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REFLECTIONS
ON THE
JUSTICE, ADVANTAGE, AND NECESSITY
OF LIMITING,
WITHIN A CERTAIN COMPASS,
THE
PRICE OF WHEAT,
BY
LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY,
ADDRESSED TO
Both Houses of Parliament.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
DEARNESS OF PROVISIONS, &c.

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PRICE ONE SHILLING.

REFLECTIONS, &c.

WHEN it is considered how very far persons in an elevated situation of life are removed from the lower classes of society, and how little liable they are to witness the misery they suffer when overwhelmed by a great calamity, like the present, arising from the high price of provisions, it is not a matter of wonder that they should think lightly of the severe distress the poor and indigent feel from the calls of hunger daily unsatisfied, when they never have felt the pain it occasions, or had an opportunity of seeing the direful effects of it upon those who do. And when it is farther considered how many taxes they pay towards the support of the poor, and the liberality of their donations for their relief, it is not surprising if they should believe, as perhaps many of them do, that there is little or no foundation for the present clamour of want, and that

the picture drawn of their distress is much exaggerated, particularly as those who surround them find it their interest to keep them in ignorance of the fact.

It may not then be amiss for a disinterested person, like myself, in the middle rank of life, who has taken great pains to examine into the real state of the case, to represent it fairly to them. One who is near enough to the lowest ranks in life to descry their necessities, and who has information and honesty sufficient to represent them with truth and candour to the highest.

If I do not as entirely as I could wish answer this description, I at least feel a willingness to become a mediator for the poor, and a determination not designedly to be guilty of any misrepresentations; and since a more able person has not stood forward in their cause, to examine and represent it with that minuteness and particularity the occasion calls for, I will use my utmost endeavours for that purpose. I was first led to a consideration of this subject by having been an eye witness, through a large extent of country, to a partial destruction of the crops of different kinds of grain in the year 1799, by the incessant rains of that year, before a great part of the harvest was got in, which made a deep and painful impression on my mind, be-

cause, on reflection, I apprehended, from a combination of circumstances, that there was no great stock of any kind of Grain in hand, and therefore we should have but a scanty provision for the ensuing year.

These considerations induced me to represent to the necessitous poor, with whom I took occasion to converse, the idea I had of the scarcity, and the advantage we enjoyed in living under a Government, who, attentive to our wants, would supply the deficiency of our own crops, by encouraging the importation of foreign Corn, and by taking every possible means to prevent a famine, which, if it was not for the care and attention of a wise and good Government, might probably take place, with all its horrors. I found in every poor person to whom I enforced these arguments, a disposition to submit to the necessities of the times, let their hardships be ever so great, and to wait with patience till the next year, which they hoped would afford abundant crops for their relief. Some mothers I saw, surrounded with children, who had not tasted bread or meat for three days, and in that time had eaten nothing more solid than a scanty meal or two of potatoes, who nevertheless did not unbecomingly repine, or utter the least murmur against the Divine Will. But then I did not go amongst the noisy and

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daring part of the poor, but amongst the greater number, who, suffering in silent obscurity, are scarce ever seen or heard of by the great and powerful.

I was convinced, by these pursuits, that the greater part of the poor were not the unreasonable dissatisfied beings they are by many represented to be, and, urged by compassion for their miseries, I published a small pamphlet, which was written before His Majesty's proclamation came out, to suppress the riots, intituled, "Thoughts on the Dearness of Provisions, &c." before I had time to give the subject the deliberate consideration it required, and this premature appearance of the work was, to recommend some immediate steps to be taken, to afford relief to the distressed poor, fearful that the miserable prospect of the approaching winter, while provisions were again rapidly advancing in price, might induce those whose virtues I had so recently seen and approved, to join the tumultuous crowd, with an idea to assist to redress of themselves their grievances, and thereby render them alike culpable and criminal with the bold and foremost ringleaders of the riots. And there was more reason to apprehend mischief, as at that time many of the middle class of people encouraged the proceedings of the mob, thinking it the only way to bring the Farmer to reason. In

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vain then would it have been for a single individual like myself, when thus countenanced, to have expected any good effect from my arguments, though I often informed them that all disorderly and riotous proceedings were contrary to law, would, if resorted to, endanger themselves, and not contribute to their relief, for that it was only from the higher power that redress could be obtained. I therefore hastily compiled the little pamphlet alluded to, with a view to recommend what I thought would procure redress to the existing grievance, and thereby remove the cause of the riots.

