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ON THE
NECESSITY OF ALTERING AND AMENDING THE
REGULATIONS,
RECOMMENDED BY PARLIAMENT,
FOR
REDUCING THE PRESENT HIGH PRICE OF
CORN:
TOGETHER WITH
SOME AMENDMENTS PROPOSED,
AND
CONSIDERATIONS ADDRESSED TO
MASTERS OF FAMILIES,
ON THE MOST ELIGIBLE MODE OF CARRYING THE
SAME INTO EXECUTION.

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M,DCC,XCVI.

ON THE
 NECESSITY OF ALTERING AND AMENDING THE
REGULATIONS,
 RECOMMENDED BY PARLIAMENT,
For Reducing the present High Price of CORN;
 &c. &c. &c.

TO suppress or withhold from publication such reflections as any man may think calculated, at this alarming juncture, to alleviate the distresses of his country, or conduce to the public safety, would be a criminal neglect of the highest duty of man.—No apology, therefore, is offered for the following Observations.

It is well known that the House of Commons have lately instituted an inquiry into the high price of corn, and that the result of their deliberations is a set of practical rules and regulations, to the observance of which they have pledged themselves

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selves in their individual capacity; and which they earnestly recommend to the public at large, for their immediate adoption and use.

To the collective wisdom of the Commons, sanctioned by the subsequent approbation of the Lords, it is with the greatest diffidence that I presume to oppose a few considerations, designed to shew that the means adopted are not only inadequate to the object in view, but, under certain circumstances, of very common occurrence, absolutely null and useless.

From the general plenteousness of the last year's harvest, the crops of wheat and rye only excepted, from the lands throughout the kingdom appearing to be well stocked with cattle, many persons are led to conclude, that the present high price of all sorts of provision is fictitious, and not the effect of a real scarcity.

In this opinion they seem to be confirmed further, by an assertion, made in the House of Commons by Mr. Fox, that the failure in the last year's crop of wheat might account for the present dearness of wheat,

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wheat, but not for that of other provisions, and of all the necessaries of life.

Such persons, being unable to assign any other cause adequate to the effect, than that which is declared, on such high authority, to be inadequate, are induced to solve the difficulty by denying the effect altogether, and disbelieving the existence of the evil.

In this sentiment the House of Commons themselves seem to have acquiesced at the time of its delivery, and to have regulated their conduct by that principle afterwards. From the nature of the means adopted, it is fair to infer the end proposed. Now their measures are well enough adapted to reduce the price of wheat, but not to counteract the greater and more comprehensive evil. If I prove this, as I hope to do, it follows, either that they did not understand the operation and effect of their own measures, which I will not suppose; or that they acted upon the principle laid down by Mr. Fox.

As I conceive this, with all due deference, to be an error in opinion, which has

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led to consequent errors in practice, it is of importance to settle it, as a preliminary question.

The argument which I oppose may be stated thus.—A scarcity of all sorts of provision cannot have been produced without an adequate cause. The failure of the last year's crop of wheat is not an adequate cause, nor can any other be assigned. Therefore there is no scarcity at all.

It will be allowed, I suppose, that an extraordinary rise in the value of any commodity, furnishes, on the face of the thing, a strong presumption of its scarcity: that the proof of the contrary lies, in a case of controversy, upon the opponent: and that if his objections be repelled, the existence of the scarcity is unquestionable.

Now I admit, for the sake of argument, that this country is well stocked with cattle, although I observe that an unusual quantity of young and half-fatted meat is brought to the market. I allow nothing for the devastations of war, and the diminution of
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agricultural labour; although, if the produce of the earth be no more than sufficient for the support of its inhabitants in ordinary years, it must necessarily be unequal to that purpose, at a time when so many hands are withdrawn from the plough, and so many acres of arable land converted into a waste and barren wilderness. I grant further, that no other cause can be adduced, than the following: and consent to rest the issue of the question on the truth or falsehood of this proposition, "That the failure in the last year's crop of wheat will not account for the dearth of all sorts of provision."

