

0564

99-7



THE CORN LAWS

CONSIDERED,

IN THEIR EFFECT ON THE

LABOURER, TENANT, LANDLORD,

&c.

“Mr. Robertson contended, that there could not be a greater grievance inflicted on a country than *cheap Bread*. Who were to purchase potteries, if corn became cheap? It was not cheap corn, but good rents, good profits, and well-paid labour, that were required to restore the country to prosperity.”

Mr. T. Benett.—“With cheap corn, the agricultural labourers would be all starving.”

Debate on the 2nd of March, 1826.

Mr. Calcraft.—“The people might be sure that the rate of their wages had nothing to do with the price of corn.”

Debate on the 9th of March, 1826.

LONDON:
JOHN HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.
1826.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Speeches quoted on the preceding page may sufficiently excuse the present trifling addition to the publications of this nature. It has not been the intention of the writer to enter deeply into the science of Political Economy, but rather to show how the principles of cause and effect are applicable to the consideration of the Corn Laws, as well as to any other subject.

Such very incorrect views appear to be entertained by some individuals, legislators of the country, as regards the laws which regulate the wages of labour, that the writer has thought it expedient to commence his reasonings with the very rudiments of the science, and to proceed, from deduction to deduction, in such a way as he hopes will carry conviction to the minds of those, who may favour him with a few minutes of their attention.

THE CORN LAWS

CONSIDERED.

CAPITAL is that accumulation of the means of support which can be advanced to those engaged in productive industry. It consists, also, in the instruments or machinery by which their labour is assisted, or the productive powers are augmented, as well as in the raw material upon which their industry is exerted.

Money, being able to command these several objects, is their representative and equivalent.

Without capital, no great undertakings, which have not an *immediate* supply of the necessaries of life as their result, can be carried on.

As, without capital, or this previous accumulation of the means of support, or of the necessaries of life, all persons must be engaged in the production of them for their daily maintenance; so capital may be termed the source, or main-spring of all other production.

Capital, therefore, is the means whereby employment can be furnished to the industrious or labouring classes.

The result of such employment is the production of articles of necessity, comfort, or luxury, and which become objects of exchange or commerce.

It is clear, that according to the amount of capital, so is the ability to furnish employment.

The more extensive the employment, the greater must be the produce.

Produce can either be used by the capitalist, or producer, or be exchanged through the operation of selling and buying, for objects of equal value.

Any exception to this general rule, can only be of a temporary nature; because, if, from the over-production of any one article, it can no longer obtain its equivalent in the market, the production of it is diminished until the supply is brought down to the demand.

There are, however, two ways of correcting over-production; the one, by diminishing the supply, as above; the other, by opening new sources of demand: the latter is, of course, the most advantageous, because it not only prevents any intermission of employment, but implies a fresh accession of comforts or luxuries in exchange.

It may always, therefore, be under-

stood, that the produce of employment cannot be useless, because, in the long run, or as a general principle, no man would employ his capital to his own disadvantage and eventual ruin.

No limits can be assigned to demand, until *all* the wants of *all* mankind are provided for, therefore there never can be an over-production in *every article*; but it is necessary for prosperity, that the production of each article shall be in that proportion, which will suit the wants of mankind.

For example, if one baker, one butcher, one tailor, one agriculturist, &c. &c. or, in any other proportions, are requisite to conduce to each other's supply and comfort, so are 100,000 bakers, butchers, &c. &c.

Produce, being articles of necessity, comfort, or luxury, constitutes the riches of a country.

Every means, consequently, which tends to the accumulation of capital, is advantageous to a country; and every means which impedes that accumulation is disadvantageous.

All men will consider that they are the best judges of what is for their own welfare; or, it will be conceded that they

are most likely to be so, in matters of their personal interests; therefore, though they may err *sometimes* in their measures, it is most advantageous that they be left to their own guidance in commercial affairs.

Every thing that limits this liberty is, therefore, prejudicial.

