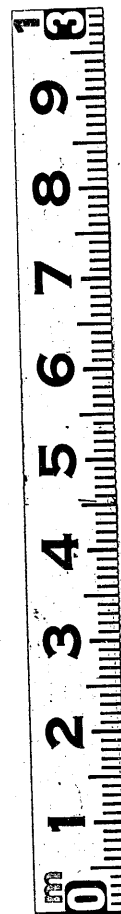


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A PROPOSAL
FOR
SUPPLYING LONDON WITH BREAD,
AT AN UNIFORM PRICE,
FROM ONE YEAR TO ANOTHER,
ACCORDING TO
AN ANNUAL ASSIZE,

By a Plan that may be applied to every Corporation in the Kingdom; would give Encouragement to Agriculture, and would prevent an extravagant Rise of Prices in case of future scanty Harvests.

LONDON;

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1798.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author wishes the present discourse to be considered as a supplement to the Essay lately published by him, entitled, "The Essential Principles of the Wealth of Nations, illustrated in opposition to some false doctrines of Dr. Adam Smith, and others." That Essay points to the direct means of promoting *the Wealth and Strength of the Nation*; and this relates to *the Contentment of the people*.

A PROPOSAL

A PROPOSAL

FOR

SUPPLYING LONDON WITH BREAD,

AT AN UNIFORM PRICE, &c.

A NATION enjoying the blessing of a wise Government, and possessing an extensive and fertile territory, will consider the cultivation of its lands, as the best source of its wealth and power. Were this source to be adequate to the general wants, and always equal in point of abundance, general comfort would be the concomitant of that abundance. But as the source flows irregularly, giving at one season a superabundance, and at another not affording a sufficiency, while the wants of a Nation remain nearly the same at all times, prudent policy would dictate, that the super-abundance of one season should be collected and preserved for supplying the deficiency of another. In other words the foresight of Government ought to be systematically directed, to prevent the instability of the prices of the chief article of the necessities of life, by having always in store, an ample supply of so essential a means of subsistence.

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Providence has thought fit to subject mankind to the vicissitudes of heat and cold, and likewise to the vicissitudes of plentiful and scanty harvests. What should we think of the wisdom of a people, who made no provision against the extremes of heat and cold. If the policy of such a people would meet with censure, the same censure will most justly apply to a people, who make no provision against the extremes of plenty and want, in respect to necessary articles of subsistence. Want of such articles is to a human being no less grievous, no less afflicting, than the want of genial warmth; for it makes no difference to a man, whether he be starved with hunger, or starved with cold. The happy and well governed Country is that, where the people in general are in security of not suffering by either. In this respect, to our reproach, Great Britain is not yet entitled to be called that Happy Country; for though by means of houses, of fires, woollens, furs, &c. we have made provision against suffering by the extreme of cold, we still continue without a system to secure us against suffering by a scanty harvest.

The establishing of such a system, would be of great importance to the prosperity of Great Britain and Ireland, as it would be the means of removing from the mass of the people of both Islands, much real cause of murmuring, and of substituting in their place, satisfaction and con-

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contentment. Every one will readily acknowledge, that a good workman would never have a satisfied mind, if he were to be paid 15s. wages in one week, and only 12s. in another, never knowing when he was to receive full, and when scanty payment. But it would not alter the vexatious situation to such a workman, were his wages to continue uniformly the same, if by the instability of prices in the markets, he found he could not purchase with them so much by a fourth or a fifth in one week, as he might have purchased with them in another.

Since we boast of having large warehouses for tobacco, for sugar, for tea, and other articles of merchandize, why should we not have warehouses for the article of merchandize, of the greatest intrinsic value. We are told "that in January
" 1796, in consequence of an inundation of the
" Clyde, the damage sustained at Port Glasgow
" in sugar, amounted to 30,000l. besides the loss
" in tobacco, which was very great." There is no mention of any loss sustained there in corn, probably because no corn was there stored up, from the impolicy of not deeming it an article worthy of being stored up. Port Glasgow, in that respect, is only a miniature of London; for were the stores of tobacco, of sugar, and of tea warehoused in the Capital to be known, and compared with the stores of corn, the former would probably be found to be twenty times
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greater than the latter. Some shadow of reason indeed may seemingly be alledged for this disproportion; for it may be said that corn being a home commodity, the storing of it is trusted to the farmers, who produce it. This apology would have some weight, were the people of London, or of any other great mercantile city, to know exactly where the stores of corn were to be found, and how much was stored. But as these two most essential points have hitherto been left in obscurity, and suffered to remain unknown, the practice of London in regard to the supply of the inhabitants appears to be altogether unsystematical, and no way to correspond to the intelligence that might be expected, from those who direct the affairs of this great Capital.

According to the present precarious supply of the London corn market, it would appear as if nature sent us fifty two harvests in one year, continually varying in point of abundance, and thereby continually subjecting the inhabitants to a variation of prices. But nature sends us only one harvest of grain in one year; and it is from our present want of system that the abundance or scantiness of the harvest is left wholly uncertain, whence follows the instability of supply and of price, during the whole twelve months, so disgraceful to the police of the Metropolis.

