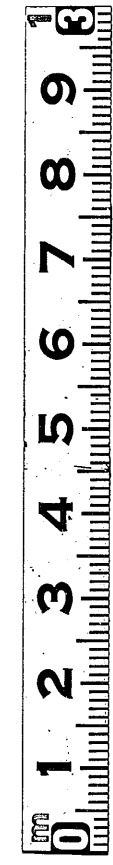


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**OBSERVATIONS**

ON THE

**QUESTION**

OF THE

**CORN LAWS AND FREE TRADE,**

SHEWING THE DISADVANTAGES OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM,  
PARTICULARLY TO THE LANDED INTEREST, AND THE  
PROPRIETY AND NECESSITY OF ALTERING IT,

AT THE SAME TIME

POINTING OUT THE EVILS OF TOO SUDDEN A CHANGE,  
AND SUGGESTING A MEANS OF EFFECTING IT  
WITH THE LEAST DISADVANTAGE:

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF MR. JACOB'S REPORT  
ON FOREIGN CORN AND AGRICULTURE.

BY J. WYATT.

LONDON:

JOHN HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

1826.

Price 2s. 1/2.

**OBSERVATIONS,***&c.*

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At a time when such intense interest is felt throughout the kingdom, on the subject of the Corn Laws and Free Trade, and when such difference of opinion exists on these questions, surely, the more these subjects are discussed, the better: and although there has already been a great number of pamphlets published of such opposite sentiments, yet much good has arisen from the variety of arguments which have been adduced. The frequent discussion therefore of subjects which naturally embrace so many considerations, it must be acknowledged, is best calculated to lead to sound conclusions.

These subjects have frequently attracted my attention, and I have devoted much time to their consideration; and in the hope that the senti-

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ments which I have formed, may contribute something to their right consideration, I have ventured thus to offer them publicly.

The first question I have chosen to enter upon, and which excites the most general concern, is that of a free corn trade; but before I enter on the main subject of this question, it will assist our views if we first trace what are generally considered the leading principles connected with it.

Corn, then, that most necessary source of food, is the essential production of all countries. In new colonies, and those countries where the productive power of land far exceeds the population, corn and other agricultural produce (excepting in times of great scarcity, arising from the badness of the seasons, internal commotions, and the like causes) always bears a lower value than in those manufacturing countries which are thickly populated in proportion to their extent—thus it is, that in England, agricultural produce bears so much greater value than in other countries. It must be observed, that it is the best land which is always first brought into cultivation; and when this fails to supply the increasing population, the inferior quality is cultivated,

till as the population becomes replete, every productive acre in time would be resorted to, and of course there would then be a limit to both, without a supply from other places. As a country therefore, circumstanced as England now is, is compelled to resort to the poorer land for an increased supply, the price of corn must rise, otherwise there would be no inducement to cultivate the poorer land—this increase of price in a great degree, or in fact all that beyond the cost of cultivation, goes to the landlord in the shape of rent.

In all countries, that portion of the population which is not employed in the cultivation of the land, must depend directly or indirectly, on the landed proprietors, clergy, and those engaged in agriculture, for support. This is effected in innumerable ways; and if by trade and manufacture, it is done either by a supply of home manufactures, partly of foreign or wholly of home material, or wholly of foreign manufacture, obtained by an exchange of home goods, dependant on the fancy and wants of their customers. This is the natural state of civilized society, and having thus alluded to the connexion between its different classes, let us now

consider the main subject before us, which naturally divides itself into three questions—first, what would be the effect of a free corn trade? Secondly, what is the effect of restraining laws, and particularly of the present corn laws? And thirdly, if the present system is bad and impolitic, what is the best to adopt for the future?