High profits occasion a quick accumulation of capital, and, consequently, furnish an increasing means of employment, leading to an increase of wealth, and providing the means of subsistence and comfort to an increasing population.

The natural tendency of population is to increase: if the means of providing for this increase do not keep pace, through increase of production, with the increased demand for subsistence, &c. the proportion which falls to the share of individuals, must, of course, be diminished. This takes place, until the support of life will allow of no further diminution. The demand being greater than the supply, naturally enhances prices; and as labourers, both manufacturing and agricultural, must receive sufficient to enable them to work, their wages must be increased,

which increase can only be furnished by encroaching on the profits of the capitalist; until, after much misery on the part of those who subsist on their labour, the capitalist finds it necessary to withdraw his capital from the employment in which it may be engaged; when, were it not for the poor rates, starvation to the labourer must ensue.

Whenever profits become generally low, it, therefore indicates the existence of a difficulty in providing for a population; and that the ability of a country to increase in wealth and population is drawing towards its limit.

The average rate of profits, therefore, is a sure criterion to judge of a nation's prosperity.

Wheat, being one of the chief necessaries of life, the greater or less cost of it increases or diminishes the means of capital, and, consequently, the means of employment.

Suppose the capital of a manufacturer allows him to employ three hundred people, the loaf being at ninepence; if the loaf falls to sixpence, and wages fall proportionably, he can employ one half as many more, or an additional one hundred and fifty.

These proportions are thus stated, and

the chief article of support only referred to, to render the principle clearer.

If, however, as would naturally be the case, the increased demand for labourers or work-people became general and extensive, and at all beyond the quantity of labour which is seeking employment; a competition amongst capitalists would take place to procure the labourers they desire to have; and, although, from the fall in the price of bread, wages might, *nominally*, remain lower than before it took place; yet, in reality, as regards the labourer, they would rise and he would be able to command more of the comforts and necessities of life.

Suppose wages to fall from ninepence to sevenpence half-penny, instead of to sixpence; bread having fallen, as before said, to sixpence; the labourer would receive higher wages, by twenty-five per cent., than he did before, when the loaf was at ninepence.

The proportion, however, between the increased number of labourers, the advance in wages, or the outlay in procuring additional quantities of raw material, &c. &c. cannot be determined: the remaining capital would go to these several objects.

As capital thus became more powerful, the rate of profit would increase; and thus a state of prosperity is induced, and indicated both from the increasing means of the manufacturer, and the increased comforts of the people.

An increased facility, or a cheaper mode of production, naturally begets a decrease in price.

A fall in price of any one article, arising from a cheaper production, begets a fall in price in all others, into the production of which the article of diminished cost enters; and, as a matter of course, the greatest general effect would be produced, by a fall in the article most generally necessary to all other production. Thus, suppose, by importation, or, from improved cultivation, a greater quantity of wheat is produced, and it falls in price, thereby allowing manufacturing wages to be lowered; the capital employed in manufactures can employ more labourers, the increased number of labourers produce more manufactures, until the additional consequent supply reduces the price to their reduced cost of production. This again affects the agriculturist, by reducing the cost of every article of his consumption.

The same argument is applicable, in its fullest extent, to the farmer. The profits, or returns, of capital employed in agriculture, are equally

affected by the proportional, though not, really, high rate of wages. . Wages are now regulated by the price of the necessaries of life. It is clear that if the necessaries of life were to fall one third, that part of the capital of the farmer allotted to wages, would allow of his employing an increased number of labourers. If the increased demand for agricultural labourers was beyond the numbers that exist, the labourer would be able, in a degree, to make his own terms with the farmer, and thus obtain higher real wages, and procure to himself a greater quantity of the necessaries or comforts of life.

The capital of the farmer, as well as that of the manufacturer, would also thus become more powerful, inasmuch as the labour of the greater number must be a greater production than that of the lesser number; and thus a proportionate increase in profits, or return to his capital, would accrue to him.