Having thus stated the reasons for giving my thoughts to the public in the aforesaid pamphlet, before they were matured by reflection, or rendered as perfectly explicit as I wished them to have been, I hope it will be admitted as a sufficient apology to the public for again offering my ideas to their consideration on the same subject, which I mean not merely as an elucidation of my former little work, but to take more matter into consideration, and to point it more particularly to the present emergency; and I am the more bold in this undertaking because I learn from various quarters the plan of my first was much approved; that part, at least, which recommends taking an account of the stock of Wheat, and limiting the

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price, above which it shall not be sold, by act of Parliament, which seems to entirely meet the approbation of the best informed, disinterested, intelligent men in the kingdom.

The uncertainty, at the present moment, of the quantity of Wheat there is in the kingdom, requires that it should be the primary step taken to ascertain it, as nearly as possible, since nothing can be done with certainty and justice, till that knowledge is obtained. It being asserted, that Ministers are now in possession of a full knowledge of it, is by no means a proof that they are so, and if they believe it themselves, that belief does not amount to proof. I would ask, by what means they come at their knowledge, when it is an indisputable fact that the very persons who know most of the matter, are those who are most interested in concealing the truth?

Those who have made the most extensive enquiries on the subject have experienced the greatest contradictions, and it will ever be the case in matters where there are two opposite interests concerned; it is natural to suppose that the Farmer and Dealer in Corn, who feel the extraordinary advantage of the high price of Wheat, will circulate the report of scarcity to give a colour to the continuance of their exorbitant demands, while the

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consumer, who feels oppressed by the extortion, is as desirous to circulate a report of plenty in order to reduce the price. It cannot then be thought surprising that various reports should be in circulation, on a matter in which every person is on one side or other interested, and that in so great a degree, that it is become the universal topic of conversation and complaint.

A discerning person may know how to detect a palpable falsehood, but it is not so easy a matter to find out the truth, particularly when artful men, for selfish purposes, endeavour to conceal it. Thus when it is advanced that Ministers were well informed at the end of the harvest, 1799, that it did not amount to half a crop, and that they also knew there was not Wheat enough in the kingdom for the usual supply of the inhabitants, to serve them longer than till the beginning of May, 1800, can it be believed that those Ministers would not have put a stop to the distilleries, and not have suffered 1,200,000 quarters of Grain to be converted into spirits, had they positively known that there had been such a great scarcity. Though in this instance the truth cannot be entirely separated from the falsehood, or be said what Ministers, at that time, did or did not know, experience has proved that the supposition of the magnitude of the scarcity was false; for the markets were sup-

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plied, and the people never refused bread for their money, till after the harvest of 1800, notwithstanding there was not more than about 900,000 quarters of Wheat imported, so small a quantity, in comparison to the consumption, that the greatest calculators have asserted it would not afford the nation the common supply for more than three weeks. And though on one hand some saving might have been made, by the quantity of Soup delivered out to the poor in different places, yet on the other, Butcher's Meat and Bacon having been so extremely dear, the indigent could rarely raise money enough to purchase either, and it is well known that with a little animal food, less than half the quantity of bread will suffice to satisfy hunger; on these considerations, therefore, it may be fairly conjectured, allowing for many of the poor being pinched, and often wanting bread, that there was very little less used than in years when the crops have been so abundant as to have much remain in hand, and other provisions at a reasonable rate. It must also be pretty evident there could be no great quantity of old Wheat in hand at the end of the harvest, 1799, a period so little distant from 1795 and 1796, when all the old stores were supposed to have been exhausted from the scarcity of those years. And when the account is taken in of the additional quantity consumed in time of war, and other adventitious circumstances,

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which of late has increased the consumption, it will readily be believed little Wheat could have accumulated in the short space of three years.

If these statements, which, I trust, are tolerably accurate, give us reason to believe, that notwithstanding the partial failure of last year's crop, it still afforded nearly sufficient for the nation's consumption, there are better grounds to hope that the crops of this year will not in the end prove in a great degree insufficient, since it is true, beyond a doubt, that there is some old Wheat now in hand.