In Scotland, where the price of grain has long been used as a standard of regulation for a variety of

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of payments, there exists a very judicious institution, that fixes that price in proportion to the abundance or scantiness of the crop. In the month of March of each year a number of landowners, farmers, and corn-dealers, assemble in each county, by order of the Sheriff, and upon considering the state of the preceding harvest, declare the rate of the prices of the different grains, which rate serves as a legal standard of commutation for that year. This institution has the good effect of keeping the markets nearly uniform, during the whole year; but as some harvests may be abundant, and others scanty, it cannot operate to keep the markets nearly uniform for a succession of years. That most desirable object, the establishment of Granaries, under proper regulations, would alone accomplish, by creating a demand in seasons of great abundance, and by furnishing a supply in times of scarcity. At present, by our improvident regulations, and general want of system, in regard to the corn laws, an abundant harvest is a thing to be dreaded. It is certainly not a proof of a wise policy, to turn the blessing of Providence into a curse; yet such is professedly the effect of our police, in respect to the most necessary article of subsistence. Some writers on Agriculture have lately declared, that three successive plentiful crops would ruin the farmers; and a rich proprietor of Scotland, I remember said to me, several years ago, "This

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" year's

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“ year’s harvest is so plentiful, and corn is so
“ cheap, that I shall lose, in my rents, 200l.”

Now what is all the industry of the farmer naturally directed to, but to have as plentiful a crop as possible? Where is the farmer that would not rather reap three quarters of wheat from an acre, than two quarters? But in consequence of our present improvident and absurd policy, in regard to corn, the farmer acts unwisely in aiming at a plentiful crop. In direct contradiction to all our essays and treatises, for adding to the fertility of the soil, and for rendering the seed more prolific, we by our want of system, in fact and reality, tell the farmer, “ You throw away
“ your labour in endeavouring to procure an
“ abundant crop; you will not thereby render your-
“ self any richer; you will only have additional
“ trouble, in reaping, threshing, winnowing,
“ and carrying to market, and your three
“ quarters of wheat will bring you no more mo-
“ ney, than if you had raised but two quarters.”

Thus our present false system counteracts, in the most direct manner, the agricultural industry of the Kingdom. While such a false policy is adhered to, it is vain to expect that agriculture can be brought to such a flourishing state, as it might otherwise be raised to. Can any thing be a greater discouragement to the farmer to produce plenty, than to find that the plenty he produces is hurtful to himself, nay, is even hurtful to the nation,
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by being the source of idleness to labourers and manufacturers.

The remedy for this complicated mischief ought to be most carefully, and most speedily sought for by a wise Legislature; and the establishment of granaries will be found to afford that remedy, for many years to come. For supposing prudent and good policy required, that one whole year’s supply should be stored, and that the harvests for a series of years, were as abundant as it was in the year 1750, the year of greatest exportation, the granaries would create a demand for the whole surplus of each harvest for eight years, as the greatest exportation has been computed not to exceed one eighth of the yearly consumption. General Smith’s proposal of obviating a future scarcity, by storing a sufficient supply of foreign corn, will, I doubt not, upon a slight reflection, be reprobated by himself, as well as by every other lover of his Country.

The granaries ought to be filled by the surpluses of our own harvests, consequently the storing them with a whole year’s supply would, for eight years at least, give as great encouragement to the farmers as they ever received from the greatest exportation of one year. The attention of Government ought to be directed to create those surpluses, which unhappily our lands do not at present yield, though susceptible of producing them to a much greater extent than those

abovementioned, were agriculture to receive those Parliamentary encouragements to which it is so justly entitled.

In order that Parliamentary Encouragement should be founded justly, it ought to be founded on a minute and accurate knowledge of the number of acres, annually sown with grain, in each parish, over the whole Kingdom. All judicious decision and regulation, naturally depend upon true and detailed information; a principle very properly, on this very subject, applied by Mr. Pitt, who in the parliamentary debates, on the late scarcity, most judiciously observed, "*That if every man knew what stock of grain was in the Kingdom, the price of wheat would not have risen to such a pitch.*" Most certainly not. And in order to know what stock of grain is in the Kingdom, the first step is to know what is the number of acres annually sown with grain over the Kingdom. In England and Wales the law of tythes supposes this knowlege familiar to the Clergy. In the hop counties the produce of hops is annually ascertained without any trouble or inconvenience; and in like manner the number of acres annually sown with grain might be ascertained. The wise corn law of Hiero, King of Sicily, the beloved Monarch of the Sicilians, is mentioned with approbation by Cicero, in his accusation of Verres; and by that law the number of husbandmen in that island was annually registered by the Magistrates. "Lege Hiero-
" nica,"

" nica," he says, " numerus aratorum quotannis apud magistratus publice subscribitur."* Several of the reverend authors of the Reports in the

* On their protection depended the prosperity of the state. Those who have treated of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire have not given sufficient attention to the consequences of the oppression of the husbandmen in the different Provinces. There needed only a succession of Verreses to have ruined the most powerful Empire, and Verres had many successors. A specimen of his despotic tyranny Cicero gives us in the following passage, which I have translated.