It is almost unnecessary to mention how much landlords, farmers, manufacturers, and every class of the people would benefit by the consequent reduction of the poor's rates. It may be estimated that almost one half of the poor rates arises from a deficiency of employment: if this be taken at £3,000,000 per year, besides the reduction in the maintenance of the sick and infirm, which might amount to, perhaps, 15 or 20 per cent., or, in the aggregate, to some hun-

dreds of thousands of pounds; it will not be an over-computation to say, that the relief, in this way, to the country, would be equal to a reduction in taxation, of three millions a year.

The foregoing short disquisition will show, in some degree, the causes and effects of capital and population.

It shows, that according to the amount and ability of capital to command the necessaries of life, which may be termed its power, so is the quantity of employment it can furnish:

That according to the returns or profits of capital, so is the quantum of produce to be distributed amongst a population.

If capital, or the means of support, including comforts and luxuries, increases in a greater ratio than population, which it can only do by profits being high, a greater proportion falls to the share of individuals, and a nation is in a state of prosperity.

If, on the contrary, population increase in a greater ratio than capital, which must arise from a fall in profits, the proportion to be divided becomes less, and privation and want are the consequence.

The great object, therefore, is to remove every obstacle from the employment of capital, so as to allow of its greatest power of action; because such obstacles not only place the natural limits of prosperity much nearer to us

than they otherwise would be ; but they hasten the decline and downfall of a country, by causing capital, which can only obtain low profits here, to be withdrawn and to seek more advantageous employment in other countries.

The object of the foregoing few pages has been to lay down, with perspicuity, the true principles of wealth, and to bring the restrictive system, especially the corn laws, to the test of these principles.

Having shown, generally, that they are destructive of the best interests of the country, it remains to examine more particularly into their effects.

Although considerable difficulty exists in ascertaining, with accuracy, the positive or precise effect of these laws, upon the price of the chief articles of food, yet it may be done with sufficient correctness to shew that they are a very great evil, and that they act as a most burthensome tax on the country, without producing *any benefit* whatever to any class of the people.

By some writers, what is termed the agricultural interest is said to consist of landlords, tenants or farmers, and labourers.

It is well known, that, under the present corn laws, this last class is reduced to what is barely necessary for their subsistence ; and it has been shown, that a diminution in the price of food,

arising from a greater facility in obtaining it ; whether by importation or otherwise, cannot lessen the quantity they would obtain, but would, it may positively be affirmed, increase the real rate of their wages, and enable them to procure a larger proportion of the necessaries and comforts of life.

As some evidence of this, the following table shews, rather in contradiction to Mr. Robertson's and Mr. Benett's ideas, that the wages of the labourer have always decreased as corn became dear ; or, what is equivalent, as poorer soils came successively into cultivation.

Statement showing the proportion of the wages of the labourer to the price of corn.

	Weekly pay.		Wheat per quarter.		Wages in pints of wheat.
	s.	d.	s.	d.	
1742 to 1752 . .	6	0 . . .	30	0 . . .	102
1761 — 1770 . .	7	6 . . .	42	6 . . .	90
1780 — 1790 . .	8	0 . . .	51	2 . . .	80
1795 — 1799 . .	9	0 . . .	70	8 . . .	65
1800 — 1808 . .	11	0 . . .	86	8 . . .	60

Every change that takes place in the improvement of machinery, which is continually occurring, produces alterations in employment, and begets some temporary inconvenience ; but these changes are accompanied with essential benefit to the whole community ; as, for example, the

advantage obtained by the adoption of the plough over the spade, or of the steam engine over the spinning wheel.

It is objected, by some, that the admission of agricultural produce from abroad would throw many labourers out of employment. It may be replied, that the increased power of the capital of the agriculturist and manufacturer would more than remedy the evil feared on this account; but, even supposing the worst anticipations to be realized, any temporary additional amount to the poor rates, would be preferable to our placing the bounds of our prosperity and the point of decline, within the restricted limits of our own cultivation.