As to the first question, had the trade in corn been free, the price of agricultural produce in this country would have been regulated by the price of corn in those countries from whence it could be cheapest supplied; always bearing as much higher value here, as the difference of expense and cost of importation—under such circumstances, the value of agricultural produce in this country would not at this period, in all probability, be more than three fourths its present value; of course the incomes of all landed proprietors, the clergy, and those dependant on them must be in proportion, and consequently their power of expenditure likewise; and there can be no doubt that the ordinary value of all our manufactures and merchandize would be in the same ratio—that this would be the case, may be easily shewn. Does not the value of all our merchandize and manufactures ultimately depend

on the power of expenditure of our landed proprietors, clergy, and those engaged in agriculture, and dependant on them? If *their incomes are reduced* by a reduction in the value of agricultural produce, which a free trade in corn most assuredly would occasion, must not the demand for all our foreign and home goods be lessened *in proportion* to the reduction of their incomes, unless the value of those goods was also lessened in proportion? It may be said on the other hand, that though the demand from the landed interest for our manufactures and goods would be thus lessened, yet our exports would be increased in proportion to the import of foreign corn; and that as those employed in trade and manufactures would pay less for agricultural produce, their power of expenditure in other articles would be as much increased, and that it is only improving the condition of one class of society at the expense of another. But let us examine the subject—there is no doubt that this country is capable of producing sufficient corn for its population, and may continue to do so for a length of time, by bringing into cultivation the poorer land and resorting to a more expensive culture; but in the present state of this country,

the price of corn must rise to do this, otherwise there would be no inducement to resort to such a cultivation. It is owing to this, and the restraint on importation of foreign corn, that the average price of wheat in this country is about thirty per cent. higher than it would be with a free importation. Remove all restriction, and the average price of wheat in this country would in all probability (laying aside the first effects of a change) be nearer 45s. per quarter instead of 60s. which may be taken as the present average. Under such circumstances, a considerable portion of the inferior land would be thrown out of cultivation, and this country would annually import a certain quantity of corn.

I have no great faith, as Dr. Adam Smith says, in political arithmetic; but for the sake of argument, let us assume, what has been frequently estimated, (adapting it to the present time,) that the gross annual value of our agricultural produce, at present, is two hundred millions a year; this sum is distributed in the following manner, viz. one portion forms the incomes of the landlords, clergy, farmers, and those chiefly dependant on them; the remainder is paid in labourers' wages, and the other ex-

pences of management. These several incomes, wages, &c. are expended in the purchase of our home and foreign manufactures and goods; reduce the value of our agricultural produce by a free trade, one fourth, and you reduce the above sum fifty millions. But, against this must be set the value of foreign corn which would be imported; this must depend on the portion of inferior land thrown out of cultivation, which is supposed would reduce our own growth of corn about five per cent.; the value of our present growth is considered to be about seventy-five millions, five per cent. on this would be three and three quarter millions, but at the price it would be imported, it would not be more than three millions, there would therefore be about forty-seven millions less to be expended in the purchase of home and foreign goods, than at present; and of course the demand for them would be so much lessened, unless their price was reduced accordingly, which would be a natural consequence. Besides, it is the natural tendency of manufactures to become cheaper, by improvements and competition, whilst it is the tendency of corn to become dearer with the increase of population. It is therefore clear, that

the value of our manufactures *ultimately* depends on the value of our agricultural produce, just as much as the value of the latter depends on the increase of population in a country such as England is at present constituted. In thus speaking of the comparative value of these two great products, it must be considered quite distinct from the fluctuating effects of supply and demand, which are produced by very different and varying causes; that the ordinary value of every article is regulated by the supply and demand, is too well established a fact, to be doubted by any one the least conversant with the subject; and that this value is frequently fluctuating more or less, is also well known; but this fluctuation generally arises from temporary causes, either from over supply, or a deficiency, from increasing demand; and in the case of corn, from the deficiency or superabundance of the seasons, or excessive importation. The value of certain manufactures may also vary, from the discovery and application of machinery, and other improvements in their manufacture; but these considerations are quite distinct from the former.

Having thus endeavoured to show the intimate

connexion between these two main classes of society, viz. the landed and manufacturing interests, and their dependance on each other—and as regards the price of corn, when left to regulate itself by gradual causes, whether the average be high or low, that the conditions of each class are equally the same; we now come to consider what object or advantage there can be in resorting to a free corn trade. If the question depended on whether any particular class of society would be benefited more than the rest by it, (except the temporary one arising from the effects of a sudden change,) we should say, none whatever;\* but there are other considerations connected with the question of vital importance. This country, it must be considered, depends, for a very great share of her wealth

