after the prices are thus raised artificially. The prices of corn fluctuate exceedingly during the twenty days, in which he must complete his lading of the corn entered for exportation—and the high bounty, followed by the early prohibition, tempts a man to speculate, and raise the price of corn.

Let it not be supposed that I mean any reflexion on the corn merchant; the law teaches him crimes—it places him between the fear of loss and the hope of gain.—On the whole it is obvious, by looking at this table and comparing it with the preceding one, that exportation is too early prohibited; and that this early prohibition is hurtful to our farmers and the nation at large, in depriving us of an opportunity of relieving our neighbours, and enriching ourselves by exporting our superabundant grain, while instead of benefiting the manufacturers and keeping the prices low, it tends to encourage speculation among our corn merchants, to waste the public money in bounties, and to raise the price of provisions.

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Thus far we have considered that part of the act, which relates to the exportation of corn. The regulations concerning importation are contained in the following table.

	T	A	B	L	E	E.
	Wheat* or Beans†	Rye, Pease, or Beans†	Barley, Beer, or Bigg.‡	Oats§	Oats§	Oatmeal.
When imported from Ireland, or the province of Quebec, or other British Colonies in North America.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
If under per quarter, —	48	32	24	16	—	15
High Duty, per quarter, —	24	22	22	6	7	8
If at or above, per quarter, —	48	32	24	16	17	15
But under, per quarter, —	52	35	26	17	—	16
First low duty, —	2	1	1	1	—	1
If at or above, per quarter, —	52	35	26	17	—	16
Second low duty, —	6	3	3	2	—	2
When imported from any other foreign Country.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
If under, per quarter, —	50	34	25	17	—	16
High Duty, —	24	22	22	6	7	8
If at or above, per quarter, —	50	34	25	17	—	16
But under, per quarter, —	54	37	27	18	—	17
First low duty, —	2	1	1	1	—	1
If at or above, per quarter, —	54	37	27	18	—	17
Second low duty, —	6	3	3	2	—	6

\* Importation of Wheat meal and Flour to be governed by the price of Wheat as follows—when imported from Ireland, or the province of Quebec, or other British Colonies in North America—high duty per cwt, 6s. 6d.—If low duty, 1s. 6d.—2d low duty, 1s. 2d. When imported from any other foreign country—high duty per cwt, 6s. 6d.—If low duty, 1s. 6d.—2d low duty, 1s.

† Rye ground, malt made of rye, pease ground, and beans ground prohibited.

‡ Importation of Indian Corn or Maize to be governed by the price of barley, as follows. When imported from Ireland, or the province of Quebec, or other British Colonies—high duty per quarter, 22s.—If low duty, 1s. 3d.—2d low duty, 3d.—When imported from any foreign country—high duty, per quart 1, 22s.—If low duty, 1s. 3d.—2d low duty, 3d.—Barley, Indian Corn or Maize, Beer or Bigg ground, and Malt made of Barley, Indian Corn or Maize, Beer or Bigg, prohibited.

§ Malt-made of Oats prohibited.

On

On this table it will be necessary to animadvert more minutely than on the two former tables—and as a distinction is made in this part of this act, between importation from Ireland and our American Colonies, and importation from any other foreign country, it will be proper to consider what preference or advantages in exporting corn should be given to Ireland and our Colonies.

While explaining the principles according to which importation of corn ought to be regulated, I did not take notice of any preference, except that of a lower duty, being given to Ireland and our remaining Colonies in North America. The reason why I did not take any notice of any other kind of preference was, that no other, and particularly none of the kind established in the act, can be justified by any principle of legislation or of political economy. If the general good of society require, that a system of corn laws should be established, if there ought to be regulations respecting the importation of corn, for the sake of preventing the farmer from selling too cheap, or the manufacturer from buying too dear, these regulations cannot be affected by the circumstance of the imported grain coming from Ireland and the British colonies, or from Poland, or from the States of America, or any part of the earth. The corn laws either are regulated by certain fixed principles, or they are regulated by no principle at all. If the latter is the case, let them be all abrogated; if the former be true, the only favour that we can shew to Ireland and our Colonies is to impose on them, as favoured countries, a less duty upon importation. It will perhaps be said, that if we want food, we must get it somewhere, and that it is better to get it from Ireland and our Colonies, than from a foreign nation;—but if when wheat is at 52s. per quarter, our manufacturers can hardly subsist, why make five millions of our fellow subjects be straitened for provisions, that Ireland and our Colonies may gain not five thousand pounds—for they can only gain 2s. on the quarter of wheat and rye, and 1s. on the quarter of barley and oats, upon all they export with this preference, more than they would gain if they had no preference at all. Besides, in a calamitous season, we may lose the time for importing from other countries, from the setting in of winter, from the Baltic sea and many of the rivers in the north of Europe being frozen over, or from some war breaking out in the countries where we looked for provisions. Nay, all the quantity that other nations can spare may be sold before we dare import any, except from Ireland and the Colonies; and in a time of general scarcity, we must pay an exorbitant price to foreign nations for their corn, if they have already sold all they can

can easily dispose of, and if we have come late to the market.— Add to all this, the temptation of such a preference may induce Ireland to do, what Ireland has often done before, namely, to sell more than the people of Ireland can afford to sell, and we shall find that a preference of this kind is ruinous to those whom it is meant to favour, as well as ourselves. Indeed, when the prices are high in some districts, but a sufficiency of corn in Britain, Ireland by virtue of this preference can send her corn to the western parts of Scotland much cheaper than the inhabitants of the east coast can send it thro' the canal to Glasgow— and at the time I write this, the duty on a quarter of oats is only two pence, if imported from Ireland. This occasions a great importation from that country, as no part of the east coast of Scotland can send corn to the west at two pence per quarter, for freight, charges, and commission. But is it reasonable that Irish should thus be in fact preferred to British grain, when we pay such a multitude of taxes? In short, in whatever light I view the subject, I do not know one principle of political economy, of legislation, of commerce, or of good neighbourhood, which warrants the preference in the act, or indeed any other preference than that of imposing lower duties upon the corn of Ireland and our colonies, than upon that of any other foreign nation.

The next thing that presents itself, on reading this table, is the duties which are imposed on exportation. Of these there are three, viz. one high, and two low duties.

The first of these called a high duty is no doubt meant to be a prohibition, and is nearly equal to half the price of the grain on importation of wheat and oats, and a still greater proportion of the price of rye or barley. I have purposely avoided finding fault with the prices of corn mentioned in the act—it would be fastidious to dispute about trifles. But I must observe that importation is not allowed in any duty that can be paid, till the prices are by far too high.— In laying down the principles by which the importation of corn ought to be regulated, I endeavoured to shew that as long as a bounty was allowed on exportation, all importation should be prohibited, and as soon as corn rose to such a price that a bounty was unnecessary, a number of high, but not prohibitory, duties should be imposed on foreign corn imported into this kingdom. These duties would keep a proper balance between the manufacturer and farmer, and prevent the one from demanding, and the other from refusing a moderate or reasonable price. But in the late corn act, instead of a number of high duties, gradually decreasing, we have only one high duty, which amounts to a prohibition. It would no doubt be loading the system of legislation

too much to attend to the minutiae of pence or farthings, in the price of a quarter of wheat for example; but the leaps from 5s. to nothing of a bounty, and from 24s. 3d. to 2s. 6d. of a duty, are too great and too sudden for a wise legislator to make, and are only favourable to a few speculating corn-merchants, who may act in concert, that they may obtain a large bounty, or be charged a small duty. All our corn laws, however, instead of imposing a regular gradation of high duties, impose only one prohibitory duty, and have made no provision whatever for what should be the great object of corn laws, such a gradation of high duties when the prices of corn are rising, as shall prevent the farmer and manufacturer from hurting each other. Exportation is prohibited in moderate seasons, to prevent the farmer from disposing of his superabundant grain to foreigners, where there is a great foreign demand, and abundance at home; and importation, upon any duty that can be paid, is prohibited, that the manufacturer, when provisions are becoming too dear, may be debarred from the foreign market. Two greater absurdities can hardly be supposed to exist. In this act, and indeed in all our corn laws, the manufacturers have gained one point over the landholders and farmers, viz. the prohibiting of exportation, after the prices rise to such a moderate sum as is thought sufficient to reward the industry of the farmer. They have gained this, not only at the expence of the farmers, but of the whole nation, and, pardon the phrase, they have gained a real loss to themselves. On the other hand, the landholders and farmers have carried another point against the manufacturers, namely, that the importation of corn shall not be permitted till the prices be very high.— They have gained this at the expence of the population of the country, which must always decline, when provisions become so dear, that a manufacturer can support only himself, though he have no family to maintain by his labour; and as all that the farmers can sell, after maintaining themselves, their families, and labourers, in an unfavourable season, produces incomparably less benefit to them from the price they receive, than it occasions hurt to the manufacturer, who pays an exorbitant price for provisions, importation of corn ought to be permitted, on the payment of high, but not prohibitory duties, before the prices are too dear. How long will men contend for victory, instead of making mutual concessions, which are of more importance than victory itself! The interest of all classes is the same—and the manufacturer should agree to let exportation be continued longer, while there is no danger of a scarcity, and the farmers should also agree that importation, under proper regulations, begin much sooner than it does at present. Thus only can our

corn laws be founded on that broad principle, the general good of society. On the whole it is obvious, that instead of one prohibitory duty, which is established in this act, there ought to have been several high, but not prohibitory duties.