If this objection, however, is to be considered valid, it is equally applicable to every other article of produce, and we ought, upon the same principle, to lay aside all ploughs, harrows, thrashing machines, which all perform the work of labourers, and to raise, at home, our sugar from beet root, our oranges in hot houses, our wine and every thing else. The absurdity of such principles is too palpable to call for further illustration. The raising an additional quantity of corn, by a more arduous process than that by which we can otherwise obtain it, is a proceeding of exactly the same nature, only differing in degree, as the attempt to produce these articles of our consumption.

The farmer must be regarded in the light of every other capitalist. In a general point of view, and considered apart from the existing temporary leases or agreements with the landlord, whatever may be the price of his produce, or the terms of his lease, whether high or low, is equally the same to him. He never can reap any gain beyond that return to his capital, which is common or current in any other employment of capital. If the farmer made twenty per cent. of his capital, whilst, in other employments of money, only fifteen per cent. can be made, it is evident that capital would leave the less advantageous for the more advantageous employment, until the additional quantity of produce in the market reduced the prices and profits to those of the ordinary return; and, also, if the return to the farmer's capital became *less* than that accruing to capital in other employment, capitalists would withdraw their money from agriculture, and place it in a more advantageous employ. According to the nature of the employment in which capital is vested, so is the time necessary for such change being effected. The farmer might require more time than the merchant, and less than the manufacturer, whose capital is fixed, and consists, in a great degree, in extensive buildings and machinery. The principle, how-

ever, is one of general application. But the case is peculiar strong in regard to the farmer, because every addition to the price of his produce does not benefit him, but goes to increase the rent of the landlord. That he is not benefited, therefore, by the restrictive system, is obvious:—that he would be benefited, in common with the rest of the community, inasmuch as the rate of profits or returns to his capital would increase, has been clearly shewn in page 8.

The degree in which tenants, holding leases, would suffer, is the most important part of the consideration attaching to this inquiry; because, if the capital of so important a class as the farmers would be absorbed by a continuation of the present rate of rent, whilst the prices of their produce would not allow them to pay it, an evil would be occasioned far beyond that of lowering the rents of the landlord, ten or fifteen per cent.: the farmer might lose his all; the landlord only a part; and that by no means equal to the decrease of income which has attended a very numerous class in the same rank in society: I mean, all the officers of our army and navy, on half pay, who are reduced in their incomes, some sixty or seventy per cent.; and who, it may be mentioned in passing, are now paying, perhaps

twenty or thirty per cent. on their expenditure, beyond what they would do, if the monopoly of the landlords did not exist.

The tenant, however, would by no means lose the whole difference in the price of his produce. Rent constitutes only between a fourth and a fifth part of his outgoings. On all the remaining part of his expenditure he would experience a reduction. If, by a free trade, the necessaries of life fell some fifteen or twenty per cent., the wages of labour might be reduced nearly in the same proportion, and cultivation could therefore be extended or improved at a smaller rate of expenditure in proportion to the land cultivated.

Again, a considerable reduction in his tithes would take place, and also in his poor rates, as estimated in page 8, and in every other item of his expenditure. There can be little doubt, that, in consequence of an increased demand for labour, the real rate of wages would rise, as shewn in page 6, which would occasion an increased demand for meat; thereby, *for a time*, raising its price, until an additional supply could be reared equal to the additional demand.

The prosperity of the great manufacturing districts is as well known to the farmer, from the direction which his sheep and cattle take, as it is to the consumers themselves. In times

of prosperity, large purchases, even from the vicinity of London, have been made for these districts, whilst, at other times, the supply of London has been the only object.