Quot acceperit Aratores agri Leontini Verres? Octoginta tres. Quot anno tertio profiteantur? Triginta duo. Unum et quinquaginta Aratores ita video dejectos, et his ne vicarii quidem successerint. Quot Aratores adveniente te fuerunt agri Matucensis? Videmus ex literis publicis centum et octoginta unus. Quid anno tertio? Centum et unus. Octoginta Aratores unus ager istius injuria desiderat; atque adeo nostra respublica, (quoniam illa Populi Romani vectigalia sunt,) hunc tot patrum familiarium numerum desiderat et reposcit. Ager Herbitensis primo anno habuit Aratores ducentos quinquaginta sep-

How many husbandmen of the district of Leontum, did Verres receive? 83. How many in his third year were registered? 32. I thus find 51 husbandmen ruined; and so completely, that the farms they had deserted were left without occupiers. How many were the husbandmen of the Matucensian district upon your arrival in your province? We see by the Public Register they were 181. How was it in the third year? 101. Thus a single district by this man's oppression has to lament the loss of 80 husbandmen; and thereby our Commonwealth (since all these farmers are tributaries of the Roman people) has lost;
tem;

the Statistical Account of Scotland have enumerated in tables, the number of acres sown in their parishes, and the average produce of those acres, which gives a proof of the great practicability of such an enumeration over the whole Kingdom. Upon such a basis as this all legislative proceedings for securing an ample supply of corn, or for preventing a scarcity of it, ought to be founded.

tem; tertio centum viginti. Hinc centum triginta septem patres familias extorres profugerunt. Argyrensis ager, quorum hominum, quam honestorum, quam locupletum! ducentos quinquaginta Aratores habuit primo anno præturae. Quid tertio anno? Octoginta, quemadmodum Legatos Argyrenses recitare ex publicis literis audistis. Proh Dii immortales! Si ex provincia tota centum septuaginta eiecisses possessue severis iudicibus salvus esse? Unus ager Argyrensis centum septuaginta Aratoribus inanior quam sit, vos conjecturam totius provinciae non facietis.

and has to demand of this man such a number of families. The Herbitensian district had in the first year 257 husbandmen; in the third year 120. Hence 137 families, to fly from this man's tyranny, have abandoned their native soil. The Argyrensiæ district in the first year of thy Prætorship had 250 husbandmen; what men! how respectable! how opulent! How was it in the third year? 80, as ye have heard the Argyrensiæ deputies read from the Public Registers. Oh immortals! if from the whole province you had expelled 170, can you expect to be acquitted by impartial judges. Since the single Argyrensiæ district has fewer husbandmen by 170, will ye not ye judges from thence form a conjecture of the oppression of the whole Province?

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On this point, an actual and accurate survey is just as requisite as it would be in forming a correct map of a Country.

Supposing the number of acres sown in any one year, to have yielded a full supply for that year, but no surplus, and that Government wished to have a surplus equal to that of the year of greatest exportation, or equal to one eighth of the whole, the most natural way to obtain this surplus, is to induce the farmers to increase the number of acres sown with corn, one eighth. Now unless the number of sown acres of any preceding year be known, the desired augmentation of sown acres in a subsequent year cannot be ascertained, which is a reason for the number of sown acres being particularly known every year.

If an additional eighth be added to the number of sown acres, the consequence to be presumed is that the ensuing crop will be one eighth more abundant, which eighth being stored up in the granaries, will leave the remainder at the same market price as though no additional eighth had been produced, and there had been no granaries to make a demand for that eighth. Thus in a succession of eight harvests, a full supply of corn of our own growth, for a whole year, may be placed in the granaries, and in the mean while the consumption of every year may not in the smallest degree be abridged. Should a very plentiful harvest produce a surplus of one fourth, instead of a surplus

surplus of one eighth, the granaries will prevent this surplus from lowering the prices to such a degree as to injure the farmer, and promote idleness among manufacturers. Such a plenty will only have the good effect of filling the granaries so much sooner; and till they be filled with at least one year's supply, exportation ought to be prohibited, however great the abundance.

While the granaries are thus filling, should the fertility of each year not exceed the usual average, it is plain that a surplus produce of one eighth could only be procured, by an addition of one eighth to the number of acres under the plough. As the pasture grounds of the island are in extent more than four times greater than the arable grounds, this addition of one eighth to the arable grounds, would diminish the former not more than one 47th; * but if it were to diminish them a full eighth, the permutation would only contribute to increase the amount of the yearly income of the Nation.

This subject has been very minutely discussed by a very intelligent author, Arthur Dobbs, Esq.

* For example, suppose of the 72 millions of acres, which Great Britain contains, that 56 millions can only be reckoned upon as yielding produce in corn and grass; and that nine millions of acres are now annually in corn. If those nine millions are augmented about one eighth, it will make a little more than 10 millions in corn; and deduct that eighth from the acres in pasture, these last will then be about 46 millions, instead of 47 millions, that is one 47th less.

in his Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland. He having compared the market prices of the Exports arising from grazing, with those arising from the Export of grain, and the number of acres required to produce each, concludes that the profit upon pasture, at a medium, does not exceed 12 shillings and 5d. per acre; whereas at a medium the profit upon agriculture is above two pounds per acre. *Presuming* that Mr. Dobbs's estimates are not far from the truth, it may then be concluded that the granaries in creating a demand for the surplus of grain of one eighth, would *thereby* in fact increase the National Income annually above one million and an half, till they should be fully stored, with one year's supply.

Would it not be deemed a joyful piece of news, were it reported, that a mine of gold had been discovered in Great Britain, that would yield an annual supply to the value of a million and an half of pounds. But the establishment of granaries would actually produce such a good effect to the farmers of Great Britain for at least eight years, by creating a demand for one eighth more of corn than is now produced.

As a parliamentary encouragement to the farmers to produce this additional eighth, let the same public bounty be given to them that was formerly given to the merchant exporters of corn. In a political view, the producers of a surplus have as good a right to a public recompence, as the exporters of a surplus, especially when the granaries

granaries point out a way to get rid of that surplus. Could the farmers sell more than they now produce, can it be doubted but they could produce more. Now the establishment of granaries would open a way to their selling one eighth more, for eight years, without lowering the common market price so as to lessen their usual gains. On the contrary, by producing the one eighth more in consequence of the bounty, while the market prices remained unaltered, their gains would be one eighth more than usual, exclusive of the bounty paid to them.