\* There is one class of society, it may be said, would be benefited by this change, viz. those who derive their incomes from taxation; but this, it must be observed, would in a great degree correct itself. Some saving has already been effected by a reduction of interest, and more may yet be done. Some saving would also be made in the expense of providing stores, and victualling our army and navy; and there would be a tendency to saving in other departments, and as our taxes would be gradually lessened, as they have already been to a great extent, no disadvantage would be felt from a change on this score.

and greatness, on the prosperity of her trade and manufactures. Destroy her foreign trade, and what has she left? It is owing to the superior capital, skill, and machinery of our merchants and manufacturers, that, notwithstanding the high price of labour in this country, we are enabled to manufacture and export the most necessary articles of life cheaper than our neighbours, and which makes this country, at present, the principal market for all the world, and gives it the superiority and advantage over every country; but the question is, can we always maintain this superiority? will not other countries be striving to compete with us? and will not capital be encouraged to flow into other countries, where so much greater profit offers itself? And that this will be the case, there can be no doubt; there is every inducement for it, and every appearance of it, and where labour is so much cheaper, other countries in time will be able to undersell us. Besides, do we not by this prohibiting system, deprive ourselves of a considerable trade with those countries of the continent which depend on a market for their surplus growth of corn, and which would take our manufactures in

exchange for such portion of our own consumption, which would be more profitable to this country to import, than to obtain by a forced and unnatural growth? It may be said that, what we gain by such a trade, we should lose in a less consumption of our manufactures at home; but this is a mistaken idea. As the price of labour is naturally regulated by the price of food, the price of our manufactures would be regulated accordingly, and the tendency of such a system would be, to place the landed interest in the same situation with regard to the power of purchase as at present; with this advantage, that as our trade would be enlarged, our manufactures would increase, a greater stimulus would be given to the increase of our population, and with it the demand for food, and consequently a gradual increase in the value of land, and the general wealth and prosperity of the country. Shall we then persevere in a system, which is so calculated in time to injure our trade, and undermine our prosperity, or shall we gradually return to a more natural one? That the latter would be preferable, every consideration points out; but as so great a change, if suddenly attempted, would be attended with such ruinous

consequences to our landed interest, and produce the greatest confusion in the country, it would be but just and prudent that it should be effected gradually.

Before we consider this question, it will be useful to examine the nature of our present corn laws. Never was there a worse system adopted than the corn laws of 1815, and least adapted to the object for which they were intended; and the late alteration is but a bungling attempt at their amelioration. By prohibiting the importation of corn, till the average price of wheat, for instance, rose to 80s. per quarter, it gave our own agriculturalists a monopoly up to that price; but whenever it rose to 80s. the quarter, owing to a bad harvest or other causes, the ports were then opened for a certain time to an unlimited importation; and as this regulating price is so much above the average of other countries, it is a great inducement to an extensive importation; our own markets become overstocked; the price of corn gets ruinously low; the country is thrown into great confusion, and in all probability it would take some time to bring matters right; they may then continue so for some time, till another bad harvest, or other

causes, produce a similar effect. That such is the tendency of the present corn laws I think is pretty generally admitted, and there can now be no doubt that the great depression of our agricultural produce a few years back, was chiefly occasioned by these laws. If then they are so pernicious in their effects, the sooner they are repealed the better, and another system adopted calculated to return to a free corn trade with the least possible disadvantage. To do this, a well-regulated corn law would be best, formed so as to secure in the first instance such a remunerating price as the *present circumstances* of the country require, and by a gradual reduction of duty, to return to a free trade; but in forming this, it should first be considered what at present would be a fair remunerating price for corn at home. If we look at the past and present state of our agriculturalists, it would appear that 60s. a quarter as an average price for wheat, and other grain in proportion, would in the present state of things be a fair remunerating price; if this should be considered so, the next question is, what regulation is best adapted to keep our markets as near to the regulated standard as possible? The average price of wheat at those



ports of the Continent from which corn could be cheapest obtained, appears from Mr. Jacob's Report at present to be about 25s. per quarter; but if there arose any demand for it in this country, it would raise that price to about 33s.; the cost of putting on board, freight, warehousing, merchant's profit, and other charges, would be from 12s. to 15s. per quarter, making the price at which it could be sold in the English markets about 45s. to 48s. per quarter; it would, therefore, require a duty of 12s. to 15s. per quarter to protect our own growth; but to prevent any ill effects to this country from excessive importation it would be desirable to increase this duty 1s. per quarter, for every 1s. per quarter the average price of our own wheat fell below the regulated standard; and also to prevent the ill effects of a scarcity at home, the duty should be reduced in the same ratio as the average price at home exceeded the standard.