If it were of any consequence to compare things, in themselves absurd, it might easily be shown, that the prohibitory or high duty of 6s. 6d. on the cwt. of flour is not nearly so great a prohibition as a duty of 24s. 3d. is on the importation of a quarter of wheat, nor this so high a duty as 22s. on the quarter of rye, nor this last so great a prohibition as a duty of 22s. on a quarter of barley, of which the price is only 24s. But I shall not enter upon the calculations in this table, which are almost all of them erroneous, as my readers would not in general follow me through a minute detail—suffice it to name some of those which are most deserving of being pointed out, as being worse than errors of calculation.

First, in regard to wheat—the lowest duty is 1s. on the cwt. of flour; when the price of wheat is so high as that the duty should have been merely nominal. The highest average price of wheat is, for any one year since 1770, only 52s. 8d.—when the manufacturer can hardly subsist, though he work incessantly, the duty on the cwt. of flour imported, instead of being 1s. should only have been a penny. This island must be in great distress for provisions, before the average price of wheat is 54s. The lowest duty, as I shewed when laying down the principles by which importation of corn ought to be regulated, should be merely nominal. A duty of 1s. paid on importation by a merchant would be at least 1s. 2d. per cwt. or half a farthing on every pound of flour, to the English manufacturer who bought it of the merchant, or perhaps only of the baker—and this duty would be a most severe and unjust tax upon him in such calamitous seasons.

Again, while the English manufacturer is oppressed by this, which is called the second low duty on flour, the Scotch manufacturer is in no better a situation from other two provisions of this act.

The price of oatmeal is not regulated by the price of oats, as it was in the table for exportation, and as wheat-meal and flour are in this very table regulated by the price of wheat; nay while the price of barley regulates the prices of Indian corn or maize, the price of oats does not regulate the price of oatmeal. The reason of this most probably is, that oats are generally sold ground in Scotland, and unground in England; and as oatmeal is not used, or very little used, by the English manufacturer, while oats are used by the farmers in England, as food to their horses, the interest of Scotland has not been attended to,

although

although oatmeal be the common food of the people of Scotland.

Very different proportions between oats and oatmeal, or very different accounts of the quantity of oatmeal contained in a quarter of oats are virtually given in this act. By the first table, which proportions the bounties between wheat and wheatmeal very accurately, a quarter of oats is allowed 2s. and a cwt. of oatmeal 1s. of a bounty on exportation. At this rate a quarter of oats is equal to 224 lb. or 2 cwt. of oatmeal; but the act says, 176 lb. shall be reckoned equal to a quarter—nay, what is worse, neither of these two proportions, viz. 176 or 224 lb. is adopted in this table for importation; but two distinct columns are marked, and a boll or 140 lb. of oatmeal is to a quarter of oats, when the high duty is imposed, as 15 to 16; when the first low duty is imposed, as 16 to 17, and when the second low duty takes place, as 17 to 18. In the first of these cases the quarter must be equal to 149 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. in the second case to 148 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. and in the third case to 148 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb.—so that here we have five different proportions of a value of a quarter of oats made into oatmeal; and it is not unworthy of remark, that none of these five proportions are near the truth. By a number of experiments made by myself, and others under my inspection, by information from a most competent judge, who is a member of the present Parliament, by the flars of the different counties of Scotland before the act took place, and by the average prices of oats and oatmeal since it commenced, I find that 18 pecks or 144 lb. Scots Troy, or 157 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. averdupoise, of oatmeal is almost exactly equal to a quarter of middling British oats, of the weight mentioned in the act. And it has already been found, that in the same district of Scotland the high duty or first low duty takes place on the importation of oats, just as they are ground or unground. The same kind of corn pays a different duty at the same port, owing to an improper proportion being established between oats and oatmeal.

The reason of these absurdities, or bad proportions, is, that our corn acts have been made at very different periods, and in collecting them into one act, the compilers did not consider, whether the proportions in the new parts which they added, were the same with the old ones which they retained. Thus there has been some inattention, but no design to hurt any person, and it is uncandid to suppose injustice, where the thing can be easily accounted for in another manner. The remedy for this would be to fix the proportion between oats and oatmeal, the same in exportation, importation, and domestic commerce, to enact that 18 pecks or 144 troy lb. of oatmeal shall be accounted a quarter of oats in Scotland; and if 157 $\frac{1}{2}$  averdupoise lb. be accounted too uneven a number, to appoint that

160 lb. of oatmeal shall be accounted a quarter of oats in England. This will preserve the weights of both countries in whole numbers, and as oatmeal is not used in England, no harm could be done by taking a round number.

On a general review of the table, which fixes the duties on importation, I think it is evident, that the preference given to the corn imported from Ireland and our Colonies is not that which is most serviceable to them, though it is most injurious to this country—that the high prohibitory duties, instead of several high duties not prohibitory, and the proportion of these duties fixed in the act, are all improper—that the second low duty on wheat is by far too high, in a calamitous season—that different proportions of the value of the boll of oatmeal to a quarter of oats are adopted in the rules for exportation and domestic trade, from what are here established for importation—and in general, that this table is not framed according to the principles by which all corn laws ought to be regulated.

I have now considered the regulations both in regard to exportation and importation. Several things fall next to be examined, which are not included in the title, nor hinted at in the preamble of the bill; but as they make part of the act itself, I shall examine them with impartiality.

The first article is the warehousing clause, which constitutes the 19th section of the act.—“ In order to promote and extend the commerce of the merchants of this kingdom in foreign corn; and to provide stores which may be always ready for the relief of his Majesty’s subjects, in times of dearth, be it farther enacted, that in case any wheat, wheat-meal, or flour, rye, pease, beans, barley, beer or bigg, oats or oatmeal, Indian corn or maize, shall be imported into any town or port, having a collector and comptroller of the customs; or to any port which shall be approved of by his Majesty, with the advice of his Privy Council, the same, on due entry thereof, may be forthwith landed from on board the ship or vessel, in which the same shall be so imported, in presence of the proper officer or officers of the customs, without payment of any duty whatever—provided, that an exact account be taken of the quantity thereof, and entered in a book to be kept by the proper officer of the customs of said ports, and that the same shall upon landing be immediately lodged and secured, under the joint locks of the King and importer or proprietor thereof, in such warehouses as shall be fit for that purpose, at the sole expence of the importer,” &c.

This clause avows to have two distinct measures to promote, one, to extend the commerce of the merchants of this kingdom in foreign corn; the other, to provide stores which may be ready

ready in times of dearth. It is proper to consider these separately.

1st, As to promoting and extending the trade of the merchants in foreign corn. Every good citizen ought to promote every branch of our foreign commerce, and particularly the carrying trade, which is a branch of that commerce; but that this may not be done at the expence of our internal trade, and particularly of British agriculture, it is proper that the duty should be paid which is due on importation, and that a drawback should be allowed for what is unfold, on exportation. This will supersede the necessity of warehousing; if warehoused, let a bond be given for the duty, to be cancelled when it is reshipped; and let the corn be warehoused under the keys of the King, the importer, and a person deputed by the county, and paid out of the land tax. An officer of the customs is very proper for looking after payment of the King’s duties, but has no interest in preventing, and might have some in permitting importation; men are always most vigilant, where their particular interests are concerned—and a man appointed by the landholders ought to have a joint custody of the warehouse, even for promoting the carrying trade, so as not to hurt British farmers.