Allowing the bounties to be the propelling motives to this augmentation of produce, and that they amounted nearly to what they were in the year of greatest exportation, that is, to 300,000 pounds, the farmers, by receiving this bounty, would have augmented the substantial wealth of the Country one million of quarters in the different grains of wheat, oats, and barley, or above one million and an half sterling, that is, they will have returned 500 per cent, for the bounty bestowed; and the nation would possess both the additional wealth, and the bounty that gave rise to that wealth. What commerce can yield to the undertakers such a return as this, and how quickly will the nation (now dropscally swoln with paper riches) increase in real vigour and opulence, by pursuing for a succession of years such a policy as may annually augment the stock of grain one eighth, and create an immediate home demand for that eighth,

which in future may save us from the impolitic measure of purchasing grain at foreign markets.

To a nation possessing an extensive territory, and favourable climate, the importation of corn is as disgraceful as the importation of wine would be to a wine country, or the importation of coals to a country abounding with coal mines. When shall we hear of the importation of wine into France, for general consumption, or of coals into Northumberland. But were our corn system founded on the rules of true policy, the importation of corn into Great Britain, ought to be as rare a thing as the importation of wine into France, because the soil of Great Britain in general, is, from our favourable climate, as fertile as some of the Countries in Europe, distinguished for their fertility, which though as populous as Great Britain, nevertheless have great surpluses, and export much corn. Sicily, for example, is deemed a country very fertile in corn, but from Cicero we may conclude that Great Britain is not inferior in fertility to that island; for in praising the fertility of Leontum, he says, the Leontines reckoned it a good crop, when they had a return of eight grains for one; and when they had ten grains for one, they thought it a very abundant harvest. Now the arable fields in Great Britain, where the land is well managed, often yield greater returns than those abovementioned; consequently were encouragement given to create annual surpluses

by increasing the present too scanty number of arable acres, and diminishing the wastes, Great Britain might maintain double the number of her present inhabitants, without ever being under the necessity of importing corn, provided she had always in store a spare supply sufficient for one or two year's consumption.

If such a situation is greatly to be desired for Great Britain; and if the means for putting her in that situation are easy and practicable, what object of policy can be more deserving of the attention of the Legislature, than the pursuit of those means. To have subjects and not to be able to feed them without foreign aid, even after the worst harvests, when the territory would feed double the number, is nearly the same thing as the giving a bounty for emigration, or what is as bad, the prohibiting, by an unwritten law, the celebration of marriages, and the rearing up of children.

Part of those means have been already stated, namely the annual registration over all the kingdom, of all the acres sown with wheat, barley, and oats. This must be established as the first principle, the condition, *sine qua non*, upon which, as upon a solid foundation, the whole system of regulation must rest. To aim at regulation without such a first principle, would be as fruitless as to attempt to scale a high wall with a short ladder, or like a man, who could neither read nor

write,

write, undertaking the management of a great mercantile concern upon the strength of his natural genius. Nations that, like our Saxon Ancestors, could neither read nor write, were excusable in having imperfect political regulations; but nations possessing the powerful instrument of writing, deprive themselves in a manner of half their intelligence in not committing to registers, exact details in regard to territory, to income, and expenditure.

Another article likewise already mentioned, and the second in point of importance, is the inviting the farmers to create surpluses of corn, by offering them bounties on those surpluses, to the amount of one eighth addition, above the quantity of acres usually sown by them. By allowing eight shillings for every additional acre sown with wheat, and four shillings for every additional acre in oats and barley, the proportion would approach nearly to what was formerly given to the merchants upon exportation; and from the following computation it is presumed the sum total of bounties thus bestowed, would not be very different from what it was in the year of greatest exportation. The consumption of London in wheat, including the territory, within ten miles of the Royal Exchange, is, according to the information of a worthy and intelligent friend, lately, from his high office, at the source of information, 800,000 quarters annually. If we take six

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times

times as much as that for the rest of the kingdom, it will on the whole be for both 5,600,000 quarters, which at two quarters per acre, would require 2,800,000 acres in wheat. Suppose as many acres in oats, and as many in barley, the whole will be 8,400,000 acres. An increase or addition of one eighth, to each kind, would be for wheat 350,000 acres, as much in oats, and as much in barley, or on the whole 1,050,000 acres. Allowing 600,000 acres for fallows, for potatoes, beans, pease, &c. the whole of the acres under the plough in Great Britain, will then be about 10,000,000 acres, including the additional eighth in wheat, oats, and barley, proposed to be entitled to the bounty. I have said that the public bounty to the farmers, as above estimated, would probably not differ much from the sum granted to the merchants, in the year of greatest exportation; but were it even to exceed that sum, the advantage to the Nation would only be proportionably greater; for an advance yielding 500 per cent. profit, would, if enlarged, only enlarge that profit.

I shall now proceed to consider the capital that would be required to furnish London with one year's spare supply of wheat, who would be the capitalists or proprietors of that supply, what profits they ought to receive on their capital, and how those profits would arise.