A regulation of this kind, I think, would be best adapted to effect the object intended, and to suit the present circumstances of the country; and if a free trade is determined on as the future policy of this country, and of the propriety and necessity of which there can be no doubt, let the

change be brought about with the least injury to individuals, and confusion to the country. The present system has now been the growth of years; to make a sudden change would produce the greatest evils and injustice. Let the change be effected gradually, by a gradual reduction of the duty and import price. In determining this, due regard should be had to the taxes and charges which peculiarly affect the landed interest. I mean the land-tax, a certain portion of the poors' rates, county and highway rates. As to tithe, I think it is now pretty generally admitted, that it is totally unconnected with the subject; since the tithe is as much the property of the clergy and lay impropietor as the land is to the landlord. The question then is, what duty would be a sufficient protection for these charges? To determine this, we must consider what is the amount of these charges, and what is the probable extent of our present growth of corn. The total amount of the land-tax is about one million and a half. The amount of the poors' rates and county rates may be taken at six millions a year; of this, about two millions are considered as paid by trade and others, which leaves about four millions as chargeable on the land,

which, with one million and a half for land-tax, amounts to five millions and a half a year. The amount of the growth of our wheat is estimated at about ten millions of quarters, and of all other grain about thirty millions more. A protecting duty, therefore, of about 5s. per quarter for wheat, and other grain in proportion, would more than indemnify these charges.

In returning then to a free corn trade, and supposing the duty and import price fixed on as the *present regulation*, were afterwards lowered 1s. per annum till the latter was 50s. per quarter, and the duty 5s. on wheat, I certainly think under whatever system there ought to be a scale of duties similar to what I have before stated, in order to guard against the ill effects to this country of excessive importation, otherwise our home-markets would always be subject to great fluctuations.

To conclude, I have endeavoured to shew that, in the present circumstances of this country, corn and agricultural produce must on the average gradually rise with the increase of its population; that, as it merely regards the conditions of each class of society, it is equally the same whether the *average* price of corn be high

or low; but as it regards the ultimate prosperity of the country, in the success of our trade and manufactures, an extravagant price of corn at home, compared with other countries in a condition to vie with us, is calculated in time to injure our trade, by the encouragement which is given to those countries to compete with our own manufactures, and in time of underselling them; besides cramping our trade by shutting our ports against those corn countries which would otherwise carry on a considerable commerce with us. That it is our policy therefore, gradually to return in some degree to a free corn-trade, but in doing this, for God's sake let it not be done headlong, consider the consequences of a sudden change; of the incalculable evils and confusion attending it; but let it be done so as to guard as much as possible against such consequences, and there will then be no doubt of its final success.

We now come to the more general question of a free trade, the object of which is to remove those restraints which only serve to misdirect the capital and industry of a country, from that employment which would be most beneficial to the community, and as we cannot have a better il-

illustration of the subject than by enquiring into the nature of our silk manufacture, we shall confine our attention more particularly to that trade, which has of late excited so much interest. This manufacture, it may be said, has been nurtured, and has grown up and extended to its present magnitude and prosperity, under the protection of prohibitory laws, but for which, it would at this day probably, have been in comparative insignificance, till it has now arrived at that skill and improvement that makes it bid fair to compete with those countries which hitherto have excelled us. But at what an immense sacrifice to the country has this manufacture been established? and by how great a misapplication of capital? to effect it we have been obliged to pay dearer for our silks, and to destroy what would have been a much more profitable trade to the community, viz. an exchange of those manufactures in which we naturally excelled, for those silks which we should have obtained from the continent at a much less expense; instead of a large population which has gradually grown up with the extension of our silk manufactures, a much larger population would have arisen in the extension of our cotton, woollen, and hardware