I profess myself to be entirely ignorant of the real fact, as to whether there is, or is not, Wheat enough in hand to supply our demands till the next harvest, though I have taken much pains to come at the knowledge of it, but in my inquiries amongst Farmers and Dealers, from my purposes not having been known, I have betrayed many of them into confessions that have thrown some light on the subject, which could not have been done by one suspected to have had authority from Ministers to have made those enquiries. So that, on the whole, I confess it appears to me, from various circumstances, that great artifice has been made use of, by keeping Grain from the market, and by circulating false reports, for the purpose of en-

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hancing the price. Suffice it to mention one or two. When the price of Wheat was rapidly falling, at the latter end of July and the beginning of August, on the prospect of a productive harvest, various samples of fine Wheat, which had been produced a few weeks before, when it bore the highest price, and contracts offered to be made for any quantity at forty pounds per load, were suddenly and entirely withdrawn, and have not since appeared. I would ask, how could those contracts have been performed if the owners of the samples had not been possessed of Wheat to make them good? But many old ricks of Wheat were seen, whole and entire, in several parts of the country, when the markets were the worst supplied; and though it is impossible there should be as great a quantity as there used to be before these last years of scarcity, when frequently a year's stock, or more, of old Wheat was in store at the time of a new harvest, we may justly conclude, from what was seen in old ricks, and what might be unseen in hand, that the country was not entirely destitute at the end of the harvest 1800. When the rain came in September, the Farmers immediately rose the price of Wheat, under pretence that the wet weather would spoil the crops, and prevent their being got in; yet it is well known that the rain did not spoil the Corn, and that the harvest was well got. Since that period they have said, that

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though there was an appearance of an abundant crop, yet that the dry weather had so parched up the ears of the Wheat, that it does not yield a fourth part of the usual quantity. When such is the conduct and representation of the Farmers, can any person of common sense believe that they wish the plain broad truth to appear, or that from their accounts, or statements taken from them, Ministers can ever come at the truth?

In a dry summer, like the last, there must be a failure in some kinds of land, and that in many parts the crops yield very poorly, is, I fear, a fatal truth, but that failure is only partial. It is also to be considered, that though the rain of last year made it impossible for the Farmer to get all the strong land, usually appropriated for Wheat, into condition time enough to put in the seed, yet, on that account, there was a good deal sown upon light unfallowed ground, which fortunately turned out the best crops. There are many instances where the Wheat land also of this year yields well. I have lately been informed by men of judgment, that in the West of England, in some parts of Wales, and, indeed, throughout the kingdom, some parts of the crops are abundant, though there is a great partial failure in others, and, from authority on which I can depend, that for a compass of several miles under the Stoken Church Hills the crops are very abundant.

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If these representations are just, we might look with hope, and even a degree of confidence, that there would be Wheat enough for our consumption until next harvest, or if, from our increased consumption, it should not prove so that the Farmer at least would have a sufficient profit if the price was greatly abated, insomuch that the poor and needy might have Bread at a moderate rate, and if it should be found necessary to limit the quantity of our consumption, they would then have something left of their wages to purchase a little of other food and necessaries for their support and comfort.— However the matter may be in this general state of despair and uncertainty, nothing could afford such universal satisfaction as an account of the stock in hand being fairly taken; that is, all the Wheat in the nation measured, both what is in, and what is out of the straw, that the people at large might know what they had to trust to, in order to accommodate themselves to the emergency. And they are the more entitled to have their wishes complied with, as every one seems ready to submit to the exigencies of the times, by abstaining in some degree from Bread, if it is found necessary.

Taking an account of the stock might be done by measuring all the Wheat ready for sale in the possession of Farmers and Dealers, and enacting

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heavy penalties if they were found guilty of secreting any; and to find out what is in the straw, it would be only necessary to measure the square feet of a given quantity stacked as in barns and ricks, and when thrashed to measure by the bushel the net quantity it produced, from which it might be nearly ascertained what quantity the ricks or parcels unthrashed in the barns contained, by measuring them in like manner with the stacks. And this process should be observed at each Farm, or at the same Farm, if the different ricks were supposed to yield very differently.

As there are a great number of Excisemen in the country who are accustomed to mensuration, if they were employed in the business, it would not take up much time, or be attended with much expence, and the expence might be defrayed in each province by a general county rate, which no one would grudge paying if it would insure a regulation for a proper reduction in the price of Wheat. With activity and vigilance a return might be made from all parts of the country, even the most remote, in the space of ten days or a fortnight; and as it is supposed that Ministers are already in possession of an account of the number of inhabitants now residing in the kingdom, which, if not, an account could be taken of them in the mean time, when a calculation might, with some

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degree of accuracy, be made, how long the Wheat, upon a full allowance, would serve the inhabitants; and this knowledge would serve, with other circumstances, such as the rent of land, taxes, &c. to make such a calculation as to enable the Legislature to enact laws to regulate the price of Wheat with justice to the Farmers; and if, from a deficiency in quantity, it should be found necessary, to enforce a limitation in the use of Bread.