2dly, As to warehousing of foreign grain, in order to provide stores which may be ready for the relief of his Majesty’s subjects in times of dearth. This appears to me unnecessary, as we have more land than, if cultivated, would maintain above double the number of our inhabitants, as our lands are generally fertile, and our exportation from century to century much exceeds our importation. It also appears to me to be inexpedient, in the present state of British finances, viz. national debt and taxes, that we should discourage agriculture in any shape, or do what would raise the value of silver, which the importation of foreign grain, without exacting a duty, would probably occasion. The warehousing of corn would also be very expensive. The expence of building warehouses for three years consumption of wheat has been estimated at 24 millions sterling, and interest and attendance at two millions and a half yearly—suppose it only six millions sunk, and half a million yearly expended. All this would be wasted to no purpose, but to produce more diseases and deaths yearly, by old musty provisions, than what, once in two or three centuries, are occasioned by a famine. And this expence, though not paid directly by the nation, must be paid by the purchasers. All the ends to be obtained by warehousing may be obtained by other means, particularly by permitting importation early, upon payment of high but not prohibitory duties; and by enabling the King and Privy Council



by Council to accept of lower duties upon foreign corn, than what were due when it was landed, if a sudden scarcity appeared to exist. And, if this warehousing plan is to be tried, let it be tried fairly—by giving a person, appointed by the county, the joint custody of the warehouses, and taking bond from the importer for the duties due at the time it was landed, and cancelling this bond as before, when re-shipped.

On the whole of this clause I must conclude, that permitting importation upon high duties gradually decreasing, and not building warehouses, is the best method to have a supply of foreign corn ready for the relief of his Majesty's subjects in times of dearth.

The division of the kingdom into districts, which is for the first time made by this act, shall now be shortly considered—and without finding any fault with the districts as being improperly divided, I must state some objections to any division into districts.

First, It is the general good of the nation, and not the particular benefit of a district, that ought to be promoted by a general law. There will no doubt be some inconvenience in establishing any general rule—but it would be more inconvenient to establish the exceptions. Great Britain has been too often divided; it should now be treated as *one*.

The bounty on exportation is by this act to be granted according to the average prices of the district, not the average price of the kingdom. From our insular situation, a good season on the east is often a bad one in the west, and vice versa. The granting a bounty at the district prices is taking the money of the whole nation, and giving it to one part to enable that part to hurt the other. Exportation without a bounty may be safely allowed; but the bounty, the money of the whole kingdom, should only be determined by the average prices of the whole kingdom.

The duty on importation should also be determined by the average prices of the whole island—otherwise foreign grain would be imported at convenient places, to the general hurt of the kingdom. It is owing to the division of the kingdom into districts, that at present (April 1792) Irish corn is imported into the western parts of Scotland, to the detriment of the eastern part of that kingdom; and as speculations can be carried on in districts, which would not be attempted over the whole kingdom, both duties and bounties ought to be regulated by the average prices of Great Britain.

I must not omit mentioning, that, by the table C, merchants are limited to particular ports, and to particular quantities at each port, in exporting to our factories, garrisons, and colonies

abroad. In an act which divides the kingdom into districts, this is very improper, as the prices at some of these ports may happen to be much dearer than the prices at other ports of the kingdom, and as this may be equally injurious to the people who live near those places, as well as to those to whom our exported corn is sent.

I would also add, that instead of permitting exportation to Ireland, whatever the prices might be in Britain, it would be more proper, as I have already shewn, that exportation to any place should not be stopped till the prices were very high, that the King should be permitted to allow importation to Ireland occasionally, rather than make this a part of a constant law, which may be often abused.

I would now take notice of some things omitted in this act, which has descended into many minutiae.

And 1st, There is no provision for allowing corn to be sent freely through the kingdom, for the purpose of seed, though new varieties of corn are carefully distinguished, and though wheat is apt to degenerate in Scotland, unless the seed be imported every second or third year from England.

But an omission in a matter of greater consequence takes off our attention from an encouragement which was due to agriculture; the limits both of bounties and duties are left too vague and undetermined.

The measure, according to which all returns are to be made, is declared to be the Winchester bushel. It would have been proper to inform us what a Winchester bushel is, and that for this plain reason, that there are four Winchester bushels, all equally legal, except for the purpose of gauging malt. The largest of these should contain 8 Winchester gallons, or according to the measure of that gallon in the time of Charles II. 2178 inches—the standard bushel of Henry VII. kept in the Exchequer, and produced before a committee of Parliament in 1696, contained only 2145.6 inches—the gauger's bushel, or a cylinder of 18½ inches diameter, and 8 inches deep, declared to be a legal Winchester bushel for making returns of malt, contains 2150.42 inches—and the standard bushel in the Exchequer produced before the committees of the House of Commons in 1757, 1758, and 1759, which is dated 1601, in the end of Q. Elizabeth's reign, contains only 2124 inches. Between the first and last of these bushels, there is a difference of 54 cubic inches, equal to a difference of 1s. 2d. or 1s. 3d. on the price of a quarter of wheat, and in proportion as to other kinds of corn. Between the gauger's bushel and that of Q. Elizabeth, there is a difference of 26 inches and 42-100 parts of an inch, equal to 7d. in the price of the quarter of wheat, between the bushel



bushel, which is the standard of excise, and that of the exchequer, which at the late visitation in 1759 was the standard of commerce. It is surely unworthy of a great, enlightened, and commercial nation, to leave this so undetermined, when a very high bounty of 5s. might either be granted or denied, according as the return were made by one bushel or another. The number of cubic inches, and the weight of rain or distilled water of a moderate temperature, ought to have been mentioned in the act, if we cannot go the length of taking a standard of weights, measures, and coins, from something in nature. As the act stands, it is often impossible to make exact returns from the different counties, or to say when a bounty or a duty is payable, when the prices are nearly those at which duties or bounties commence.

While speaking of these things, I cannot help expressing my surprize, that as a Scots chalders of 16 Scots bolls, or 2048 Scots Troy lb. correspond so nearly with an English Avoirdupoise tun, that both duties and bounties on meal of all kinds were fixed on the cwt. instead of the tun. As the Scots Troy differs from the English weight, and as 16 bolls, at the rate in the act, of 140 Avoirdupoise lb. to the boll, are exactly equal to a tun weight, undoubtedly the duties and bounties should have been established at that point, where the measures of both nations so fortunately correspond—and I would even add, that it would have been wise to have fixed the duties and bounties on unground corn on the *tun* instead of the chalders, only so far to correct them by measure as to prove the quality of the grain. By this means grain would soon come to be sold by weight only, and one weight, viz. the tun or chalders, would be established over all the island.

To conclude this long examination of the late corn act, I think it does not in its present state tend to promote the general good of society—it offers a bounty which is given in such a manner, as to do the least possible good, and the greatest evil frequently, which is not proportioned to the need there is for it, nor to the value of ground to unground corn—it checks exportation too soon, and prohibits importation too long—the duties are ill proportioned, and one proportion is adopted between one kind of ground and unground corn in the rules for importation, different from those fixed for exportation and domestic trade—the warehousing of foreign grain in the way it is proposed is in every view improper—the division of the kingdom into districts is also in many respects an improper measure; as also the limitation of merchants to particular ports in a kingdom, so divided—the preference given to Ireland and our Colonies is not the best to them, and yet it is the worst for us—agriculture

culture ought not to be discouraged in a corn law, which does not allow the circulation of feed corn—and the measure by which every thing is to be determined, is not itself determined. On the whole, the late corn act needs to be amended.

### III. *An Enquiry into the Expediency of Corn Laws of any Kind.*

I AM now to enter upon the consideration of one point, which I purposely omitted at first, namely, whether all our corn laws ought to be repealed, and the corn trade laid entirely open, without either encouragements or restrictions, as has been keenly contended for by Dr Adam Smith, in his celebrated work “on the Wealth of Nations.”

Here notwithstanding the veneration which I feel for a great name, I do not hesitate to assert, that a system of corn laws is necessary for Britain, and that the giving of bounties, imposing of duties, and enacting regulations, in regard to the exportation and importation of corn, can be justified on the best principles of political economy, where a nation is situated as Great Britain is now situated, in many respects. I shall here first assign some reasons in support of the opinion which I have formed; and I shall afterwards examine what Dr Smith has stated on the other side of the question.

First then, I would assign some reasons in support of my own opinion—and I begin with defending the granting of bounties on exportation, when the price of corn is low in Britain.