To digress, for a moment, from the consideration of how far the classes, denominated the agricultural interest, would be affected by a free trade in corn, it may be observed, that, from the preceding remark relative to an increased demand for meat, the idea that capital would be withdrawn from agriculture is, at best, doubtful. It has been proposed to reduce the import price of corn by degrees, in order to allow of the withdrawing of capital. A greater demand for meat would, however, immediately find employment for spare capital, and, at the same time, give occupation to the poor soils, which would be thrown into sheep pasture. The further advantages to tillage from increased stock need hardly be mentioned.

Having considered the effect of a free trade on the labourer and tenant, it remains to consider it in connection with the landlord, the only member of the community who is, apparently, benefited by the existing restrictions. The extent to which he is benefited is matter rather of curious inquiry, and, I think it may be proved that, though upwards of twenty-five millions, in grain alone, are paid by the con-

sumers, above what would be the necessary cost, if importation were permitted, yet that only a small portion of that amount goes to the landlord; and that the necessity we are under of resorting to poorer soils to raise the necessary food, is as injurious to the country as a community, as it would be, if resorted to by an individual. The nation, instead of having recourse to the more productive soils of the foreigner, by means of commerce, restricts itself to raise its supplies on its own poorer soils. If an individual were to labour, by choice, with a view to his own supply, on a poor piece of ground, instead of on a richer, which was close at hand, what would be the result? That the greater part, if not all, of the produce of his labour would be expended in his immediate maintenance; thereby preventing, if not altogether, almost altogether, that accumulation of the necessaries of life, which might allow of his employing himself in something beyond the mere provision of the means of support. So it is, in its degree, with the extra price paid by the consumers to the agriculturist. The restriction rendering necessary a resort to the poorer soils, it requires about four days labour to procure that, which could be procured by three days labour, under a different application of it; so that about at least one fourth of the time, labour, and capital of

the country, which is expended in raising that portion of the agricultural produce which is grown on the poorer soils, is totally wasted. I mention this proportion, as I believe it to be about that which exists between the prices of continental corn and our own: the exact difference, however, is not insisted on, only the principle.

But to arrive at some more precise conclusion as to the amount of evil that accrues to the country, it is necessary, as far as it can be done, to examine into the difference of price now paid, and that at which corn could be obtained by importation, and the consideration of the subject, as it respects the landlord, is involved in this inquiry.

*Poland is generally allowed to be the coun-

* The population of Poland being to that of England as 6 to 23, it is a thinly peopled agricultural country, and may not only admit of a great additional cultivation, as regards extent of surface, but also of great additional supplies from lands at present under cultivation; by means of improvement in the system of husbandry. An increasing population and additional capital, which would be attracted to their agriculture under the certainty of a regular demand, with a continuance of peace, would conduce to an ability for a greatly increased production. The largest exportations of Poland have not exceeded 5 or 600,000 quarters, to which they amounted in 1803 and 1804. They have since declined to about 150,000 quarters per annum. At from 35s. to 40s. it is calculated by a respectable merchant at Dantzic, that the Polanders might, under present circumstances, be in-

try from which we should, in the first instance, mainly draw our extra supply of wheat.

The following comparison will shew the difference which has existed, for a series of years, between the prices of this country and those of Dantzic :

	England.	Dantzic.	Difference.	
	per qr.	per qr.	per qr.	
1770 to 1789.	49 0	34 0	15 0	
1790 to 1798.	63 0	43 8	19 4	
1800 to 1809.	*89 0	60 0	29 0	} deducting de- preciation leaves 27s. 6d.
1810 to 1819.	†93 0	55 4	37 9	

duced to bring about 300,000 quarters to Dantzic. Time would, however, be requisite to afford additional supplies, as, for want of a regular market, tillage land has been very much of late years converted into pasture, the attention of the Polanders having been turned into the breeding of sheep, horses, and black cattle. This latter fact and the additional one that from want of a vent for their agricultural produce, their capital is now becoming employed in manufactures, lead to a fervent hope that we shall, by timely measures, not drive them, as we have the Americans, to become our rivals in the chief source of our prosperity.

* The depreciation of our currency was rather under three per cent.