I say that if the whole amount or aggregate of human food in this kingdom is made up of its component parts, the several sorts of food, it follows, that a deficiency in any one particular will inevitably diminish the sum total, in the proportion which the part deficient bears to the whole. And if the deficiency in any principal article be considerable, the common stock will be so reduced by it, as to occasion a

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general scarcity and dearth of every article of human food.

Let us suppose, for example, the crop of barley to be defective: Hence follows, in the first instance, a scarcity of pork and bacon. As the marketable value of these commodities increases, the public by degrees resort to other meats; all of which, in their turn, become scarce, and are relinquished for cheaper sorts of food, until, by further divisions and subdivisions, the evil spreads into all the necessaries of life.

From the scarcity of barley-bread, even from that of beer, I might have arrived, by a longer circumduction, at the same conclusion: and, by various other processes, it might be shewn how the want of this or any other eatable of extensive use, necessarily produces the most calamitous consequences throughout the whole system. The lines of cause and effect cross and intersect one another in a thousand directions. The same reasoning will be found applicable, in a proportionate degree, to butcher's meat, to oats, and even to peas,
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beans, or potatoes. If so, much more will it hold good when applied to wheat.

It remains only to consider, in the present instance, whether the last year's failure in the crop of wheat, was sufficiently great to produce consequences of such magnitude.

For the determination of that doubt I appeal to the Reports of the Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to take into consideration the present high price of corn. Founding their opinion upon information, collected from all quarters of the kingdom, they calculate the deficiency in the last year's crop of wheat and rye to be not less, when compared with an average crop, than from one-fourth to one-fifth.

Many persons are induced to deny the truth of this reasoning, on account of the partial appearance of a plentiful harvest in particular parishes or counties. To all such the answer is obvious.

Others object, with greater reason, that the Committee have drawn the foregoing conclusion from a false statement of facts, from the testimony of men whose interest

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it was to misrepresent and deceive. Those who are accustomed to private intercourse and dealings with the farmer, know that he, like other men, may be seduced from the line of honesty and fairness in his conduct, by considerations of self-interest. In the present instance it must be confessed that the temptation is strong. For, to convince his countrymen that the failure in the harvest was such as he represents it to be, is to exculpate himself entirely from the crime which is charged upon him, of having created an artificial scarcity: and if he should be wicked enough still to meditate the most atrocious schemes of monopoly and extortion, he may hope to transfer the imputation of guilt from his own shoulders, to the badness of the seasons, and the parsimonious dispensations of Providence.

Besides, it is known to be the cautious policy of the tenant to conceal from his landlord all such facts as may enable the latter to ascertain the annual produce and value of his farm.

This, and the foregoing considerations, seem likely to operate strongly upon the
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moral feelings of this class of men; and that they have in fact so operated, I am informed by persons, who from their situation and habits of life are well qualified to enter into the farmer's views. A country clergyman has assured me that the farmers of his parish, convened in vestry to report on the produce of their lands, refused to deliberate on the question in his presence; alledging, that gentlemen ought not to pry too closely into the secrets of the farming business.— He adds, that after he was gone, they drew up a statement, representing the crops to be far short of what he has good reason to believe they were.

Now in the situation of these particular farmers there was nothing peculiar, nothing in the relation which they bear to the public and to their landlords, but what is common to the generality of men. Hence I conclude, that most of them are actuated by similar motives; and that all inferences, drawn from the returns delivered in, either by them or those who derive their information ultimately from them, cannot be
admitted

admitted without many grains of allowance for misrepresentation.

Whether the Committee in their calculation made such allowance, or not, is a question of importance. I am disposed to suspect, however, they did not: because, while they relate certain other difficulties which they had to encounter in preparing their Report, they omit to mention that particular one, which, upon this supposition, would have been the greatest of all, namely, the laying down some principle which might enable them to gauge the farmer's dishonesty, and ascertain what abatements ought to be made in the account under that head.

In some parishes, where the agent employed to estimate the produce of the harvest applied for information not to the farmer, but to the reaper, the thresher, and the labourer, such fraudulent exaggeration has been effectually guarded against. But unfortunately, so sharp are the animosities of the people at the present time against the farmer, that their minds lie under the contrary influence, and their estimate

mate seems to be as much too high, as the other is too low.