If the money price of labour were the same in every kingdom of Europe, if Great Britain had no national debt, no considerable expences of government, if there was no unavoidable and known tax on the landholder, if the expences of agriculture and of maintaining a farmer, with his family and dependants, who indirectly pay much greater taxes than the land tax, if our lands were uncommonly fertile and required no manure, as being newly taken from the woods, if common industry in our farmers would raise as much grain as could supply all the inhabitants, and if our superfluous grain in a plentiful season could be always disposed of to foreigners at the money price at which it can be raised and exported—it would not be necessary for the sake of our farmers to grant a bounty on the exportation of corn. But as the money price of labour is much higher in Britain than in many other countries in Europe—as our national debt and the expences of our government necessarily occasion many taxes, and particularly the land tax which cannot be evaded—as it is reasonable, that a drawback of part of this tax should be allowed, when the produce of our lands

is exported to foreigners—as it is expedient, that this drawback should be given in such a way, as shall be most beneficial to our farmers—as the expence of manure and the agricultural expences of a country that has been long under cultivation are considerable, and require great industry in our farmers to defray these, and also their domestic expences—as by exerting themselves, our farmers often raise more corn than is necessary for the inhabitants of Britain, and yet cannot always dispose of their surplus grain at a money price which will repay them for raising and transporting it—it is reasonable, it is expedient, and it is good policy, for the sake of our farmers, to grant a bounty on the exportation of corn.

Again, if the manufacturers of Great Britain would exert as much industry, when the price of provisions was low, as when it was very high—if they would perform as much labour when they had no stimulus for action, as when their labour was both required and exacted—if there were no danger of their becoming indolent and dissipated in times of plenty, and of being oppressed and dispirited in times of scarcity—if a constant and moderate price were not preferable to a fluctuating price of provisions—and if our manufacturers did not derive as much benefit from their internal commerce with the farmers, as these do, from selling their superabundant grain to foreigners—it would not be expedient for the sake of the manufacturers to grant a bounty on exportation. But as the manufacturers of this kingdom ought to be kept equally from indolence and oppression—as by their industry and ingenuity they ought to manufacture such a quantity of goods, as shall, by being exported from Britain into other countries, leave such a balance of trade in our favour, in our whole transactions with other nations, as, with the profits of our internal commerce, shall enable us to pay our accumulated taxes, and at the same time reward the industry and ingenuity of our manufacturers—a moderate but pretty uniform price, which shall both require and recompense the labour of every description of inhabitants, who have not independent fortunes, should be established through the kingdom, established however not by any violent step inconsistent with our liberties, but by offering a premium or bounty for sending our superabundant corn to foreigners. Thus that our manufacturers may have a constant supply of provisions on reasonable terms, and at the same time find it necessary to be active and industrious, a bounty on exportation is not improper, even for the sake of our manufacturers.

That exportation of corn, without giving any bounty, should be permitted, till the prices are very high, would not be disputed by those who would have the corn trade always open.

But

But though, as I have already shown, exportation should not be prohibited till the prices are very high, and provisions are scarce, yet where this happens, it ought to be prohibited. *Salus populi lex suprema.*

The imposing of duties upon the importation of grain from other countries, to give British farmers a preference in the market, may be justified in the same manner in which the giving of bounties was defended. Yet there is some difference in the cases; the one is allowing a drawback of part of the land tax—the other is imposing a duty, as an equivalent to the taxes paid in Britain by the raising of corn. The British farmer, however, on this broad principle, that the general good of society ought to be promoted, should have no monopoly, but a preference in the market; and that preference, I have shown, ought to be gradually lessened, by diminishing the duties on importation, as the price of provisions increased. An additional argument is now given for imposing these duties; as the American States have established their independency, since Dr Smith's book, *on the Wealth of Nations*, was published, and can afford to sell their corn cheaper than it could be sold in Britain, though neither rent, nor tithes, nor land tax, were paid by the British farmer. In every view, it is expedient to impose high duties, gradually decreasing to a mere nominal duty, as the price of provisions rises in Britain; for if the plough were once laid aside, or discouraged in this country, the first calamitous season which happened in America would occasion a famine in this island.

On the whole, such is the state of Great Britain, from her great national debt, and the situation in which she is placed in regard to some other countries in Europe, and the late colonies, now the United States of America, that corn laws, properly regulated, appear to me to be not only expedient, but even necessary.—But from the great character which Dr Smith's book, *on the Wealth of Nations*, has deservedly attained, it is proper to consider the leading arguments which he has urged in favour of the free exportation and importation of corn.

He lays it down as a principle (book 1st, ch. 1. p. 41. Lond. ed. 1776) that “equal quantities of labour will be at distant times more nearly purchased with equal quantities of corn, than with equal quantities of gold or silver, or perhaps of any other commodity”.—That “though labour is the only universal standard of value, we must generally content ourselves with the prices of corn, not as being always in the same proportion as the current prices of labour, but as the nearest approximation that can commonly be had to that proportion.” Here it is obvious, that Dr Smith considers labour as the only accurate

accurate standard of value, and the real average prices of corn at distant times as the nearest approximation to it.

But in the second volume, (p. 94. book 4th chap. 5th) he says, that the price of corn regulates the money price of labour, of all the other parts of the rude produce of the land, of the materials of all manufactures, and consequently of complete manufactures. Here from being only the best approximation which can commonly be had, it becomes a perfect regulator, and an universal measure of value.

It is extremely difficult even for a philosopher, when he handles a favourite subject, to avoid expressing himself in stronger language, than what he used when laying down his general principles, and in the application of one's reasonings, it is not unusual to consider probable arguments as complete evidence. Let us observe how Dr Smith applies his reasonings against granting a bounty on corn.

“ Though, in consequence of the bounty, the farmer should  
 “ be enabled to sell his corn for 4s. the bushel, instead of 3s.  
 “ 6d. and to pay his landlord a money rent proportionable to  
 “ this rise in the money price of his produce, yet if in conse-  
 “ quence of this rise of the price of corn, 4s. will purchase no  
 “ more goods than 3s. 6d. did formerly, the farmer will not  
 “ be able to cultivate the land better, nor the landholder to live  
 “ better.

And on the subject of free importation of corn, he says, it would very little affect the farmers of Great Britain. It may be proper now to examine how far Dr Smith's principles are well founded, and what conclusions we may warrantably draw from them.

“ In a society of naked savages (if such a society ever existed) who lived not on hunting and fishing, but subsisted entirely on corn, the price of corn would be an accurate standard of value. But men are hunters and fishers, and generally shepherds, before they become farmers. In no nation, at distant times, or from century to century, is corn considered as the only necessary of life; milk, vegetables, and butcher meat, are also parts of man's subsistence—and a certain quantity of cloathing, and some little accommodation in regard to lodging and household furniture, are considered as necessary to a common labourer in most countries. The proportion of corn to the whole articles of food (not to say the whole necessaries of life, or what are reckoned such) is very different in different places of Britain at present. In some places in the Highlands of Scotland, half a boll or 70 lb. ayerdupoise of oatmeal is the yearly allowance to every person in a family. In the city of London the proportion of corn to butcher meat is not one half of what it is in many  
 of

of the farming counties of Great Britain. Since the introduction of the new husbandry, scarcely one half of our arable lands are sown with any kind of corn—the other half is employed in feeding cattle, who are now fed with very little corn. Hence no comparison can be made between the former and the present real price of butcher meat; hence also the price and value of corn is as much regulated by those of butcher meat, potatoes and other vegetables, as these are regulated by the price of corn. Nay the price of corn, from century to century, is in some measure regulated by good or bad seasons, the raging of war or continuance of peace, which are very different in different centuries. Nor should it pass unnoticed, that though the depreciating of the coin of any country would not now occasion any alteration in the real or in the money price of corn, yet in former ages the degraded coin did not fall to its real insignificance, nor did labour receive the same real recompence for a very long time after the coin was depreciated. What would now be known in a single day was not then so easily detected; and even when it was known, men were so much attached to their rulers, or afraid of offending them, that they valued a piece of degraded coin at more than its real weight of gold or silver. This I think had a considerable effect on both the real and money price of corn in Britain, from the middle of the 14th to the middle of the 16th century.”

The conclusion, which a man attached to no system would draw from those reasonings is that, in times of peace and of moderate seasons, the price of all those articles which men will have, and which they reckon necessaries of life, and even of those which are only conveniences, which the labourer can purchase by his industry, and not the price of corn singly, give us a more accurate measure of value than we can obtain from the price of any one commodity, and that in ages when the seasons have been unusually bad, or wars prevailed, or coin was frequently depreciated, we can draw no general conclusion from the price of any one commodity, such as corn. I must add, that in an age of luxury, and in a rich commercial nation where the value of corn consumed is constantly bearing a smaller proportion to the general consumpt of the nation, the price of corn can never have the effects ascribed to it by Dr Smith, though it certainly will have some effect in regulating the price of these articles, as they in their turn will have an effect in regulating the price of corn.