† The depreciation of our currency averaged thirteen per cent.

As the averages of wheat from 1800 to 1819 appear rather to vary, though they do not in reality, from 85s. 10d. as stated by Mr. Whitmore as the average from 1802 to 1820,

To draw a further comparison from the year 1820 to 1825.

The average price of first quality of high mixed wheat, suited for the London market, at Dantzic, free on board, per quarter, was,

	Prices at Dantzic.	Add for freight and expenses 10s.	Prices in England.	Difference.
1820	42 6	52 6	65 10	13 4
1821	37 6	47 6	54 5	7 1
1822	32 6	42 6	43 3	0 9
1823	30 0	40 0	51 9	11 9
1824	29 0	39 0	62 9	23 0
1825	29 0	39 0	66 0	27 0
				average difference 14s.

it may be well to annex the annual average prices, as given in Mr. Lowe's work, page 130, where they are stated as follows :

	£.	s.	d.
1802 . . .	3	5	6
3 . . .	3	5	6
4 . . .	3	5	6
5 . . .	4	2	0
6 . . .	4	2	0
7 . . .	4	2	0
8 . . .	4	2	0
9 . . .	5	9	0
10 . . .	5	9	0
11 . . .	5	18	8
12 . . .	5	18	8
13 . . .	5	18	8
14 . . .	3	11	5
15 . . .	3	11	5
16 . . .	3	11	5
17 . . .	4	9	5
18 . . .	4	9	5
19 . . .	3	13	0
20 . . .	3	5	7

19) 81 10 2 (gives 85s. 10d. as stated by Mr. Whitmore. The prices of 1800 and 1801 were 127s. 9d.

This and the preceding statement afford striking evidence of the evils both of war and of restrictive regulations: in both countries the fluctuations are ruinous.

It is well known that the prices, in Poland, of the four last mentioned years will not remunerate the farmer for cultivation, and that they have led to a great alteration in the agriculture of that country. They cannot, therefore, be reckoned as prices upon which to ground a calculation, for the rate at which corn could be regularly imported. It is clear also, that a depressed price in England, like that of 1822, cannot be further aggravated by importation, as the charges attending importation equalize the prices of the two countries.

From every consideration of the subject, and from the opinion of many highly respectable merchants, the price at which we could obtain about 300,000 quarters, being about ten days supply for Great Britain, would be about 37s. 6d., rather higher than lower.

If to this	s.	d.
be added, for freight and all other charges,	37	6
The price at which it could be imported would be	47	6

The average difference of price between the two countries, from 1820 to 1825, appears about 14s.; but if we consider 1824 as a fair average year, in which the price was 62s., the

difference amounts to 15s. 6d. As, however, considerable importations would raise the prices abroad, let the difference in the price of wheat be reduced to 13s. Considering still the year 1824 as an average year, the prices of which were, for

Barley,	Oats,	Rye,	Beans,	Peas,
35	24	40	39	38 6

it is calculated, upon good mercantile authority, that the difference which is paid beyond what the price would be, if importation were allowed, may be taken as follows :

	s. d.
Wheat	13 0
Barley	13 0
Oats	7 6
Rye,	13 6
Peas and Beans	13 6

The estimated consumption of Great Britain may be taken and calculated as follows :*

	s. d.	£
15,000,000 qrs. of Wheat, at	13 0 .	9,750,000
10,000,000 Barley	13 0 .	6,500,000
24,000,000 Oats	7 6 .	9,000,000
1,000,000 Rye	13 6 .	675,000
2,000,000 Peas and Beans	13 6 .	1,350,000
		£27,275,000

* See Evidence of the Agricultural Committee for 1821, page 370. Upon the estimate there given, it would amount, according to Mr. Whitmore's pamphlet, page 107, to 55,000,000 quarters. The entire agricultural produce is estimated by some writers at £200,000,000. See Blackwood for March, 1826.

making an aggregate of about twenty-seven millions, paid by the consumers, beyond the necessary cost, if free importation were permitted.