If it should be found, however, upon inquiry, that many other parishes have pursued the same method, or that the agent of government, suspecting the veracity of the farmer, has often been induced to rectify of himself gross mis-statements (which I believe to be the case) this at the least is a corrective of the error in some degree.

Add to this, that the Board of Agriculture has lately reported the last year's wheat, when threshed, to be deficient in weight. The Committee had stated the deficiency to be not less than from one-fourth to one-fifth, the average of which is one-ninth; but since this new discovery, it is declared by the Board of Agriculture to be not less than one-fourth.

Now, if this latter calculation was made separately, and conducted upon principles independent of those upon which the Committee proceeded, it confirms the truth of the Committee's Report.

If, on the contrary, the Board of Agriculture pre-supposed the truth of the Committee's

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mittee's Report, or arrived at the same conclusion through the medium of the same proofs, then the newly-discovered deficiency in weight, and the late extraordinary consumption of seed-wheat, may be set against the farmer's misrepresentation, and the balance will probably be restored.

Considering all these things, the Report of the Committee appears to me satisfactory.

I assume it, therefore, as a position established, that although the present scarcity may have originated wholly in the failure of the last year's crop of wheat, yet it is now no longer partial, and confined to that single grain, but universally extended to every species of human food. The precise nature of the disease being previously ascertained, we shall be the better enabled to discover the mode of treating it. In order to this, let us first consider what measures have been taken already, and whether they are suitable to the circumstances of the case.

The general principle from which all the particular rules recommended by Parliament have been deduced, is, as intimated above,

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above, to lessen the consumption of wheat. "We will reduce," say they, "the consumption of wheat in our families by at least one-third of the quantity consumed in ordinary times;"—and upon this basis the practical directions which follow are all founded.

Now, it appears to me that the very foundation of the scheme is narrow and defective. If the grievance were partial, this mode of relief might be suitable; yet not exclusively so, even then, as I will prove hereafter. But in a common dearth of every article of first necessity, to recommend frugality and parsimony in one particular, what is it but to apply a partial remedy to a general evil?

I do not mean to say that Parliament ought to have recommended an universal reduction in the consumption of all kinds of food. To attempt too much, is to effect nothing. But the marks are conspicuous which might and ought to have directed them where to draw the line of distinction. And I will venture to predict, that unless they do this now, or
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the public do it of themselves, the measures already taken will not only prove nugatory and inadequate to the object in view, but on many occasions of no effect whatever. For it is not in every case, but only under certain circumstances, that a partial or even total difuse of wheat can furnish relief to the sufferings of the country; and these circumstances not having been specified, it is a fact that many well-intentioned persons have reduced the consumption of wheat in their families, and carefully conformed to the letter of the regulations, without attending to those essential points, upon which the whole efficacy of the measure turns. Such, I contend, are all they, who, discontinuing the use of wheat, substitute instead of it any aliment whatever, the waste of which cannot be recruited by fresh importations. If, for instance, you make up for the deficiency with animal food, it is obvious that the vent of that commodity being increased, and the quantity diminished, the value must rise proportionably; and then what follows? Why, as there are thou-

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sands of families in this kingdom, who were accustomed, when meat was cheaper than it is now, to subsist on it in part, and who have ceased to partake of it ever since the price was advanced to its present height: so there are thousands and tens of thousands more who are still enabled to participate in the blessing, but will be excluded from all share in it by such additional enhancement of the price. Now, if these persons be deprived of their usual diet, they must be provided with some other: and if we consider that persons accustomed to animal food, are not of the poorest class, but at least one remove above the poorest, the aliment of principal resort, in that case, will be wheat.

Under this view of the question, all that you have effected is, to persuade one part of the community to substitute flesh instead of corn, and compel the other to substitute corn instead of flesh; the quantity of wheat consumed upon the whole is the same; and the people are put to the inconvenience of eating, some of them, meat without bread; and others, bread without

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without meat; to answer no one good purpose whatever.

I am aware of one objection to this reasoning, in its present application to animal food. It may be said, that because the grazier, in seasons of dearth, may forestall the produce of the ensuing year, and bring his lean stock to the market, therefore the national stock of provisions for the present year may be replenished by resorting to that food. This, I grant, in a case of extreme emergency, may afford some relief: but let it be observed, that by this anticipation, the deductions made from the produce of the next year are much greater than the additions made to that of the present; that this is to borrow at an enormous discount, and to commit a waste that impoverishes the national stock of cattle, and may entail a dearth upon the country for a series of years.