Thus it appears to me, that Dr Smith's arguments are carried farther than his principles will admit, and that his substitution of corn as nearly equivalent to labour is not well founded. But I shall now, for the sake of argument, suppose them

be well founded, and that the bounty has no effect on the value of corn, but only on the value of gold and silver; still I assert, that we ought to continue the bounty, for the sake of preserving the value of gold and silver from fluctuating. We have about 240,000,000*l.* of national debt; this can only be discharged by the payment of 5,000,000 troy pounds of gold, or 75,000,000 pounds of silver—the yearly interest of this is nearly 200,000 pounds of gold, and 3,000,000 pounds of silver. Dr Smith supposes if the corn trade were free, that the price of corn would fall to 28*s.* instead of 44*s.* per quarter; and supposing his conclusions to be just, that every other article rose and fell with the price of corn, it is demonstrable, that we should find it as difficult to pay off 380,000,000 sterling money, or 7,800,000*lb.* of gold, or 115,000,000 of troy pounds of silver, as to pay off our present national debt; and that the interest of that debt, which is about 9,000,000*l.* sterling, would be nearly as high a tax on the nation, as the whole of our present taxes are to the nation. According to Dr Smith's principles, the British farmer would not be affected by the fall of the money price of corn; neither should the manufacturer by the same reasoning be hurt by the rise of that price. Let it not be answered, that if the money price of provisions were reduced, we should gain greatly by the balance of our foreign commerce. I have no great faith in that balance, which was not quite a million sterling last year, although it was *three* millions thirty years ago. In the course of this century, Britain has no doubt gained much by her commerce, but she has lost it again in expensive wars;—and the only effect of the balance of trade has been to send our manufactures to the continent to carry on our expensive continental wars, and to get the value of these manufactures added to our national debt. The stockholders possess all the capitals acquired by that balance, and the nation at large pays the interest of it—but without continental wars we could not have had that balance. No nation would have been safe to trade with us, if we had not been engaged in preserving the balance, not of *trade*, but of *power*, among the nations of Europe.

If Dr Smith's arguments were conclusive, we must get five millions more yearly of the balance of trade in our favour before we can pay the interest of our debts, though the capital were not redeemed. In the unfortunate American war we allowed nearly 200*l.* of stock for 100*l.* of money advanced to government; but if Dr Smith's reasoning be just, and if corn would fall to 28*s.* for the quarter of wheat, by laying open the corn trade, our national creditors would gain above 100*l.* more upon that 200*l.* Our minister has given us a prospect of repaying that debt; and it would be very unadvisable, by laying open the <sup>corn</sup>

corn trade, to raise the value of gold and silver, when we owed so much to our national creditors.

But I do not deny altogether, though I would limit Dr Smith's principles; and therefore I add, that as the price of corn has a considerable effect on the value of money, we ought, in justice to the nation and its creditors, to keep the price of corn as nearly as possible at 44*s.* or 45*s.* the average price of corn, when we funded the greatest part of our national debt.

Another argument which Dr Smith adduces against a bounty is, that manufacturers do most work in times of plenty;—this argument turns upon a matter of fact—and here the Doctor quotes Mr Messiaie (vol. 1. book 1. ch. 8. p. 103) an eminent French writer, who mentions that three manufacturers in Rouen, one of woollen cloth, one of linen, and one of silk, did not, either in the quantity or value of their work, come up to that amount in times of dearth, which they did in years of plenty. And he informs us himself, that the manufacture of linen in Scotland, and that of coarse woollens in the West Ridings of Yorkshire, both declined in 1740, a year of great scarcity, but that in 1756, another year of scarcity, the Scotch manufactures made rapid advances, and the English declined. Now concerning this point I would observe, that occupations, such as those of quarriers or carpenters, and manufactures which require great bodily strength, cannot prosper, when a man is ill clothed or poorly fed; that manufactures which cannot be carried on in intense frosts, must suffer by inclement as well as by unfruitful seasons; that in absolute governments, where corn is sold at a low price to the poor in times of dearth, one can judge nothing from the quantity of goods manufactured. But on the other hand I assert that the greater part of manufactures are carried on by the division of labour, rather than by bodily strength, and that in these, at any rate in free nations, greatest exertions are made in times of dearth. We are not told, whether the seasons were inclement, as well as unfruitful in France, when the three manufacturers in Rouen declined, whether the manufacturers got any corn in donations, or at low prices—or whether they had recourse to another employment by which they could earn a better subsistence. But in regard to the instances quoted in Britain, we know that the frost was extremely intense in 1740, that fuel is extremely scarce in the linen manufacturing counties of Scotland, and that the woollen manufactures in Yorkshire which are carried on in the manufacturing towns, or rather villages, must have suffered by the severe frosts.

We find that in 1756 the Scotch manufactures made rapid progress, owing to the dearth of provisions; and we may suppose that the want of demand, owing to the war in America, was the



the cause of the decline of the English manufactures, which did not flourish till 1766.

To put this matter beyond all dispute, we unfortunately can oppose the misfortunes and exertions of a whole nation to Dr. Smith's opinion, which he has doubtless espoused too hastily. The calamitous seasons of 1782 and 1783 raised the price of oatmeal to above 40s. the sack, or two Scotch bolls; and a famine would have ensued, if there had been as little trade in Scotland, as there was a century ago. What was the consequence?—a most astonishing exertion among the manufacturers; and although the price was extremely low, owing to the great quantity made up, yet a sum probably exceeding 500,000l. each of these years, or 1,000,000l. sterling in whole, was raised from the Scotch manufactures, more than had usually been received from that country in any two preceeding years. In the county of Aberdeen, where the author resides, the number of stockings manufactured was almost incredible; and the merchants who exported them were obliged to give twenty months credit to the Dutch purchasers, from the uncommon quantities which were poured into the market. Here the experience of a whole nation is certainly preferable to the few instances, mentioned by Dr. Smith, and is decisive on this point, that men will make great exertions, when impelled by necessity. Virgil, no incompetent judge, was of this opinion long ago.

*' Omnia vincit labor*

*Improbis et duris in rebus urgens egestas.'*

I would next take notice of Dr. Smith's great argument for the free importation of corn. "If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, it is better to buy it of that country with some part of the produce of our own. It is the maxim of every prudent master of a family never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy. The taylor does not make his own shoes, but buys them of the shoemaker; the shoemaker does not make his own clothes, but employs a taylor."

The obvious answer to this argument is—We cannot depend upon being constantly supplied by a foreign country, which can only send us its superabundant grain; and Dr. Smith's illustration may be answered by another illustration—"I live in the country, and must employ a taylor and shoemaker. Two such persons live in my neighbourhood, and they owe me some money; yet I could often get both my clothes and shoes cheaper from the tradesmen of a large market town, which is at a considerable distance. There however I ly under some disadvantages from the distance, and for the want of

"a regular carrier, who cannot travel in stormy weather, and especially as the roads are frequently impassable. But what is worse than all these, when there happens to be a general mourning, the taylor will not make me a coat, or if he does, he charges double price, and the shoemaker also prefers his townsmen, when there is a great demand for shoes. I must therefore in general employ my country tradesmen, to whom I have lent some money, and who are always willing to serve me; and if at any time they are not able, I get a suit of clothes, or a pair of shoes, made in the city.

Thus all Dr. Smith's principal arguments, for I need not enter upon a minute detail of inferior matters, may be easily answered; and as a writer of great perspicacity has observed, our veneration for great names should not procure respect even to their crudities.—But I can add still farther that Dr. Smith has made some concessions in other parts of his work, sufficient to justify all the corn laws, for which I would be an advocate; for the imposing of prohibitory duties on importation, which Dr. Smith has attacked with success, no man can defend upon any principle of political economy, except when the price of corn is so very low, that little, if any, would be imported.

The concessions which Dr. Smith makes are the following.—The first is in book 4th, chap. 4. p. 48 of 2d. vol.—"Of all the encouragements to exportation, what are called drawbacks seem to be most reasonable. To allow the merchant to draw back upon exportation, either the whole or a part of the inland duty, imposed upon domestic industry cannot be hurtful to that balance which naturally establishes itself among all the different employments of society, but tends only to hinder it from being overturned by the duty.

Another concession of Dr. Smith's is in book 4th, chap. II. vol. 2. p. 48, where he says—"There seem however to be two cases in which it will be generally advantageous to lay some burden upon foreign, for the encouragement of domestic industry. The first is, when some particular sort of industry is necessary for the defence of the country. As the defence of Great Britain depends much upon its sailors and shipping, and as defence is of more importance than opulence, the act of navigation is the wisest of the commercial regulations of England. The second case in which it will be generally advantageous, to lay some burden upon foreign, for the encouragement of domestic industry, is, when some tax is imposed upon the produce of the latter. In this case it is reasonable that an equal tax should be laid upon the former.