Without adverting particularly to the arguments quoted at the beginning of these remarks, it may be replied, in answer to the query of Mr. Robertson, "Who were to purchase potteries if corn became cheap?" that if this sum of twenty-seven millions were not extracted from the pockets of the consumers, in consequence of the monopoly of the home market, it would equally be spent in the purchase of potteries or other articles *by them*. It may further be said, that if such an enormous charge tended at all to the benefit of the country, by becoming a part of the revenue, and so admitting of a reduction in other taxation, the objections to it would not be so strong as they are at present; but, instead of causing alleviations in any manner, I think I have shewn, that independently of the amount of the tax, the whole energies of the country are crippled by the system, and that the agricultural labourers, as well as the farmers or tenants, instead of being in any way benefited, are injured, in common with all the rest of the population.

I have before remarked, that the landlords are the only class who are *apparently* benefited by

the restrictive system. It appears from what I have above stated; that about twenty-seven millions are levied on the population to benefit the landlords. I will now shew that not one fourth of that sum finds its way to their pockets.

The outgoings of the farmer may be divided into

Rent,

Wages of labour, and

Other general expenses to tradespeople, &c.

The first may be taken as . . . 2-9ths

The second 2-9ths

The third 5-9ths

That is to say, on the average, for a farm of from 350 to 400 acres,

Rent will amount to . . . £400.

Wages of labour £400.

Other expenses £1000.

The sum of twenty-seven millions, before mentioned, has to be divided in the above proportion, as these several outgoings of the farmer are affected by the additional price, according to their respective amounts. The most palpable proof that can be offered of this, is, that the wages of labour are advanced, or lowered, according to the price of the necessaries of life. If they were just half the price that they are, would not the wages of labour, *supposing the supply and demand for labour to*

remain in the same proportions as at present, be reduced exactly to one half? All other expenses are affected by the same principle, and therefore, though twenty-seven millions are levied in consequence of the restriction of ourselves to the poorer lands of this country, only two ninths, or about six millions, go to the landlords.

But it may further be shewn, that although these six millions are added to what, under the circumstances of a free trade in corn, would constitute the rents of the landlords, yet that it may be doubted whether the landlords are not, positively, losers by this addition *through these means*. According to the returns of the income tax in 1814, the income of the landlords was about £44,000,000. Rents are about the same as at that time. Now as I have before shewn that a fall in price of any one article, arising from cheaper production, begets a fall in every other, into the production of which the article which has diminished in price directly or indirectly enters; and as bread enters into the cost, it may be said, of all objects of our production, so in the proportion of the fall would the landlords be benefited in the greater part of their expenditure. If wheat were to fall one-fifth, and all other grain about one-third, it may not be

an over-computation to calculate fifteen per cent. on the whole of their expenditure, as the fall that would take place, especially if the poor-rate be greatly diminished.*

Comparing the difference then, between the £6,000,000 †, and calculating the benefit to them from a fall of only fifteen per cent. on £44,000,000 to be..... £6,600,000

it may fairly be doubted whether they are not positively losers.

One other remark commonly made by the supporters of the present system, is, that we raise corn enough for our supply, and that we could not consume more. This is an argument used in Blackwood's Magazine for March, where it is asked, "Why we do not consume more wine" and other articles? And the answer is given by the Querist, who replies, "Because we cannot consume them." This number of that Magazine was published before the second of March, otherwise the author

* Mr. Brereton calculates the poor rates at twelve per cent. on the rent of all lands, houses, and mines.

† It will be noticed that I have taken the rent of land at £6,000,000 below the calculation made by Mr. Lowe, page 248, of his "Present State of England;" therefore it can hardly be said that I have over-computed the rent of the landlords; but any difference in degree, in my calculation, cannot affect the principle.

might have learnt, from the declaration of one of His Majesty's ministers, in the House of Commons, that the *consumption* of wine and coffee had increased, during the preceding six months, to double what it had been, previously to the reduction of the duty.