manufactures. It has been said by some writers, that a great portion of our foreign silks, in the event of a free trade, would be purchased with gold instead of manufactures, and what then? is gold in this country inexhaustible? could this exist without an importation of gold from other countries to continue such a trade? and how can gold be obtained, like other articles, without an exchange of that which we have to give, viz. our surplus manufactures? It is therefore clear that, in the case of our silk manufactures, and in all others of the same nature, this country has gained nothing by the immense labour and sacrifice bestowed on them, but on the contrary has been a great loser. There can therefore be no doubt of the propriety and advantage of altering such a system, but like the corn laws, it would be the height of imprudence to attempt it too hastily, unless it was already in a condition to admit of it; our silk manufacture has gradually grown up to its present magnitude under this system, and there is such an immense capital and population engaged in it, that the consequences would be too serious to take any rash step that would suddenly affect its interests, it is now protected by a prohibitory law, it either stands in

need of this protection or it does not, either the French can afford to bring their silks into our market cheaper than our own manufacturer, or they cannot. I leave this point to be decided by more competent judges than myself, there can however be no doubt, that whilst our manufacturers paid the old duty on the raw material, the foreigner could undersell them, this is proved by the extent of trade carried on by the smuggler. To destroy this illicit trade, and to protect our manufacturer, government has reduced the duty on the raw material, and imposed a duty of thirty per cent. on foreign silks, if this duty is no more than a set off against the duty on the raw material, then, it is assumed that our manufacturers can bring silks into the market as cheap as their neighbours, and if so, it is only placing the foreign manufacturer on an equal footing with our own, and thus establishing what is so desirable, a free trade, the duties in this case only acting as a source of revenue; admitting all this to be correct, then there can be no reason for our manufacturer to complain, but if he is not yet in a situation to stand a fair competition with the foreign manufacturer, then, any measure that would hastily open the trade, must be a serious

injury to our own, and produce for a considerable time, the greatest distress and confusion in the country, unless the change was affected by gradual means.

With regard to the suppression of smuggling, by removing the prohibitory laws, in the case of the silk trade, this must depend on whether the duty of thirty per cent., is, or is not a sufficient temptation to the smuggler, I should scarcely think it was, but a little time will soon prove this, however the duty on all goods in which there is a facility of smuggling, particularly in French goods, ought to be so regulated as to offer no inducement to smuggling.

Duties on importation, when judiciously imposed, and confined to no other object than a source of revenue, are no detriment to a free trade, but when they are calculated to give an undue preference to any particular manufacture, they then become injurious. The expenses of the state must be provided for, and whether it be done by a duty on foreign produce or an excise duty, or other taxes, it is all one, so that they are judiciously imposed, and made to bear on the different classes of the community, according to their ability. It has been said that, owing to the

enormous magnitude of our taxation and debt, this country is not in a situation to adopt a free trade, if we are not in a situation to do so, now that our taxes have been reduced to the extent in fact of twenty-four millions a year, and with every prospect of a further reduction, we never shall be; but there can be no doubt that *this* is the proper period, when there is every prospect of a lasting peace; when our wealth is rapidly increasing; and when it is of the most essential consequence to direct its employment to the greatest advantage to the community. As to the present unfortunate state of the country, it arises from causes in a great degree uncontrollable, and unfortunately inseparable from a great commercial and manufacturing country such as England, it is the character of the merchant and trader to be enterprising, and this is necessarily accompanied with a greater or less degree of speculation; this country has for a long period been subject at different times to commercial distresses, arising from over-speculation, or the change to a state of war or peace; and that such misfortunes will again visit us must be expected, though it is to be wished as seldom as possible. Partial distress will also sometimes arise in cer-

tain districts from the introduction of new machinery to supersede a great portion of manual labour, thereby throwing out of employ a considerable population; this is unfortunately now exemplified in a very alarming and distressing extent in certain parts of Lancashire, where the power-loom has been introduced; but although such changes are generally attended with more or less evil, no considerate person will deny the advantages arising to the country from the discovery of improvements, and the application of machinery. What is it that has so greatly increased every source of comfort, convenience, and enjoyment, particularly within the last thirty years but this spirit of improvement?—that enables every class of the community to be better fed, better housed, and better clothed?—that enables the traveller to go any distance in one-fourth the time, at less expense, and with incomparable ease and comfort, and that diffuses to all greater and more rational sources of enjoyment?