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The yearly supply of London, stated at 800,000 quarters of wheat, would, at 40 shillings per quarter, cost 1,600,000 pounds; at 30 shillings per quarter, (the market price in the year 1750) would cost 1,200,000 pounds; and at 50 shillings per quarter (as it was sold in London, in October last) would cost 2,000,000 pounds. Taking even the highest of these sums, and adding to it the expence of building the granaries, which may be estimated at 120,000 pounds, we shall have 2,120,000 pounds as the capital that would be required, in order to secure the Metropolis against the inconveniences of a scarcity or dearth; and allowing ten per cent. to the capitalists, for expences of management and profit, this expenditure, when compared to the great public benefit thereby procured, could not but be esteemed very inconsiderable. The City of London for example, would tax itself annually 212,000 pounds, in order that every family in it might be sure of having bread nearly at the price which a harvest of medium plenty would afford, without the risk of ever being obliged to pay nearly double that price.

Now let us consider how much the City of London taxes itself annually for its diversions? The newly erected Play-house in Drury-lane is computed, when full, to contain a receipt of 750 pounds, and that of Covent Garden nearly the same, or both together 1500 pounds. If therefore they are open 200 nights each season, and

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only half filled each night, that will amount to 150,000 pounds. To this must be added one quarter as much for the Opera-house, or 37,500 pounds, and for the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, supposing it open 100 nights, at 100 pounds per night, 10,000 pounds; for Public Concerts as much; for Sadler's Wells as much; for Vauxhall as much; for Ranelagh 6000 pounds; for Aftley's 6000 pounds, and the Circus 6000 pounds, the amount of the whole will be 245,500 pounds. Were this estimate to be made with greater accuracy, it would probably amount to a much higher sum than is here stated; but supposing it even less than I have computed it to be, it gives a plain proof, that the inhabitants of London, may, if they please, insure themselves against any extraordinary rise in the price of bread, for less money than what they now pay yearly for their Public Amusements, and Public Diversions.

To procure the great benefit of a reasonable and uniform price of the article of first necessity to man, the capital to be employed for the City of London, is 2,120,000 pounds, for which capital the proprietors would be justly entitled to a reasonable profit. This profit, like other mercantile profits, must arise from the consumers, and including therein the expences of management, might be regulated by raising the present affize tables ten per cent. higher than the actual rate.

It is not clear how this is to produce an uniform price according to the title of this tract.

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If the Public would be greatly benefited in having bread always at an uniform price, those who procure them that benefit, would certainly be most justly entitled to a recompence. Shall it be said, that the inhabitants of London expend annually, in diversions, above 245,000 pounds, and would scruple to expend annually 212,000 pounds, in assuring to themselves a constant supply of bread, without the risk of its ever rising to an exorbitant price. The different insurance offices in London, would not be continued, if the proprietors of them did not draw some profits from them; but what else would the granaries be but insurance offices against famine, or at least against a dearth; and late experience has given us but too strong proofs, that the Nation has paid very dear for not having had such insurance offices. Do the immense breweries in London, yield no profits to their proprietors; or would it be at all reasonable to expect that the brewers should supply the Metropolis with good porter, at a steady price from year to year, without any calculation of profit to themselves, in return for the money laid out by them, in their expensive buildings and utensils, and for the time and labour they bestow on the business. If the proprietors of the granaries would furnish bread for the consumption of London, at as uniform and steady a price as the London brewers furnish malt liquor, would not the general benefit be as great in the one case as in the other, and would

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they

they not have just as good a claim to a reasonable profit as the brewers, more especially as they might be the instruments of preventing many others from making exorbitant profits. Of this the late Albion Mills afford a striking example, for during the few years they existed, they are said to have saved to the Metropolis 800,000 pounds. In like manner the directors of the granaries, by the correspondence they would establish over the whole Kingdom, would remove many obstructions that the London markets are now liable to, and would thereby bring the annual prices upon an average lower than they now are, or otherwise would be; so that notwithstanding the proposed addition to the affize, bread would in general not rise in price, but would actually come as cheap, if not cheaper, to the consumer than at present. It would only be a transfer of profits from those who advantage the Public nothing, to those who would advantage the Public a great deal. Thus those who transport goods by canals, transfer to themselves the profits of those persons, who before transported such goods by land carriage. It is indifferent to the consumers who receives the profit, provided they be as well served in the one case as in the other. But if they be better served, it is no longer indifferent to them who receive the profits. They will give every encouragement to those whose system promises to be accompanied with the greatest advantage. If this circumstance

is made the test in regard to the establishment of granaries, it will most effectually operate in favour of them, more especially when it is considered who should be the proprietors of them, to whom the profits would accrue.

The proprietors ought to be the inhabitants of London themselves; and so of every Town and City throughout the Kingdom, where granaries shall be established, by which means the management and the profits would always remain concentrated in each place respectively. It can I think hardly be doubted, but the full conviction of the private, as well as public benefits arising from the granaries, would quickly procure a capital by an open subscription, which should be rendered as comprehensive as possible. In London therefore no particular subscription should exceed 10,000 pounds; but subscriptions should be admitted for householders as low as 20 pounds; and for servants and servant maids as low as 15 pounds. Should the Corporation of London, or any of its Public Companies be inclined to become subscribers, they should be admitted to subscribe for more than 10,000 pounds. The subscribers or stockholders, should manage their own concerns by governors annually chosen by themselves, which for the Metropolis might be 24 in number, with a salary not exceeding 200 pounds each; and the dividends on the capitals should be paid half yearly.

Though I have restricted my calculations chiefly to the City of London, they may most easily be extended to the whole Kingdom; and I mean that they should be so extended. My reasoning equally applies to every large City, to every town and every parish throughout Great Britain and Ireland. If the proverb which says, *Store is no store*, contains an acknowledged solid maxim, the storing of such a supply of corn as would prevent a future scarcity, ought not to be confined to one City, or one Town; but ought equally to be the concern of every Town in these Islands. That such a supply would in the beginning cost something, can no more be an objection to it, than that a stock of household furniture cannot be procured without costing something. The capital for the City of London, we have seen, would amount to about 2,120,000 pounds; and reckoning seven times as much for the whole Island of Great Britain, it would make in all 17 millions.