Now I beg to remind the reader, that the bounty upon exportation is in truth only a drawback of part of an inland tax, viz. the land tax, which is imposed upon the produce of the land—

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that



that the duties on exportation are only an equivalent to the British taxes (particularly the land tax, poors rate, and that heavy tax in England, the tythe) which the Americans ought in reason to pay before their corn is imported into Britain—also that as a man may be famished as well as killed outright, agriculture is as necessary for the defence of Britain, as our ships and sailors are necessary for that purpose. If only a tenth part of our corn was imported yearly, what a numerous navy would we need to escort our ships, loaded with such bulky goods, and how much would it be in the power of our enemies to distress us for want of provisions? How easily does a general defeat his enemy, or force him to retire, if he has cut off his supplies!—In every view, Dr. Smith's concessions would grant every regulation that I have proposed, or would ask.

On the whole, I think that well regulated corn laws may be justified by the general arguments which I have adduced—that Dr. Smith's principles do not warrant the conclusions he has drawn, and to the extent to which he has carried them—but that though the price of corn absolutely determined the value of labour, yet as Britain owes a certain quantity of gold and silver to the national creditors, it would be highly improper till that debt be paid off, to increase the value of the precious metals, by lowering the price of corn—that Dr. Smith has been too hasty in concluding that manufacturers in general do most work in plentiful seasons—and that by admitting a drawback of inland taxes when goods are exported, and an equivalent to these taxes on importation, as also the laying a burden upon foreign to encourage any sort of industry necessary to the defence of a country, he admits all that I should ask for encouraging agriculture upon which not only the defence, but the existence of the nation, may depend. The conclusion is, that corn laws, properly regulated, are expedient for Britain.

#### IV. *The Outlines of a New Corn Bill.*

**H**AVING now laid down the principles by which all corn laws ought to be regulated, having applied these principles to the examination of the late corn act, and having shewn that corn laws properly regulated are necessary, and that the corn trade ought to be subject to certain restrictions—that I may not be thought to pass a general censure on former acts of Parliament, or to catch at particular errors with the remedies of these incidentally mentioned, but without producing a specimen of the proposed emendations, regularly arranged and forming one entire and connected system, I shall conclude this review of the corn act with the outlines of a bill, which any member of Parliament may adopt, either in whole or in part,

as he may think it merits his patronage. This, however, I am so far from thinking a perfect work, that I only give it as a specimen, of the alterations which I propose, sufficiently intelligible to every person. In this specimen I shall express myself in the plainest language, that my errors may be more easily detected; and while I produce different tables (which I have constructed with some care) of the bounties to be granted, duties to be imposed, and regulations to be enacted, I shall inclose in crotchets [ ] my reason for every step as I go along, and I shall point out the state of the country, or the condition, character, and circumstances, both of the farmers and manufacturers, at the time that these bounties are given, duties imposed, or regulations established. The reader may either peruse what is contained within these crotchets, or after being apprized of their contents he may pass over them, if he pleases. The perusal of the whole, however, will not detain him long, and will enable those readers who have not been accustomed to close investigation, or who, owing to some defect in my arrangements, or obscurity in my language, have not followed me in some of my reasonings, to judge whether my views of this subject be just, or extensive.

#### *Outlines of a Bill to explain and amend the Corn Act of 1791.*

“ Whereas an act passed in the 31st year of his present Majesty, entitled—an act for regulating the importation and exportation of corn, and the payment of the duty on foreign corn imported, and British corn exported—and whereas in this act, which was designed to include all the former laws fit to be retained, and to contain several new regulations, which were proper to be added, some errors were unavoidably committed; therefore be it enacted, by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice, consent, and authority of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, that the following alterations and amendments be substituted in place of those parts of the said act, which is hereby declared to be repealed, so far as it contradicts any part of the regulations of this act.

“ Whereas the granting of the same bounty on the same kind of corn in all cases, where the prices are mentioned in the table marked A, in the said act of the 31st of his present Majesty, is found not to be so much for the general interests of his Majesty's subjects, nor so conducive to keeping the prices of corn from fluctuating, as it would be, if the said bounty were made gradual and progressive; therefore it is enacted, that instead of the said table marked A, the following table also marked A shall be adopted, and the bounties following are hereby granted accordingly, and all importation of corn prohibited, while under the prices in said table.

Vide table A.

[In this table the bounty is payable, when the price of wheat is under 45s. instead of 44s.— My reasons for this alteration are the following.

First, the medium price of wheat for above 20 years past has been over all England 44s. 8d. which is nearer to 45s. than to 44s. Secondly, as all the bounty that is proposed to be given is only 1s. 6d. till the price fall below 42s. there is some reason to begin the bounty a little sooner than when 5s. are given at once. The same thing may be said of other kinds of grain, where the bounty begins a little earlier.

I have also proposed, that the highest bounty should be 6s. on a quarter of wheat, and proportionally on other kinds of corn. This is a little higher than it is by the former corn acts; but as the price is very low, at which this high bounty is granted, this addition is not unreasonable.

By looking at this table of progressive bounties it will be seen, that the price of wheat, added to the bounty, is greater when the lowest bounty is given, than when the highest bounty is added to the price of wheat. My reason for this gradual diminution is, that I suppose the farmer has a better crop, and exports more corn, as the price falls, and the bounty rises.

I have marked the prices also by the tun, as well as by the quarter, and the bounties as well as the prices; (if this were adopted, corn would soon be sold by weight only, and by the tun, instead of the quarter in England, or boll in Scotland).— The tables, however, are much larger than if I had marked only the prices of corn by the measure only.

As the medium of the bounty payable on rye, barley, beer or bigg, when made into meal, was very nearly the same in all these cases, I have proposed only one rate of bounty for barley meal, beer meal, and rye meal.

If the state of society be here enquired into by the philosopher or legislator, he will find it to be nearly the following. The farmer, with all the aid of the bounty, is not rich, unless there be a foreign demand for his corn; and if there be such a demand, he draws less of the bounty, but has more clear profit. He is not so active as when he has a greater stimulus to industry, and if he had not the bounty, he would suffer much from the low price of provisions—but this bounty, and the price of corn sold to foreigners, occasion a brisk circulation of money. The farmer buys more articles from the manufacturer, and spends more money in social parties than usual. The manufacturer finds provisions so cheap, that he is generally idle one day in the week, and that day he spends in drinking and revelling. The industry of the nation is least at this time—but the population of the country increases, as men are not afraid to marry.

Only

T A B L E A.

When the prices of the different sorts of Corn are under the sums mentioned in this table, importation of any kind of foreign Corn, ground or unground, is prohibited; and the different bounties mentioned in this table are granted on the exportation of British corn, either on the quarter or on the tun, of the Corn so exported.

When sold by the quarter of 17203.36 inches.				When sold by the Averdupoise Tun.							
	S. D.	S. D.	S. D.	S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.			
WHEAT,	{ If under per quarter,	36 —	39 —	42 —	45 —	WHEAT,	{ If under per tun,	9 —	9 15 —	10 10 —	11 5 —
	{ Bounty on the quarter,	6	4 6	3 —	1 6		{ Bounty on wheat or wheatmeal per tun,	1 10 —	1 2 6 —	15 —	—
RYE,	{ If under per quarter,	24 —	26 —	28 —	30 —	RYE,	{ If under per tun,	6 —	6 10 —	7 —	7 10 —
	{ Bounty on the quarter,	3 8	2 9	1 10	11		{ Bounty on rye or ryemeal per tun,	— 18 —	— 13 6 —	— 9 —	—
BARLEY, BEER, BIGG,	{ If under per quarter,	18 —	19 6	21 —	22 6	BARLEY, BEER, BIGG,	{ If under the tun,	5 10 —	6 —	6 10 —	7 —
	{ Bounty on the quarter,	3 —	2 3	1 6	9		{ Bounty on the tun ground or unground	— 18 —	— 13 6 —	— 9 —	—
OATS,	{ If under per quarter,	12 —	13 —	14 —	15 —	OATS,	{ If under per tun,	4 10 —	4 17 6	5 5 —	5 12 6
	{ Bounty on the quarter,	2 4	1 9	1 2	7		{ Bounty on the tun,	— 18 —	— 13 6 —	— 9 —	—
							{ Bounty on oatmeal per tun,	1 10 —	1 2 6	— 15 —	— 7 6

T A B L E B.