Some writers have said, “that machinery cannot in the nature of things be usefully carried beyond a certain point, and that in almost every manufacture it has long since passed that useful point; that it is the sole source of the existing

distresses, and that this distress has for sometime increased, and will still increase, in the very ratio of the improvement of that machinery, unless the market can be extended proportionally." They admit that "machinery, by extending human power, adds greatly to the convenience and luxuries of life; but that there is a limit to it, and one step beyond this limit is misery, when it takes employment from those who to eat must labour, or renders their condition one jot worse than it was before." And they call the system of free trade "the most insane project that any set of statesmen ever undertook; and that every step which is taken is inflicting undeserved ruin or damage on one part of the community, and undeserved advantage upon another." They say, "we may go on extending our machinery till manual labour is absolutely superseded, and ask what is to become of the unemployed hands."

That the introduction of the power-loom in Lancashire is the chief cause of the present distress there, cannot be doubted; for no machinery can be introduced without, for a time, producing a greater or less degree of distress to those whose employment it supersedes, and the greater its application is, the more extensive will that dis-

tress be. The same arguments might be applied, with equal justice, to the improvements which have been introduced at any time, for the same evils have more or less attended them from the most barbarous ages to the present period; yet I doubt whether even the poor distressed weaver would change even his present condition for the most prosperous of his own class in the earlier ages. I do not make this comparison to lessen our sympathy for the distresses of the poor weaver; on the contrary, I think he is deserving of all the relief that his present distresses may require; but only to show, that no improvement in the general welfare of a country can take place without producing, for a time, more or less individual injury.

We read of the distress which took place in the reign of Henry the Seventh, when the proprietors of land began to abolish the small tenements, into which their estates had been subdivided under the feudal system, being occupied by a swarm of peasants, who lived in the greatest misery and poverty, such as now exists in Poland, whom Mr. Jacob, in his Report, describes as "living in wooden huts, covered with thatch or shingles, consisting of one room with a stove,

around which the inhabitants and their cattle crowd together, and where the most disgusting kinds of filthiness are to be seen." In the place of such occupiers the proprietors enlarged their farms, and thereby gradually introduced a better race of tenantry, the rest of the peasantry being driven to seek employment in the manufacturing towns and districts. But it was this system which laid the foundation of that agricultural and commercial opulence which this country has since attained, and although so great a change could not have been effected without producing much distress, yet no one, I think, will now say, that it would have been better to have continued such a condition of society rather than produce any temporary distress. The machinery of Arkwright, at the time it was introduced, produced great distress among the population which was thrown out of employ, yet no one will now deny the benefits which have been derived from its discovery. The farmer cannot introduce the thrashing machine without in many instances doing a temporary injury to the thrasher; yet the same man who uses the thrashing machine is probably one of those who now abuses the introduction of other machinery.

It is very easy to say, that the extension of machinery and the introduction of a system of free trade will be the ruin of this country; but does the experience of the past teach us that the improvements which have taken place from time to time have detracted from the welfare of this country? No; on the contrary, that the condition of every class of society, from the highest to the lowest, generally speaking, is greatly improved. Look at every other country of the world, and say, if there is one whose inhabitants, in every rank, are to compare in its comforts with those of this country? Is there any period of our own history in which all classes of the community were in the enjoyment of greater comforts than the present age? There have been temporary distresses at all periods, and there is no doubt that there have been likewise the same opinions and forebodings of ill against all improvements and innovations as at present; yet the country, notwithstanding, has continued to increase in prosperity, and will yet do so, in spite of all the prophecies against the present liberal system of government; and there is no doubt as the demand for cotton goods increases, which their cheapness, occasioned by the power-looms, will

extend, that the present distresses of the weaver will be gradually lessening, till in time the power-looms will be no more thought of than other long established machinery.

It is, however, much to be wished, that in the case of the application of new machinery in our manufactures, some regulation could be devised, if such a thing be practicable, for a more gradual introduction of it, so as to produce as little distress to the labouring class as possible, and whatever tends to encourage unfair trading and over-speculation, should also be removed as much as possible; but the measures lately adopted for altering our currency will contribute much to prevent this.

In concluding this subject, it only remains to say, that parliament has only to decide the question, whether it be right or not to establish a free system of trade; and if right, to persevere in carrying it into effect, cautiously and judiciously, yet decisively. Partial attempts are more likely to do harm than good. Unless the corn laws are first amended, it is of little avail altering our system in other defective branches; and although so great a change cannot be expected to be made, without producing some individual and temporary

injury; yet if it be carried into effect cautiously and judiciously, the change will be but little felt, and there can be no doubt this country will rise to greater prosperity and wealth than ever.