This sum of 17 millions (hardly exceeding two pounds a head for all the inhabitants) would form the spare supply of the whole nation in corn, and when we compare it with the reserved stock of the nation in household furniture, it will be found to be altogether inconsiderable. This last, which is a capital yielding no income, would probably be much under estimated, when valued at 200 millions. Nevertheless it is so far from being
deemed

deemed a burden, that there is perhaps not a master or mistress of a family in the Kingdom, that do not think themselves happy, when they have it in their power to augment it. What family thinks itself poorer by purchasing a new bed, additional table linen, a new set of chairs, a looking glass, &c. All the return expected for the capital sunk on such an occasion, is convenience. The convenience in most cases more than counterbalancing the cost, the buyer with satisfaction, concludes that the money is well laid out.

If such in general is the conclusion in regard to the immense capital, sunk in the purchase of household furniture; and if the inhabitants so far from thinking such capital a burden, would from the conveniences which accompany it, wish to enlarge it; the capital employed in providing a spare supply of corn, would be still more entitled to be considered in the same light, as it would be attended not alone with convenience, but with economy likewise. For such a capital, exclusive of the immediate convenience of furnishing bread, at a reasonable and steady price, would, in case of a scanty harvest, be the means not only of preventing two or three millions of pounds from being sent out of the country to purchase foreign corn, but would save to the consumers of bread, a rise of 50 or 60 per cent, in the price of that article, which they lately
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paid, from our improvident neglect, in not having a spare supply of corn.

The friendly societies at present existing in many parts of the Kingdom, are allowed to be attended with advantages to their respective members. But do not those advantages take their origin from the weekly payments, made by the members themselves. The advantages received are only returns for the assessments made, and though the benefits are never universal to all the members, the assessments are nevertheless universal. If this circumstance has at no time been stated as an objection to the usefulness of those friendly societies, much less can it be urged against the establishment of granaries, according to the plan proposed; for in this case the benefits would actually extend universally, and the immediate subscribers would only partake of them somewhat more largely than the others.

The plan of granaries, when adopted throughout the Island, would in effect turn the whole nation into friendly societies, all uniting by their joint operation to render the importation of foreign corn for ever unnecessary, to keep the markets for grain more uniform, and to prevent the price of it, even when the harvest is scanty, from exceeding the ability of the poor to purchase it. To these advantages it may be added, that the granaries would for eight years give an animating spur to the industry of the farmers, which would bring
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along with it an increase of population with all the benefits attendant on such an increase, and after the home additional demand ceased, might be a means of recovering the trade of the exportation of corn formerly so profitable to the Nation.

While the benefit of the granaries is preparing for the Public, the subscribers, who are the instruments of that benefit, ought to draw a revenue in proportion to the capital annually advanced by them. Thus taking the Metropolis for an example, it has before been calculated that it would require about 2,120,000 pounds to provide a spare supply of wheat for one year's consumption of the inhabitants of London; and if the surpluses of eight harvests would be required to complete this supply, that would infer an annual advance from the subscribers of 265,000 pounds, for eight years successively. The interest at five per cent. upon this advance, would for the first year amount to 13,250 pounds, or about one halfpenny per week upon each family in the Metropolis. The second year, supposing an equal advance to be made by the subscribers, the interest would amount to one penny per week upon each family. The third year to three halfpence, and in the eighth year when the granaries were completed, and fully stored, to a weekly payment of four pence upon each family, or about 106,000 pounds per annum. But as on every permanent establish-

establishment where management is required, an allowance must be made for that management, as also for repairs, waste, and accidents, I have stated that the annual expence of granaries for the Metropolis would probably amount to about as much more as the sum above mentioned, or to 212,000 pounds, which is considerably less than what the article of diversions costs the inhabitants of London annually; and lower than the weekly assessments of any of the friendly societies.

Were this annual expence to be really an additional expence to the inhabitants of London; yet when the many advantages arising from the granaries, are carefully considered, and weighed against it, which they ought to be, few people I think will doubt but that the preponderance will be greatly in favour of the granaries, and that they would be most cheaply purchased even at a larger expence. But there is the greatest reason to presume, as I have before observed, that the annual expence accompanying the establishment of granaries, would not be an additional expence, but would only be a transfer of expence.

Nay I am inclined to think the granaries would even prove on the whole a lessening of expence to the inhabitants; and this I shall endeavour to illustrate, by adding a few words in regard to the future provision of London, on the supposition that the granaries are fully stored with one year's spare supply; and that the directors of them

them should at the option of the buyers, furnish the markets with flour as well as with wheat. The expence of the granaries we have seen would amount to about eight pence per week to each family in the Metropolis; and it may I think be justly presumed, that if the traffic in corn were freed from its present obstructions, and the practices of the millers, now so grievously complained of, were kept under some controul, each family might save in the price of bread above eight pence per week, in which case the inhabitants of London would be at less expence in that article than at present; *and would have the granaries with all their stores into the bargain.*

This indeed is concluding much more than is necessary in behalf of the granaries. The essential advantages they would procure to the Nation would be a full compensation for the Capital they would require, though the last mentioned advantage were not be obtained. Nevertheless it ought to be kept in view, and could it be obtained, it would render the establishment of granaries still more useful to the public.