Neither can the public be benefited by any mode of decreasing the consumption of wheaten bread, which may occasion a proportionable increase in that of potatoes.

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It is a maxim in housewifery, that a family does not consume the less quantity of other provisions, for being plentifully supplied with garden-stuff, because, instead of satisfying, it is found to provoke and increase the appetite. The potatoe, however, seems in a great degree to form an exception to this rule; for, besides that it is distinguished from other vegetables of this country by a peculiar substance and fleshiness, it is a fact, I believe, that the Irish peasantry subsist on that root almost entirely; and it is said to be a principal article of food in Wales, and the more northern counties of England. A person who has visited the iron-works of Carran, in Scotland, assures me, that he has seen the workmen, exhausted by the heat of the smelting-furnace, and the labours of the mine, assemble, at the hour of dinner, round a large mess of potatoes, without any other seasoning or addition than a handful of salt sprinkled over them. I admit therefore the supposition, that the potatoe is sufficiently nutritious to answer the purposes of bread. I allow further,

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that by introducing this root into general use among the higher and middle orders, you make a proportionable saving in the article of wheat, and leave a greater quantity for the use of those of the poor, whose usual diet has been wheaten bread: and who are they? They are the lowest class of the counties round the metropolis, and of the other more opulent parts of the country. Such are the good effects; mark the evil. The extraordinary demand in our markets for potatoes can be supplied only by Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and the northern counties of England. And thus from the Irish, Welsh, or Scottish peasantry, from the poor of the poorest districts, you take their chief or only means of life and sustenance, in order to supply the poor of the wealthier provinces with an article, which, to persons in a state of want, is, comparatively speaking, a luxury; for the money which will purchase a loaf of wheaten bread will purchase a greater quantity of other coarser eatables; whereas the potatoe is the last and cheapest food, beyond which the poor man that
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you have robbed has no resort. Facts, as far as I can learn, correspond with this reasoning. At the place of my residence, the price of potatoes has risen, within a month, at the rate of four-ninths. And exportations of this root from Scotland have commenced in such abundance, that the inhabitants are apprehensive of a famine.

The foregoing reasoning will be found applicable, upon trial, to all articles of food whatever, of which we cannot get fresh supplies by importation. Hence I conclude, that to abstain from the use of wheat, either wholly or in part, and to substitute articles of the foregoing description in lieu of it, is to suffer a private inconvenience, without answering any public good. And yet a man may do all this, and at the same time adhere strictly to his engagement, "to reduce the quantity of wheat consumed in his family, by at least one-third of the quantity consumed in ordinary times."

Thus the very end of the project is defeated, not that the failure arises from the terms of subscription being loose and inde-

finite; it is not a verbal mistake; it is an ignorance of the thing; nay, it is worse: ignorance produces only faults of omission; whereas here is a positive error committed. For, of the practical directions subjoined to the general rule, the very first, and therefore not the most ineligible in the opinion of the authors, proposes to reduce the consumption of flour, by lessening the quantity without altering the quality. To this case the foregoing objections are directly applicable. In all cases the argument is founded on this supposition, that the less a person eats of one particular sort of food, the more he will probably eat of some other, that whatever partial saving he may make in one instance, will be counterbalanced by an extraordinary expenditure elsewhere. In another direction the substitution of potatoes is expressly recommended.

These, therefore, and all such as are not grounded upon the principle which I have endeavoured to establish, ought, in my opinion, to be reversed; and the terms of agreement to be corrected thus:

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We promise to reduce the consumption of wheat in our families, by at least one-third of the quantity usually consumed; and, at the same time, not to increase the consumption of meat, potatoes, or if there be any other article of general consumption, whereof the deficiency cannot be supplied by importation before next August.