To effect a limitation with justice and equity, the best way would be to allow an equal quantity for the use of each person in the kingdom, in proportion to the stock, leaving a surplus of two, and if possible, three months' provision at the end of the harvest 1801. For this purpose it should be required of all persons to give in the number of their families to the Church-Wardens, or any proper person or persons that should be judged competent to the business, and to signify their intentions whether they would buy Wheat and make their own Bread, or Bread ready made; and a permit should be given them, by the person or persons authorized for the purpose, to enable them to purchase either Wheat or Bread, according to which they had made choice of, in proportion to the number of their families; and no Corn Dealer, Mealman, Baker, or any other person, should serve any person, persons, or family, with Wheat Flour or

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Bread, without a permit, under heavy penalties. This permit should be lodged with the person who supplied them with the articles, and a return made to the different parishes of the number served, to prevent any deception being practised. All Inns, Taverns, Coffee-Houses, &c. &c. should give an account of their usual consumption, and have a permit made out accordingly, with a certain latitude for additional company, which, however, should be made appear was, or had recently been at their houses.

This method of limiting the consumption would, in many respects, be better than obliging the Farmer to bring a certain quantity to market within every month, as recommended in my former pamphlet, because it would not lay him under the disagreeable, and sometimes inconvenient restraint of confining him to the time of bringing his Corn to market. And it would have a still greater advantage, by insuring to the poor the privilege of having an equal quantity of Bread with the rich.

Having shewn the necessity of ascertaining, upon some ground of certainty, the quantity of Wheat there is now in the nation, in order that the inhabitants may not be tortured by unpleasant or unwholesome mixtures in their Bread, or incon-

venienced by the forbearance of it, if there is plenty; and the justice and eligibility of each individual being equally obliged by law to abstain from a certain portion, to insure a regular supply till the next harvest, if there is a scarcity, I will next endeavour to prove the justice, advantage, and necessity of reducing the present price, and fixing it within the limits of a certain given sum, such as shall be judged most right and equitable by the Wisdom and Justice of the Legislature.

It has been advanced, with apparent reason, that the Farmer has an equal right with others to dispose of his goods, what he brings forth with industry, care, and expence, at as high a price as he can possibly obtain for them; and at the first blush it appears perfectly right that he should be allowed to do so, but when the subject is examined with more attention it will be found quite otherwise, from the eminent importance of his goods, and from the just and natural claim every one has to the articles in which he deals.

The Farmer, more than those who follow other occupations in life, is the servant of the public, because his business is to cultivate and bring forward the fruits of the earth, in which we have all an inherent and an indelible right, a right superior to all human institutions, for it comes from God*,

* Genesis, chap. i. ver. 26, 28, 29, 30.

who has given the fruits of the earth, and the living creatures thereon, for the use and support of man, and has so formed the human frame that it cannot subsist without a constant supply of the earth's produce. And though, for the advantage of society, it has been judged proper, in all civilized countries, to give the land to a small comparative number of the inhabitants, for their independent support, and to vest them with power and abilities to rule the laborious part of mankind, yet it was never intended that they, or their vassals, should withhold the produce from the multitude, or, in other words, keep it above the price the community can pay for it, whose existence, like their own, depends upon having a constant supply.

Nor does advancing this incontrovertable truth tend to lessen the dignity and consequence of our governors, or in the least to favour the system of general equality; for the same Almighty Power who ordained the fruits of the earth, in common for the support of every individual, has made a wide difference between the intellectual faculties of man, which plainly implies his will and intentions that some should rule over others. Neither has he made only the single distinction of wisdom and folly, but many degrees of intellectual powers, evincing, thereby, his intention that there should be gradations to keep the different proportions in the

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grand system of government in proper and regular order, when men formed themselves into large communities. Nor has the all-wise Creator made the faculties of man definite, but has left the human capacity open and capable of enlargement and improvement, from the culture of education, the exercise of memory, from reflection, and application, to intimate to mankind that those who govern should be supported without manual labour, that their time might be employed in cultivating the understanding, to keep that decided superiority of intellectual ability, which alone can enable them to regulate and rule over the different branches of society.