The price of flour when compared to the price of wheat, is very generally complained of as exorbitant; and certainly the manner in which the London market is at present supplied with wheat, and other grain, indicates that the sources of supply are not so sufficiently explored throughout the Kingdom, as they might be, or as they would

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be, were such a regular correspondence established with every county, as would bring the farmers into immediate contact with the great purchaser in the Capital.

On the supposition that there is a twelvemonth's spare supply of wheat or flour lodged in the granaries, the bakers in the Metropolis, and the millers in the vicinity, might at their option be supplied with flour and wheat from the granaries, at such a price as should be agreed upon between them and the directors, who in return should be entitled to be the first bidders for all wheat or flour brought by individuals to the London market. Thus the directors of the granaries would be continual sellers and continual buyers, without any monopoly existing; for if the bakers and millers did not like the price of the directors, they might buy elsewhere; and if those who brought wheat or flour to the London market, did not like the offer of the directors, they might sell elsewhere.

Should the weekly supply not equal the weekly consumption, the directors of the granaries would always be ready to make good the deficiency; and should that supply exceed the consumption, they would prevent a stagnation in the markets, by affording a fair price for the surpluses. Nay should the deficiency of supply even extend to several weeks, it would not affect the general market, as the directors could still answer the

+ What will prevent them from commanding the demand in the markets, asking what prices they please & becoming Monopolists?

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demand from the granaries, without any hazard of draining them too much, because from their extensive correspondence fresh supplies from some quarter or another, would be continually on their way to the Capital, either by sea, or by inland navigation, or by land carriage; and the tardiness in one month, would be compensated by the more speedy conveyance in another month. Thus were London to have in magazines a twelvemonth's spare supply of coals, there would be no occasion to alter the price of that commodity, though the navigation of the Thames should be obstructed for several weeks together by a hard frost. The coals that were then wanted might be drawn from the magazines, which might be again stored with their usual supply upon the return of mild weather.

Thus far in regard to the operation of the granaries in years of ordinary abundance. Let us now consider what it might be in case of the calamity of a bad harvest. When a harvest fails that misfortune is generally well known, before the season arrives for sowing the seed for the following harvest. In proportion then to the deficiency of the harvest newly reaped, let preparation be made for increasing the abundance of next year's crop, by a renewal of the premium to the farmers upon such an additional number of acres as may be found requisite. For example, taking the number of sown acres in Great Britain in

in common years at nine millions, as before calculated, and supposing the deficiency of any harvest to have been as great as to require an augmentation of one fourth to the number of acres in the following seed-time, that would occasion a demand upon Government of 600,000 pounds in bounties.

I have supposed a deficiency of crop, much beyond what Great Britain has experienced for these hundred years past, or perhaps has ever experienced, in order that the importance of having always a spare supply of corn at home, may appear with the greater evidence. Should a deficiency of crop actually amount to one fourth, Great Britain without granaries could not secure herself against the bad effects of such a deficiency for a less sum than seven or eight millions sent out of the kingdom; but Great Britain with granaries might prevent the inconveniencies of such a deficiency for 600,000 pounds, circulated within its own territory, and thereby promoting industry among her inhabitants. What a wide difference between the two systems of administration.

The farmers being thus induced to lay the foundation of an ample supply for the future harvest, the directors of the granaries throughout the Kingdom, would that year sell one fourth more than they purchased; and by purchasing the following year one fourth more than they sold, they would fully replace the deficiency, and at the same

same time would create a market to the farmers for the surpluses they had produced. By these operations Great Britain will realize one of the most important of political principles, *Sibi sufficit*, sufficient to herself; and a scarcity, when it happened, so far from creating distress and murmuring among the people, would hardly occasion any alteration in the prices of the markets.

Having thus treated of the extent of the capital that would be required to store in granaries a year's supply of corn, for the whole Kingdom, and explained how by premiums to the farmers that supply might be furnished from our own territory; and also who ought to be the proprietors of that capital, and from what sources the profits upon that capital ought to arise, I shall now add a few observations relative to the construction of the granaries, particularly in the Metropolis; and to the best and safest method of preserving the grain or flour in the Granaries.

The average yearly consumption of London, has been stated at 800,000 quarters of wheat, consequently to store such a quantity properly, would require 16 millions of cubic feet, or about 24 buildings of the size or capacity of the late Albion Mills, which building indeed might very properly serve for one of them. Supposing each of those buildings to cost 5000 pounds, the whole would then, as before stated, occasion an expence of 120,000 pounds. The East India Company,
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for merchandizes of mere luxury, have not scrupled a larger expence in warehouscs, which in a manner fill whole streets in London. Now a full supply of bread, or of the material of bread, is certainly of much greater importance to the inhabitants of the Metropolis, than a full supply of tea or of pepper, consequently granaries for the former, may not unjustly be deemed as requisite as warehouses for the latter. That London long before this time has not had to boast of its elegant granaries, as well as of its sumptuous warehouses, and sumptuous brewhouses, is to be attributed rather to the total neglect of system in the corn trade, than to any deficiency in point of capital, or of spirit and enterprize in its inhabitants. We learn from Mr. Yarranton, a skilful engineer and public spirited man, who in the last century was employed for several years in visiting Germany and other States on the Continent, for political and manufacturing purposes, that the single City of Magdebourg could boast of 300 granaries*.