The next object that calls for our attention, is the encouragement held out by Parliament for the importation of wheat. And here the objection formerly urged rises again in full force. Why limit the bounty to that single import, and not extend it to barley, oats, beans, peas, and every other nutrimental substance of large consumption? I grant, indeed, that a sufficiency of wheat alone might answer the purpose. But of the possibility of procuring that, the Minister entertains doubts. And, therefore, we must take measures of precaution, on the supposition that the thing is impossible; for, with wise men, an impossibility, and an improbability, in a practical sense, and considered as motives of action, are synonymous terms.

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But suppose the thing were possible ; yet our wants may be relieved effectually by a sufficient influx of any one sort of grain or other provisions : and a month's or a week's subsistence for nine millions of people may be obtained with greater ease, and at a cheaper rate, by purchasing a proportionate share of different sorts of food, than by ransacking and exhausting foreign markets of one particular kind.

That our uneasiness would be removed by a competent supply of any eatable that our neighbours can spare us, appears from the following consideration : That a copious introduction of barley would increase the quantity, and lessen the marketable value of bacon ; and, in a great degree, of beef ; because, in many parts, oxen are fatted with that grain, and if it were cheaper, the custom would obtain more generally. Another immediate consequence would be the cheapening of beer, barley-bread, and every bread that contains a mixture of barley. Thence, through a variety of channels, which all communicate with one another immediately or mediately,

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an universal plenty would be diffused throughout the land ; just in the same manner as I have proved before, that a want of any one article of general use may, in its consequences, occasion an universal dearth.

I have heard it objected, that persons accustomed to wheaten bread will not easily be induced to change their diet ; and that, for prudential reasons, it may be proper to indulge the people in their prejudice. To this I answer, that in point of fact the case seems to be otherwise, for barley is now, I believe, a very common ingredient of bread.

But allowing some force to the objection, I say, that to encourage the importation of other provisions tends only by very remote consequences, and in a very small degree, to discourage the importation of wheat. And even supposing it does, instead of wandering in generals, let us come home to particulars, and try an experiment. Suppose a peasant's family to be well supplied with barley, oats, beans, peas, and potatoes, will it be said, either that his ne-

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cessities require so large a supply of wheat, as he would require otherwise; or that his discontents would not be allayed, his temper sweetened, and his acquiescence purchased, by the compensatory comforts and luxuries with which these articles would enrich his board? The acidity of the black, lumpy loaf would be sheathed and softened by the mild beverage that flows from the barley-corn when dried on the kiln, and decocted in the furnace. The watery, unsatisfying, pot-herb would become hearty and nutritious, the dry mealy oat-cake be rendered unctuous and favourable by the oily fatness of the same grain, after it has been animalized in the sty, and smoaked in the chimney. These various combinations, the sour corrected in the stomach by its anti-acid, the indigestible dissolved by its attendant menstruum, are both more palatable to the taste, and convertible perhaps by the concoctive power into a wholesomer and stronger nutriment, than that of the whitest wheaten bread accompanied with water from the well.

From these considerations I am led to conclude,

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conclude, with due deference to Mr. Pitt, who thinks differently, that encouragement given to importation, when thus opened and enlarged, is the grand specific for the cure of existing, and the prevention of impending calamities.

Under this head, I shall only suggest further, that it may not be an object unworthy the attention of government, to encourage the capture of sea-fish, at least by protecting our coasting fishermen from the press.

Other minor and subsidiary measures are reducible, I think, to the topic of internal regulations of œconomy. By these, no doubt, our sufferings might be mitigated, if not removed; but they pre-suppose, some of them, so minute an attention to the rules of œconomy; others, so total a derangement of the system of high life, where, to obtain the currency of fashion, such alterations must originate, that no reasonable hopes of success can be entertained until motives arise which may come nearer home to men's bosoms than any which I can
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excite by delineating, in prospect, scenes of future distress.

Under the topic of internal regulations of œconomy, I comprise,

1. The preventing of wanton and luxurious waste,

It is not my intention to enumerate all the particulars that are included in this and the following rules. On the contrary, I shall only mention such as I have not seen specified in other publications.

If it be true, that to make rich gravies or soups, the nutritious qualities of animal food are so drawn out, that the residue is unfit for the use of man, let such practices be discontinued.