Here then we may trace the wise and just design of Omnipotence, in his formation of man, making a difference in the intellectual capacity that some should rule, and others be subordinate, and an equality in his appetite for food, and the quantity necessary for his subsistence, that all might share alike his bounteous supply of the fruits of the earth, as he has commanded. And this is so powerfully defined, that none with impunity can exceed the limits, for whoever does, and eats more than sufficient for the full support of life, will find sickness, pain, and disease, to be the certain consequence.

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Thus having made it appear from the highest authority, that mankind in general have an inherent right to the produce of the earth, it cannot be thought just to have that right withheld from them; and that it is so in part at this moment no one can doubt, while the law has justly ordained that every one should pay for the goods of another, and it is well known, that at this time, the price is beyond the reach, of a great part, of the poor to purchase enough of any kind of food for their support.

To whom then are they to look for redress? It cannot be to the land owner, for he has given all power over his land to the tenant, to whom he lets it, if he complies with, and fulfils, the terms on which he has taken the land; and though the rents and profits are, to all intents and purposes, the landlord's, yet he can have no right or title to the produce, or direct on what terms it shall be delivered by his tenant to the public, more than any other individual whatever. He may indeed turn him out of his farm at the end of the term for which it is taken, if he does not sell his Corn at the price he dictates; but the power of doing this does not constitute right, for he might exercise the same authority from motives of caprice, indignation, or interest. The produce is, to all intents and purposes, the Farmer's, to dispose of as he pleases, and at as high a price as he thinks

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proper; nor is there, I believe, at present, any human law to prevent his doing it; but there is a Divine Law which constitutes the rights of the people, and gives them a claim to a part of this his property, which if he does not acknowledge, and will not adhere to, it is high time a law should be made expressly for the purpose of obliging him to do it, and it is the more necessary, as the people cannot lawfully assert their own right, nor is it proper they should be allowed to enter upon so arduous an undertaking, which they are so totally unqualified to execute, and which, whenever attempted, is always attended with mischief, disorder, and excess. It is therefore to be esteemed one of the greatest blessings we enjoy, that we at present live under a Government calculated by its wisdom, vigour, and activity, to prevent and suppress such calamitous confusion; and that our present Governors are possessed of this wisdom, vigour, and activity, quelling the late riots in so short a space of time, evidently and positively evinces. And we will hope that these Governors are equally possessed of justice, compassion, and liberality, and that the same hands which were lately held up to punish when, and if, offences were committed, shall be held out to support and preserve those who are sinking under the weight of their oppression, now that peace and tranquillity is restored.

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Seeing then there is no power extant to redress the existing grievance, we must sue, entreat, and pray the different members that compose our inestimable, noble, and august Legislature, to create and give birth to a power that will fully and entirely effectuate the purpose, that they will agree and unite, and graciously condescend to make an Act of Parliament to limit the price of Wheat, within so moderate and reasonable a compass, as to enable those who have only small means to purchase a sufficient quantity for their daily subsistence. The people ask it as their right—they solicit as a favour—they petition for it with great humility, to relieve their pressing necessities.

Let it not be thought that this petition is incautiously, injudiciously, or unjustly preferred, for it will be found upon examination, that the fair interests of the Farmer and Dealer will not be injured if the price of Wheat, which operates on the price of all kinds of provisions, should, by the wisdom and benevolence of Parliament, be considerably lowered. This is so obvious, that it is almost unnecessary to point out the reasons; lest, however, a doubt should remain on the mind of any one, I will endeavour to point them out. The quantity of English Wheat sold between the harvest of 1799 and that of 1800, was so little less than what has been sold in the same period, in former years,

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that it bears no proportion with the increase in the price, so that the Farmer must have received more money, and gained infinitely larger profits, than in most preceding years; therefore, though the harvest of 1799 in many instances failed in the crops, yet, on the whole, it proved a rich harvest to the Farmer, a harvest that will indemnify him, for some losses, for many years to come; and when it is taken into consideration, the high price at which he disposed of his other kinds of Grain, as well as his Hay, Straw, and Cattle, there cannot remain a doubt of the truth of the proposition.— On these grounds it must appear clear to every unprejudiced person, that if Wheat was now reduced to 9s. per bushel, and every other article the Farmer deals in reduced in a certain degree, there would still remain for him as great a profit as a Farmer expected or required twenty years ago, notwithstanding the increase in his rent, and the additional taxes he pays (the income tax excepted, which ought not to be laid on the consumer, by dealers in any articles, for it is a tributary tax paid in common by every one who has property) it is then evident that the Farmer would not be incapacitated from making just and ample profits, if Wheat was now reduced to 10s. per bushel in London, and 9s. in the country, and an Act made expressly for that purpose would not infringe on the rights of the Farmer or any part of the body politic, but