When the prices of the different sorts of Corn are not above the sums mentioned in this table, all sorts of Corn, Meal, Flour, and Malt, are allowed to be exported, and all kinds of unground corn, but no kind of ground corn, allowed to be imported, upon payment of the high duties on importation mentioned in this table.

When sold by the Winchester bushel abovementioned.				When sold by the Averdupoise Tun.							
	S. D.	S. D.	S. D.	S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.			
WHEAT,	{ Not above per quarter,	45 —	47 —	49 —	51 —	WHEAT,	{ Not above per tun,	11 5 —	11 15 —	12 5 —	12 15 —
	{ High duty per quarter,	12 —	9 —	6 —	3 —		{ High duty per tun,	3 —	2 5 —	1 10 —	—
RYE, PEASE, BEANS,	{ Not above per quarter,	30 —	31 4	32 8	34 —	RYE, PEASE, BEANS,	{ Not above per tun,	7 10 —	7 16 —	8 3 —	8 10 —
	{ High duty per quarter,	7 4	5 6	3 8	1 10		{ High duty per tun,	1 16 —	1 7 —	— 18 —	—
BARLEY, BEER, BIGG,	{ Not above per quarter,	22 6	23 6	24 6	25 6	BARLEY, BEER, BIGG,	{ Not above per tun,	7 —	7 6 —	7 12 —	7 18 —
	{ High duty per quarter,	6 —	4 6	3 —	1 6		{ High duty per tun,	1 16 —	1 7 —	— 18 —	—
INDIAN CORN, MAIZE,	{ Not above per quarter,	15 —	15 8	16 4	17 —	OATS,	{ Not above per tun,	5 12 6	5 17 6	6 2 6	6 7 6
	{ High duty per quarter,	4 8	3 6	2 4	1 2		{ High duty per tun,	1 16 —	1 7 —	— 18 —	—

T A B L E C.

When the prices of the different sorts of Corn exceed the sums mentioned in this table, exportation of any kind of Corn, Meal, Malt, and Flour, is prohibited; and importation of all sorts of Corn, ground and unground, is allowed upon payment of the low duties mentioned in this table.

When sold by the Winchester bushel abovementioned.				When sold by the Averdupoise Tun.							
	S. D.	S. D.	S. D.	S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.	L. S. D.			
WHEAT,	{ If above per quarter,	51 —	52 —	53 —	54 —	WHEAT,	{ Above per tun,	12 15 —	13 —	13 5 —	13 10 —
	{ Low duty per quarter,	1 6	1 —	— 6	— 1		{ Low duties on the tun,	— 7 6	— 5 —	— 2 6	—
RYE, PEASE, BEANS,	{ If above per quarter,	34 —	34 8	35 4	36 —	RYE, PEASE, BEANS,	{ Low duties on the tun of wheatmeal,	— 9 —	— 6 —	— 3 —	— 6
	{ Low duty per quarter,	— 11	— 8	— 5	— 1		{ Low duties on the tun of flour,	— 12 —	— 8 —	— 4 —	—
BARLEY, BEER, BIGG,	{ If above per quarter,	25 6	26 —	26 6	27 —	BARLEY, BEER, MAIZE	{ Above per tun,	8 10 —	8 13 —	8 17 —	9 —
	{ Low duty per quarter,	— 9	— 6	— 3	— 1		{ Above per tun,	7 18 —	— 8 1	8 3 —	8 5 —
INDIAN CORN, MAIZE,	{ If above per quarter,	17 —	17 4	17 8	18 —	OATS,	{ Above per tun,	6 7 6	— 6 10	6 12 6	6 15 —
	{ Low duty per quarter,	— 7	— 5	— 2	— 1		{ Low duties on rye, pease, beans,	— 4 6	— 3 —	— 1 6	—
							{ beer or bigg and on oats per tun,	— 6 —	— 4 —	— 2 —	— 6
							{ Low duties on meal made of rye,	— 6 —	— 4 —	— 2 —	— 6
							{ pease, beans, barley, beer or bigg,	— 9 —	— 6 —	— 3 —	— 6
							{ Low duties on oatmeal per tun,	— 9 —	— 6 —	— 3 —	— 6

N. B. The duties on Indian Corn or Maize to be regulated by the price of barley.

Only it is supposed, that even population in times of plenty has not advanced so fast, since the introduction of ardent spirits; and this population too often consists of unhealthy children, whose constitutions are hurt before they come into the world, by their parents intemperance. [To return to the proposed act.]

“ The bounties in the table marked A in this act, to be paid  
“ in the manner, and according to the regulations prescribed in  
“ the said 31st year of his present Majesty.

“ And whereas it is for the general good of all classes  
“ of his Majesty's subjects, that when the prices of pro-  
“ visions do not exceed a moderate rate, foreign corn should  
“ not be imported into this kingdom, but upon payment of such  
“ high duties as give a preference to having a constant supply  
“ of provisions raised within this kingdom, and that a reason-  
“ able price and no more should be asked and given for all  
“ sorts of corn, that the farmers who raise, or those who  
“ manufacture provisions, should be at liberty to export them,  
“ when there is no scarcity of corn, and that merchants and  
“ manufacturers, upon paying such high duties, as gradually  
“ fall when the price of provisions becomes dearer, should be  
“ at liberty to import foreign corn; therefore be it enacted by  
“ the authority aforesaid that the table marked B, in the said act  
“ of the 31st of his present Majesty, and the regulations pro-  
“ hibiting exportation of corn in said act be, and they hereby  
“ are repealed, and that instead thereof, the following table also  
“ marked B, should be adopted, and that it shall be lawful to  
“ export corn ground or unground of all kinds, while the prices  
“ do not exceed the sums marked in said table, and also lawful  
“ to import foreign corn unground, upon paying the high  
“ duties mentioned in said table, but that all foreign corn im-  
“ ported, when the prices are below the lowest of the said sums,  
“ and all ground foreign corn when the price is not equal to the  
“ highest of the said sums, shall be forfeited.—Vide table B.

[In this table, the high duties on importation are exactly double of the different bounties, which were proposed to be granted on exportation. To have made them equal to these might to some appear more simple and proper. But I have some doubts whether the British farmer who pays tythe, land tax, and poor rates, should not have a greater preference over the American importer, than a duty equal to the bounty. Yet I think he should only get a preference, not a monopoly, after the prices rise to what are mentioned in this table.

The reason for not permitting any kind of ground corn to be imported is, that the nation is not as yet in want of provisions, and that there is more employment to British sailors, and more work given to our millers, in importing unground than ground corn.

The

The reason for allowing exportation without bounty, and importation upon payment of a duty, at the same time, is to keep the the manufacturer and farmer from hurting each other. No provision in any of our corn laws has been made for this middle state of society in regard to the price of provisions; yet it is only at this time, that the interests of the farmer and manufacturer seem to clash frequently. In times of great plenty, the manufacturer and farmer are good friends, and meet in social parties. In times of great scarcity, both are poor and mutually feel for each other, if they have good sense.—But at this period, the manufacturer wishes to have a free importation, and the farmer would have importation prohibited. Both are in the wrong—the farmer should be at liberty to export, but without a bounty, and the manufacturer allowed to import upon payment of a duty equivalent to the taxes paid by the British farmer.

If we look to the conditions of the different classes of men in moderate seasons, we find that the farmer frequently clears more money now than in the most plentiful years. The manufacturer also is industrious and happy. But as the price of provisions rises, he must increase his industry to procure a competence; and if there were not now another market open to him from importation, he might be confined, by the farmers raising the price, to the mere necessaries of life.

In this state of the country, more fortunes are generally made both by manufactures and farmers than in any other state; and by allowing importation upon these high duties which fall gradually with the rise of provisions, we promote industry in all ranks, which is the great source of national prosperity. The population of the kingdom is as yet pretty uniform, and the farmer's son is apt to leave the plough, and become manufacturer; nor does the mechanic need to send his son to work at the plough. At first when provisions are low, and the bounty withdrawn, the farmer is apt to envy the manufacturer; but at last when the prices rise to be pretty high, the farmer's occupation is envied by the mechanic.

The morals of the people are generally best at this time, when all are employed and industrious. Keeping the general good of society in view, let us pass to the amendments of the corn act.]