If there be in any kitchen in this kingdom, such an engine of waste and wickedness, as that called a Cormorant, or repository for such soups and gravies; if it be true that the monster be fed with flesh and fowl, at the expence of five guineas a week, let the owner know, that in seasons of dearth, this instrument of gluttony devours
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more human lives than the guillotine under Robespierre: with this difference, however, in favour of the tyrant, that he sheds the blood of man, to defend his own life, and uphold his tyranny; whereas, to the former, "his God is his belly," and to that he immolates victims that never gave him offence.

2. The preventing negative waste, or the preparing and combining the several ingredients both of bread and of other human food, in such manner and proportion, as to support as many persons as possible.

3. The preventing clandestine exportation.

It is pretty loudly whispered, that much larger quantities of wheat have been shipped off lately for Jersey and Guernsey, than the inhabitants of those islands can require for their own consumption.

4. The recommending an universal temperance of diet,

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Of all other remedies, this, if reducible to general practice, would be the surest and most effectual; and it is possible that Parliament, when they recommended a reduction in the consumption of wheat, without debasing or deteriorating the quality of the bread, relied in some measure on the operation of it. But to suppose, that the generality of people will be induced, by patriotic considerations, to lay a voluntary restraint on the appetite (whether that appetite be the call of nature, or a superinduced artificial habit of luxury, it matters not) is to attribute to individuals a much larger share of public virtue, than any experience in life can warrant. Thank God! indeed, the state of humanity is not so depraved in this country, but that there are many, both in public and private life, who, uninfluenced by any other considerations than those of duty, might be contented to forego, for a time, the luxuries and superfluities of the table, or even circumscribe their wants, as far as is consistent with the preservation of health and bodily strength. But these exceptions are so rare, when

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when compared with the population of the country, that the success of a scheme for averting a national famine, cannot, in common prudence, be rested on so romantic a supposition. Do the rulers of countries hope to find, among the vulgar of mankind (the vulgar I mean, of the higher and middle ranks) that expanded and comprehensive benevolence, which, founded in the love of our neighbour, rises in its natural course, from individuals to the species, and there forms the very summit and perfection of human virtue? In such a soil do they hope to find that holy spirit in sufficient strength, to controul, in the breast of each individual, and at every returning meal, the violence of a bodily appetite? To frame a set of practical rules under this persuasion, would be more absurd than to erect a metaphysical constitution of government, upon the hypothesis that all men are honest.

Persons may perhaps be persuaded to commute one species of food for another; to substitute a coarser for a more palatable bread. Yet you will find it difficult enough
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to overcome the force of habit and prejudice, so far as to recommend successfully even this commutation, without the aid of legislative coercion. And if you succeed in the attempt, I will venture to assert, that you must not rely solely on each man's patriotism, but lay hold at the same time of other assistant passions. So respectable is public virtue, that the most selfish and corrupt mind affects a sensibility to it; and it is to the intermediate agency of this affectation, that you must be beholden for the accomplishment of your purpose. For though many, I doubt not, may be induced by the purest motives to model the œconomy of their household after your proposed plan, yet the far greater number will be influenced by different considerations. To be what old Cato was, to prefer the substance of virtue to the semblance, requires more strength of character than most men have. With them, the ordinary spring of action is popular applause, popular applause is their reward.

If public virtue, when pure and unmixed with other passions, has so slight
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a hold upon the heart of man, that it cannot prevail on him to substitute a browner instead of a whiter loaf; if it has not power to effect so trifling a *change* of diet, without the co-operative assistance of one of the most powerful agents in the moral world: much less, *without* this assistance, can you hope to enforce an *abstinence*. For in this case you cannot work on a man's vanity. The unostentatious forbearance of him, who moderates his repast in silence, out of compassion for the distresses of his country, escapes the public eye, and is known only to God and himself.

It is without much effect upon the practice of the world, that the mandates of the Gospel, supported by the eloquence of St. Paul, enjoin religious abstinencies, upon *single* days and occasions. To recommend a continued *course* of forbearance and self-denial, *still more* urgent motives must be employed.