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would contribute to establish the rights of the whole. These arguments of the immense profit made by the late high price of Grain, attaches equally to the Corn Dealer, whose interest should not be forgotten. But if a regulation of this nature should happily take place, and he felt dissatisfied with what he could then gain, he might leave the Corn trade to more moderate men, and endeavour to strike into another branch of business. In a great trading country, such as England, where the manufactories and commercial concerns are so extensive, a man of this description will always find some road open which affords a prospect for making a fortune, without that of dealing in Corn being made one of the number; for it will ever be injurious to the inhabitants of a country, to have those articles on which they subsist made objects of speculation, whereon ambitious and avaricious men build their hopes to amass wealth.

It being clearly proved that the Farmer's interest would not be so much injured by a legal reduction in the price of Wheat, as the people's interest if it is not reduced, the justice of the measure can be no longer doubted. To remove, however, all obstacles, on this head, we will take a view of the Farmer's interest in common with other members of society. It has always been the fixed principles of a good Government to make the interest of part of the

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community subservient to that of the whole.— Hence it is that the Legislature has made an Act to prevent any one from taking more than five pounds per cent. per ann. for money lent out to use, to prevent the practice of extortion and usury; and though it is a great hardship to many individuals, who could get more, yet every one is bound to submit to this law. An Act of Parliament has also been made to fix the price of the fares for hackney-coaches; and in another the price of small beer is limited. These Acts affect those on whom they are imposed, and check them in making the most of their property, as much as a law made to limit the price of Wheat could the Farmer, so that there would be no more injustice in the one than the other; and these instances serve to prove, that a law made to affix the price of any goods or property, is no innovation in the Legislative System of this country. If then, as plainly appears, the rule of property is not invaded by restrictive Acts, when tending to the general advantage of society, they can never be resorted to, or enacted by Parliament, with more justice, or on a more important occasion, than the present, which, in a great degree, affects the interests and happiness of the whole nation.

The advantages that would arise from making a law to limit the price above which Wheat should not be sold, in preference to any indirect

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mode that could be adopted, are numerous. It would have the immediate effect of removing the difficulties and hardships of every class of the people, without the partial tendency of alleviating one class, and leaving other classes without redress. It would, in fact, keep things in that admirable and proper order which has hitherto justly made this nation held up, in preference, as a country to live in, to all others in the known world. It would be doing even the Farmer a real service, by keeping him in his proper sphere, and contributing to make him the plain honest husbandman, his best characteristic, and what he ought always to be; a character highly respectable, and of the greatest utility in society; when, instead of being looked upon in the obnoxious light he is by many at present, he would be considered as the fostering friend of all mankind.

This law would rather prove a means of increasing the Farmer's attention to the cultivation of his land, than be a cause of his negligence, as some have imagined; for a man will never labour so hard, or contrive so well, when he is in affluence, as when he is obliged to do so for his livelihood; and when it was once ascertained how much at best he could get for his most valuable Grain, he would turn his mind more especially to improve his land and increase his crops, instead of employing his

thoughts, and racking his invention, to find out methods to advance the price of them. To prevent, however, any decrease in the cultivation of Wheat, if an Act was made to reduce the price of it, the same Act might contain a restriction on the price of all other kinds of Grain in proportion, which would have a proportional good effect, particularly on that of Barley, which of late has been so immoderately high in price, that the Brewers have severely felt the pressure, and have been disabled from making their Beer of that good quality that rendered it so justly estimable, and the comfort and admiration of all true Britons.

If any fear should be entertained that reducing the price of provisions would increase the consumption, it must be remembered, that if it is found there is not Wheat enough for the year's consumption, the consumption may be properly limited. And as there is every reason to believe there is a good stock of cattle, it is hoped the poor may have a small share of meat, which they would be able to purchase if they payed less for their bread, and there would need but little deductions, from the tables of the rich and great, to afford the poor what would then make them grateful; so that by each sparing a little, and by management and economy, England *will* still have enough to supply all her wants.