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* Holland every one knows is distinguished for its granaries; but so is Geneva, Berne, Genoa, Rome, Naples, and many other cities. Among Mr. Hastings's meritorious services in Bengal is reckoned the establishment of granaries; and the granaries in China are mentioned by Sir George Staunton. In the Statistical Account of Scotland, published by Sir John Sinclair, Vol. 14. p. 375. we have the following account of a granary in the burrough of Linlithgow. "Be-

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As by far the greatest quantity of corn for the supply of London is brought by water, the granaries would be most conveniently situated upon the banks of the Thames, six or eight of them on the Surry shore, from Lambeth to Rotherhithe, and double that number upon the Middlesex side; and they might be so constructed as to be ornamental on the banks of the River, now in many places so neglected as to be a deformity and nuisance. It is needless here to enter into any details in regard to the form of the buildings, as that will depend in a great degree upon local circumstances, and may afterwards be the subject of consideration.

In regard to the manner of preserving the corn or flour in the granaries, I think there is very great room for improvement. This very essential point not having hitherto been sufficiently attended to, and reflected upon, has, I am persuaded, been one of the chief causes why the practice of storing corn has been so much neglected. Were

" fides the funds which the Corporation (or Trades) have
 " for the poor, with whom they are severally connected,
 " they have adopted a plan, of which the good effects are
 " sensibly felt. They have a repository capable of contain-
 " ing 600 Bolls of meal. This they sell at a proper time;
 " and if application be made, the town advances 100l. with-
 " out interest. Thus they have always a quantity to answer
 " demands, are enabled to regulate the price of the markets,
 " and prevent private retailers from taking an improper advantage
 " of circumstances."

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a method devised, by which corn might be kept for years without waste, and without spoiling, the cultivation of it with the view of storing it, as well as supplying the present market, might enter into the economy of the farmers, who would then be without alarm in case of an abundant harvest, or of half a dozen abundant harvests. Some agricultural writers, as I have before observed, tell us, that at present two or three abundant harvests in succession, would ruin the farmers; and so would two or three abundant vintages, in succession, ruin the proprietors of vineyards, if they had not casks or bottles, in which to store the wine. Abundance of corn, instead of being a curse as at present, would, as an abundance of wine, become a blessing, if people knew how to preserve the abundance when it arrived. The farmers resource is to preserve the super-abundant corn in the straw, which in many cases is making a present of a great proportion of it to the rats and mice; and the expedient of the merchants and corn dealers is to spread it on floors, and to turn it frequently, which however does not secure it from the weevil and other vermin, or from being damaged by mouldiness.

We have the experience that things much more corruptible than corn, are preserved many years by being wholly excluded from the common air. Why may not we then conclude, that by the same means corn might be preserved many years. Upon this principle, were the corn in the granaries, in-

stead of being spread upon floors, to be inclosed in earthen jars of a large size, similar to those brought from Italy with oil, which are to be seen before the doors of several shops in London, it might in all probability be preserved without damage for many years. Flour in particular would be much better preserved in such jars than in casks, which not being completely air tight, too commonly generate mites or weevils, that often devour great part of it. Formerly a great supply of flour was annually sent in casks from France to the West India Islands: but at Bourdeaux, from whence the greatest part of it was shipped, I was told that not unfrequently before such flour reached the West Indies, it was either spoilt, or in part destroyed by vermin. Had this flour been packed in jars, instead of casks, and the mouths of the jars closely stopped, it may I think be presumed that the damage and loss would have been avoided; and the same jars that carried out the flour, might have brought back the sugar, which would have saved the repeated expence of hogsheads, to be renewed each voyage, and also prevented an annual waste of the sugar from leakage, which is said to be very considerable.

It ought to be no objection to this mode of preserving the corn, that it would in the beginning add to the expence, because the complete preservation of the corn would fully indemnify the Public for that expence. Nobody scruples

the expence of bottles to preserve wine; and in France were the number of bottles annually filled with wine to be filled with flour, the French people would never be in any hazard of a dearth, or a scarcity of bread. Now flour is intrinsically much more valuable than wine. Had Captain Bligh, in his perilous voyage of 2000 miles in an undecked boat, without provisions, touched at an island, where he might have had at his choice 100 bottles of flour, or 1000 bottles of wine, he would without any hesitation have preferred the flour. Were the real value of flour or corn to be always kept in view, as it ever ought to be by a wise government and a prudent people, the most effectual means of preserving them would be thought much more worthy of their attention than the means of preserving wine or beer.* In respect to wine or beer contained in bottles, the vessel containing, though originally of as great value as what is contained in it, yet from its long durability, and the short duration of what is contained, it may in the course of a century, not be the hundredth part of the value of what in that

* In France, in an abundant vintage, it has been said, that a possessor of new casks, has received a cask-full of wine for his cask; that is, the cask, and the wine contained in it, were of equal value; and in the Province of Burgundy I have drunk wine, better than what is commonly called Burgundy in England, a quart of which nevertheless would have been given for three glass bottles; that is, the *Container* was one third of the value of the *Contained*.

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time it has contained. This would very nearly be the case in respect to the method I have proposed for preserving flour; for supposing each jar to hold a sack of flour, that jar might in the course of a century, hold 100 sacks of flour, consequently from this consideration no objection could arise against the use of jars, more than against the use of bottles. Sure I am that some farmers would have saved considerably, if they had used this method of preserving their grain, instead of wooden granaries detached from their barns.

The subject here treated of, notwithstanding its great importance, having hitherto been in a manner wholly overlooked by political writers, a first attempt to form it into a system, will, I hope, meet with indulgence from the reader. I give to the Public the preceding considerations, only in the manner of a draught of a Parliamentary Bill, to receive improvements and amendments from those whose abilities, and means of information, are greater than mine.

THE END.