Those who, from confined views of life, with more candour than discernment, see nothing in men's motives but honesty and disinterestedness, may still think that I estimate
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mate the public virtue at too low a rate: Let such consider, that those qualities or actions, which are usually denominated virtues, and which in their practical effect are so, because in the constitution of the moral world good is often educed out of things evil, or things indifferent, are yet, many of them, the effect of education and habit, rather than of sentiment and deliberate choice. These causes, in well-regulated minds, are favourable to the practice of virtue in the common course of human affairs: but, as the present is an unusual call upon a man for an extraordinary effort of self-denial, those habits, instead of being with you, are against you.

Besides these difficulties, which are common to all, there are others peculiar to such masters of families as may recommend to their domestics the practice of this rule. That the latter will be apt to impute his purest and noblest intentions to sordid motives of parsimony and private interest. Again, if the credit and reputation attendant on a good deed, should induce any man to adopt this measure, that credit redounds almost

almost entirely on the master or regulator of the household, and not on those whose conduct is regulated. The latter, therefore, want this incentive to kindle their patriotism: which incentive is the more necessary, because the moral feelings of such persons is generally, for want of cultivation, less delicate, and less alive to impressions of this sort.

To elude in practice the force of these objections, to avoid encountering the suspicious jealousy of servants, and to give room for the agency of that other powerful spring of action in the human breast, I make a proposal to those who may choose to try the experiment. For, though I entertain no hopes of instituting a general temperance, yet this consideration ought not to operate as a discouragement to those few who may have courage and virtue enough to practise so laudable a self-denial. While the success of many public measures depends on the support of the whole, or a majority of the community, in the present instance, the most partial, or even individual endeavours, cannot wholly miscarry.

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If five persons should lessen their consumption of provisions, by one-sixth, those five sixths would furnish a maintenance for some other person, and in the case of a famine, might preserve the lives of more.

The proposal is as follows:—After the master of the family has informed his domestics, that there are not provisions enough in the country for the support of its inhabitants, without the greatest œconomy and good management; that no one man can take his fill, without lessening the portion of him who has but little already; but that if each would stint himself in a small degree, there would be a moderate quantity left for all;—let him propose a weekly saving in the consumption of the family, and that, as he (the master) can have no exclusive right to their common savings, they shall, one and all, have the satisfaction of bestowing them on whatever object of charity each, in his turn, may choose out for the purpose: with two provisos, however, which are added for obvious reasons: 1. That the master approve of the object of charity; 2. That

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the charity shall be distributed either in money or provisions, at his pleasure.

This scheme, I think, would not only answer the end proposed, but includes these singular advantages—that it enables a man to make large donations of charity without any expence to the donor; and inures all who are embarked in it, to the noblest exercise of virtue.

To reduce it into practice, it is evident that persons must previously ascertain the quantity of food consumed in their families during a week, or any other given space.

It would be adviseable also, if possible so to arrange the plan, that the savings of each individual might be known. This might easily be effected in the article of bread, by having it made up in small loaves, and assigning to each his quota. What remained at the end of the week would settle the proportion of merit due to each person, and might establish among them a competition in benevolence and charity.

It may not be improper to add, what

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we all know, but what most of us have need to be reminded of, that although extreme abstinence begets disease, yet nothing is more conducive to health than temperance. The instances of longevity, (says Arbuthnot) are chiefly among the abstemious. That repletion, by stopping the action of the stomach, is the cause of most disorders, appears from this consideration, that the practice of physic turns usually upon some sort of evacuation, either bleeding, emetic, sudorific, or cathartic. Now, if the cure of disease be by purgation, the true preservative against it must be temperance; and prevention, both in politics and medicine, is always better than remedy.

I am aware, that the practical observance of the rules above-mentioned, requires and includes a variety of petty and minute attentions. As they furnish no room for dignity of composition in the narrative, so, in their actual performance, they want that splendor which embellishes some sorts of virtues. But let not the sons and daughters of fashion imagine they
demean

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demean themselves by descending to the lowest and smallest offices of charity and humanity. Let them remember, that all things consist of their proper elements; that a life of active virtue is composed for the most part of petty and inferior acts of duty; and that the moral quality of an action is to be estimated by the importance of its consequences. If to serve one's country be virtue; if the very measure and standard of virtue be public utility; if it be pure religion before God, to relieve the fatherless and the widow, such righteousness, working by the love of our neighbour, will be had in remembrance at the day of final retribution.

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