The necessity of Legislative interference at this time proceeds not only from the dearness of Wheat at this moment, but also from the length of time it has been dear, and the prospect of the high price continuing, if an Act of Parliament is not passed to prevent it, for the evil appears too deeply rooted to have any less direct measures take effect. It exceeds all precedent, for on examining the price of Corn for more than a century, it appears, that till the scarce year 1795, Wheat never was but twice in that period as high as 9s. per bushel; one instance was in the year 1710, and the other in the year 1774, and in those two years it was above 10s. per bushel, and both times the price fell before the approach of the next harvest. In 1795 it was 13s. per bushel, but fell before the harvest of 1796; and in the spring of 1797 was reduced to 7s. 6d. its just and proper level. In 1799 it rose to 13s. and 14s. per bushel, and continued to rise in 1800 till it reached 19s. and upwards, and experienced only a temporary fall in part of July and August, from which time it has risen again to nearly the same price. When such advances are made in the price of what we cannot dispense with, and are persisted in, what have we not to dread, in being left to the mercy of those who make them? When we sensibly feel, for a long period, what men do, and have done to oppress us, we have cause to fear what they may do. If such extortion is suffered, Wheat may rise to two guineas per bushel, or more;

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no one knows where the price may stop, if the Legislature does not enact forceable laws to fix its bounds.

For this last century past Wheat has kept a more equal standard in price than any other article of food, except in the two instances before quoted, till 1795; and it is more necessary that it should do so, because we cannot live without it; and because upon an influx of wealth into the country, by increase of trade, or other means, that wealth cannot, by any system whatever, be distributed in such proportions as to enable all classes of people to meet an extraordinary demand in the price for it. In the present case of distress, raising the price of labour would conduce to relieve some part of the poor, but as there are many very indigent persons who yet do not work for wages, it could not relieve all. In great manufactories, even a moderate encrease might tend to injure trade, and in small concerns, at this time, the master mechanic is often in as great want as his journeyman. It might be doing an essential service to advance the peasant's wages, for though in many places the Farmer has been extremely good to him, these hard times, yet it is a much better plan to be observed in society, to let a man depend on his own industry for his support, and enable him to do so, rather than be obliged to place his trust on the will of another.

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There is a still more powerful reason, if possible, for desiring a compulsory law to be made to limit the price of Wheat, within a certain compass, than any yet advanced. It would entirely put a stop to the evil consequence of the Farmer's rent being paid according to the price of Corn, an idea which has lately been much in circulation, as the wish of many land owners. The danger of having such a custom adopted is of so great a magnitude, that every nerve should be strained to prevent it. It would be infatuation to suffer, if it could by any means be avoided, to have it made the interest both of the landlord and the tenant for the price of Wheat to be high, when experience daily convinces us that nothing operates so powerfully on the human mind as self interest. On this consideration, not less than on all, and every, of those discussed, we hope, we intreat, and we pray, that the Legislature will, in its goodness, wisdom, and justice, most graciously condescend to make this law, so much desired by the people, and of which they stand so much in need.

I have enlarged the more upon the foregoing subject, as I wished, in treating upon it, to answer all the objections that have been in circulation. I have only one more to add, which is, what has been said of provision being dearer in other States than they are now in England. The fact, however, is not fairly ascertained, if the different prices of

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provisions are enumerated, and not the wages that are given to labourers, the profits that are made in trade, the emoluments that arise from offices, or the rents of the lands, and interest of money; if these are sufficient to meet the demand made for provision, the people have no reason to complain, they may be considered in a happy state; but if the lower classes of people, like most of ours at present, are unable to live with their usual comforts, and the poor, many of them, in want of bread, such a nation is not one that should be imitated; oppression of that nature is tyranny, and should be avoided by all governors who would wish to support the system of freedom, of wisdom, and of justice.

If all the rulers upon earth were to starve and oppress their poor, those of England should rise superior to them all, and shew their just sense of religion and virtue, by obeying and fulfilling the just and earliest ordinances of God. So shall they rise in prosperity and fame, in proportion to their piety and virtue. The Governors of Great Britain shall be the bulwark of her glorious and happy constitution, and support and uphold every part, that none be pressed down or go to decay. And when the government of the vicious, the factious, and corrupt nations shall change, be destroyed, and perish, her's shall continue firm, united, and perfect, to the astonishment and admiration of succeeding ages.

FINIS.