“ Farther, whereas the general interests of all classes of men in this kingdom require, that when corn becomes scarce in calamitous seasons, and when no corn laws can produce a sufficiency of corn raised in Great Britain, and when it becomes necessary to import foreign grain for supplying his Majesty's subjects, be it therefore enacted, that when the price of corn is above the sums mentioned in the table marked C, no British corn ground or unground shall be allowed to be ex-  
“ ported

“ ported out of this kingdom, on pain of forfeiting the ship and cargo, and paying treble the value of the corn to the King, and all kinds of foreign corn, ground or unground, shall be allowed to be imported, upon payment of the different low duties mentioned in the table.”—Vide Table C.

[In drawing up the above table the duty on ground corn, is made as much more than equal to the same quantity of unground corn, in the two first lines of prices, as would compensate for the loss of not having it ground in Britain. In the last line the duty is merely nominal, because it is unreasonable in the highest degree to charge a duty when the price of corn is exorbitant.

In the whole of this table, ground corn of any kind may be imported, because provisions are now supposed to be both dear and scarce. In the former table, no ground corn was allowed to be imported because the nation was not straitened for provisions, and because the allowing it to be imported unground was only to keep the farmer and manufacturer from hurting each other. But in this table, all kinds are allowed to be imported. In the late corn act, both high and low duties are in the same table, and all kinds of ground corn except wheatmeal, flour and oatmeal are prohibited. But there ought undoubtedly to be two tables, one for high and one for low duties, and no kind of ground corn should be imported while the high duties prevail, nor any kind of ground corn should be prohibited when the low duties take place, and when provisions are so scarce and dear, that all kinds of meal should be imported.

By comparing these three tables together it will be found, that I have allowed when the prices are low, a bounty on every difference of 3s. in the price of a quarter of wheat; when the prices are higher, I propose a high duty decreasing on every difference of 2s. in a quarter of wheat: But when provisions become very high, I propose a high duty decreasing on every difference of 1s. in the price of a quarter of wheat. My reason is the following. In times of plenty, a leap of 3s. on the quarter, does not affect the state of society more than an alteration of 2s. does, when the prices are high, though there be no scarcity. Nor does a rise of 3s. in times of plenty and cheapness, or of 2s. in times of industry and competency, affect a poor manufacturer more sensibly than an alteration of a single shilling does in times of scarcity, or when provisions are so dear, that he must labour incessantly to procure the necessaries of life.

I do not say after all, that these tables, though constructed with considerable care and attention, will answer in every case, with the rise or fall of the value of money—No tables can do so; but I humbly apprehend that no alteration, or at least no great alte-

alteration, need be made for many years. The paying of our national debt would in time render corn laws less necessary; and if, in the progress of society, of commerce, and of luxury, these prices should be found lower than the average prices, in cheap, moderate, and unfruitful seasons, an alteration in the columns of prices could easily be made, while all the other columns remained, or at least showed the proportion by which future tables may be easily constructed.

Perhaps some may be displeas'd, that in marking these prices, I have in the case of rye, barley, and oats, not only mentioned these prices in shillings, but even in pence, which may be thought too minute in a general law. I answer, first; this will occasion no trouble to any person; for the average prices of all kinds of corn are found to be in pence as well as in shillings. I answer secondly, that whatever proportion is adopted in any one case between the different kinds of grain, justice requires that the same proportion should be adopted in every case. By not attending to this in the late corn act, the proportion of oats to wheat is, in the table for granting bounties, as 14 to 44, and in the table which fixes the high duty on importation as 17 to 50; consequently when corn is dear, the Scotch manufacturer eats oatmeal  $\frac{1}{4}$  part or 7 per cent dearer than the English manufacturer eats wheatmeal; and this at a time, when the corn is imported from foreign countries. Now this could have been avoided, by setting down both in pence and shillings the exact proportions of oats to wheat in the table for importation, which had been fixed in the table for exportation. Injustice should never be done to save a little trouble; but in this case no trouble is given—for it is as easy to see in the average prices in the Gazette, that 17s. 3d. is below 17s. 4d. as that it is above 17s.; and justice, as well as avarice, confirms the maxim of a statesman of the last century, "Take care of the pence, the pounds will take care of themselves."

The state of society, which is always sensibly affected by the price of provisions, in times of dearth and scarcity nearly the following. The manufacturer is apt to be riotous, and mobbing is not unfrequent. If it succeed, the corn merchant's granaries are quickly emptied; and his grain is sold at low prices fixed by the leaders of the mob. If it do not succeed, grumblings and discontents prevail among the manufacturers, who are not soon persuaded that there is a scarcity, but insist that provisions are hoarded up by covetous and hard hearted men. By degrees, however, that delusion vanishes, and the manufacturer, convinced that there is a scarcity, labours very hard to maintain himself and his family, if he have a family; but population is at a stand, and poor children are sickly. Diseases now prevail,  
often

often more from the bad quality, than from the scarcity of provisions in cities and manufacturing towns. While in the country, the farmer is as industrious as the manufacturer, only not so apt to be riotous, but sooner despondent, because he sees at once there is a scarcity. Many striking instances of generosity are now shown by the opulent landholders, and merchants of a humane and generous nation; examples of despondency among poor, but high spirited men, too often occur; and let it be remembered, that the benevolence of individuals can do much less good, than can be effected by wise laws. It was in this state of society that I insisted, that when the highest prices of corn take place, no duty but a mere nominal one should be imposed on importation. The duty of 1s. upon the cwt. of flour imposed by the late corn act, would, when wheat is above 54s. do more hurt to poor labourers, manufacturers, and mechanics, than could be compensated by all the humanity of a Howard or a Percy, or by all the generous individuals of a nation, long and justly celebrated for benevolence.

I shall not carry the amendments of the late corn bill, further in the form of an act—enough has been given by way of specimen. A few hints shall suffice for the rest.

Let the King and Council be permitted to allow exportation to Ireland, and to our factories and colonies; I see no danger of this power being abused. Let Irish corn, and the corn of our colonies, pay a less duty, suppose one fourth part less upon importation. Let foreign corn be imported under the joint custody of the King, the county, and the importer, or proprietor. Let every kind of corn for the purpose of feed-corn be circulated freely through the kingdom. Only if it be foreign corn, let the same indulgence, in regard to the duty imposed, be given to foreign feed corn, as what is granted to Irish corn imported. Let the prices of corn be taken not from the corn dealers books, nor let their secrets be open to every inspector of corn returns, or country justice of the peace. But let an equal number of landholders and manufacturers, possessing property, renting farms, or carrying on manufactures to a certain extent, be convened as a jury, before the Mayor or Sheriff, with power to interrogate corn dealers and others, if they choose to call for any evidence; and if, from their own knowledge of the prices, they judge this unnecessary, let them after being sworn give an account of the price of provisions weekly to the mayor or sheriff. In London, the prices at the corn exchange will naturally be adopted by the lord mayor, and the jury whom he shall convene. But let this be *their act*; and let one law be over all the kingdom. To prevent improper or false returns of the prices, let this jury be chosen not by the mayor or sheriff, if there



there be any complaints, but let the quarter sessions of the county, and common council of the town choose each of them a certain number of persons, suppose 6 each; and let the mayor or sheriff choose them if they neglect to do so. Thus the prices of grain will be taken by those who are most concerned. Let all returns be made to the board of trade, or to the privy council, who should have cognizance of all matters connected with this act, and should publish the accounts in the Gazette.

If the division of the kingdom into districts is insisted on, let the act of the 15th of Charles II. chapter 7th, which prohibits corn merchants to buy corn to sell again, when the prices are high, be restored to its former strength. Indeed I am not satisfied that it should have been abrogated at all; nor do I see any propriety in dividing the kingdom into districts. I do not see so great harm, if the kingdom is divided into very large districts, in allowing importation upon receiving the duties payable in that district; only perhaps, the natural divisions of the east, south, and west coasts, and the midland counties in England, and the east and west coasts of Scotland, would form the most proper districts, and be only 6 in number. This would prevent speculations from the districts being so large. After all, the division into districts loads the corn laws with a number of unnecessary regulations; and wants that simplicity which is the great recommendation of public laws.

When the price of corn amounts to that at which high duties are payable, let the quantity of corn in the island be taken by actual survey, or by reports from the different counties. This could be done more easily than would at first be supposed; and we would not need to refuse corn to other nations, when we had any to spare them.

On the whole, instead of a complicated act of eighty four folio pages, either an amended act might be drawn up in 7 or 8 pages, or a new act in 10 or 12 pages, expressed in plain language, having one object in view from beginning to end, and regulated by one principle, the general good of society.

Let me recommend it both to landholders and manufacturers, to consider that their interests are the same. Let our legislators also remember this; and let them bend their minds not to acquire places, or to oppose ministers, but to study the principles of legislation and of political oeconomy.