Let it be also stated that the average import from Ireland—

	Quarters of Grain of all sorts.
From 1806 to 1818, was.....	762,000
In 1819.....	972,441
1820.....	1,425,058
1821.....	1,822,815
* 1822.....	1,063,088
1823.....	1,528,151
1824.....	1,634,024

proving, beyond dispute, a positive capability of increased consumption. In corroboration of this general argument, the writer could adduce many instances of individual suffering, by prudent and industrious members of the labouring classes, for want of sufficient bread. But let the restrictive system be abolished, and the demand judged of from experience. If we cannot consume more, we may be sure that we shall not buy more. In the mean time, let not those who live in plenty and comfort be the judges for those who are otherwise

* A year of over-abundant production in England.

situated. It will hardly be credited, that during the high tax on salt, many amongst the labouring classes were deprived, in a great degree, of what they would gladly have consumed. It may be imagined, therefore, without doing much violence to reason, that if the ability to pay for it existed, a very great additional consumption of all kinds of corn might easily take place.

The last consideration which attaches to this subject, is that which relates to protection.

It is evident, that if we lay a tax on our own agricultural produce, a tax to an equal amount must be laid on what we may import from other countries, or we should encourage foreign agriculture to the destruction of our own.

The advantages of importation consist in our availing ourselves of the superior soils of other countries, instead of, by bringing into cultivation the poorer soils of our own, raising our supplies at a greater comparative expense. The natural cost of production, or of obtaining supplies, therefore, is that which alone ought to enter into the comparison.

If it cost, both in this country and others,
30s. to raise a quarter of wheat on a first quality of land,
40s. second
50s. third
60s. fourth;

it is clear, that after availing ourselves of all

the first quality of our own land, it will be more favourable to us to receive the produce of the first quality of land of other countries, before we cultivate our second quality;* and so, as it respects the others. If, in consequence of tithe, or other charge attending the cultivation of our own land, 10s. per quarter be added to the cost of our production, if we were to admit of importation without a duty to the same amount on foreign wheat, it is clear that we could only cultivate our first portion of land, whilst the foreigner could cultivate his first and second; and when, from a rise in prices, we could cultivate our second, the foreigner would include the third in his cultivation, &c. &c.

At present, the price of wheat, &c. is fixed by *the cost of production in our own country*, and this cost necessarily includes *all charges*, as tithes, county rates, &c.; therefore all the charges attending cultivation are now paid by the consumers. If free importation were permitted, without any duty, *the cost of importation* would regulate the price; and if the cost of production of foreign corn, with the addition of freight and charges attending importation, were lower than the prices of our own produce, it is

* Here, for simplicity, all mention of the cost of carriage, &c. is omitted.

clear that the latter must fall to the price at which the former could be afforded. In this case, the charges of tithe, poor rate, &c. would fall, first on the farmer, during any existing leases, and, eventually, on the landlord.

The difference, then, between the extra charges, as tithe, poor rate, &c., attending our own cultivation, and those attending the cultivation of other countries from which we may import, must, at all events, be laid on importations, and the tithe, &c. will then fall upon the consumers as it does at present.

From what has been said relative to the effect of charges upon agriculture, it may be remarked, how prejudicial they are in limiting our cultivation and means of employment.

In conclusion, and with reference to what has been said relative to the ability of employing the labouring classes, let it be remembered that in the question is involved, not alone their prosperity, but that of the whole community. All classes are in some degree dependent upon one another: the increase of employment and prosperity among the laborious and productive gives an impulse throughout the variety of classes engaged in contributing to the subsistence, the comfort, or the luxury of a nation; and as population, and the comfort, well-being, and happiness of a population, are increased by

an increased productive power, so, by a diminished power, must the population be checked and diminished, through the agency of want, deprivation, and absolute misery.

THE END.

LONDON:

IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY-STREET, STRAND.

0582