As many of those who may be inclined to purchase this pamphlet may not have read Mr. Jacob's Report on foreign corn and agriculture, and as the result of his valuable inquiries are so immediately connected with the subject before us, it may be interesting to the reader to give a short account of his Report.

Mr. Jacob's instructions from the Board of Trade were, to obtain the most correct information on every subject connected with the supply of foreign corn, and the nature of the commerce in it, within the districts whose surplus finds a vent through the mouths of the Vistula into the Baltic; and also to collect information on the subject in the other parts of the Continent through which he passed.

Mr. Jacob accordingly proceeded on the 25th of June last to the Continent, passing through the Netherlands, the Prussian provinces on the Rhine, and the Dominions of Saxony, to Berlin, and from thence by Stettin to Dantzic; from Dantzic he travelled through the kingdom of Poland, and



returned through different parts of Germany into France, and by way of Paris to England.

Mr. Jacob describes the distress among the landowners and farmers throughout the whole of the North of Europe through which he travelled as ruinous; that since the exportation of corn has nearly ceased, the price has so greatly fallen, that many proprietors derive little or no revenue from their land; that the growth of corn is annually lessening in consequence of the conversion of arable land into pasture, and the decline of cultivation through the poverty of the farmer or occupier.

The state of agriculture in Prussia and Poland appears to be at a very low ebb, and resembles what we read in our own history of the state of this country in the feudal times. Mr. Jacob says, "the cultivators of that corn which is supplied to trade, are almost universally both owners and occupiers of the soil on which it grows. They cultivate it by the labour of their tenants or subjects, who raise sufficient for their own support, but have scarcely any surplus. It does not, as in most other countries, come to the several markets in small parcels. As wheat, particularly, can scarcely be there considered an article

of food, it would scarcely ever find purchasers among the inhabitants of the countries in which it is grown, if it were brought to the weekly or other markets in their own towns. It is almost exclusively an article for foreign consumption."

Mr. Jacob appears to have taken a great deal of pains to ascertain the stocks of wheat in the several ports of the Baltic, and also at the warehouses in the interior.

The following shews the result of his inquiries, some of which are founded on official documents.

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
|                              | Quarters.     |
| In Pomerania . . . . .       | 67,103        |
| Dantzic and Elbing . . . . . | 361,500       |
| Lubeck . . . . .             | 29,900        |
|                              | <hr/> 458,503 |

Conjectural.

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Denmark . . . . .                      | 25,000         |
| Rostock and Wismar . . . . .           | 25,000         |
| Petersburgh, Riga, and Memel . . . . . | 100,000        |
|  | <hr/> 608,503. |

In ports in the North Sea as ascertained.

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Hamburgh . . . . . | 105,000                  |
| Bremen . . . . .   | 27,970                   |
|                    | <hr/> Total 741,473 qrs. |

Mr. Jacob adds—"of the wheat to which we have referred, as accumulated in the several ports, I was assured nearly one fourth is of so bad a quality, as to find no market in this country, except in seasons of uncommon dearth. If then, out of the whole 741,473 quarters 556,330 quarters were to be sent to England, it would not be more than the consumption of ten days."

The following statement of Mr. Jacob is very satisfactory in shewing the probable means of supply to be obtained from the Baltic. He says—

"A view of the past exportation from the Vistula at different periods, and under different circumstances, will perhaps give some assistance in forming an idea of what may be the result of future changes. It is worthy of remark, that in the long period of 166 years, of which the returns are given, (viz. from 1651 to 1825,) there has been but little variation in the actual quantities of corn exported from Dantzic, when taken by periods of twenty-five years. The average of the whole period, gives an annual quantity of wheat and rye of 279,794 quarters, and this surplus may be fairly considered as the nearest approach that can be made, with existing mate-

rials, to what is the usual excess of the production of bread corn above the consumption of the inhabitants, when no extraordinary circumstances occur to excite or check cultivation."

The following he gives as the exports of wheat and rye from the cities of Dantzic and Elbing—

|                                  | <i>Wheat.</i> | <i>Rye.</i> | <i>Total.</i> |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
|                                  | Quarters.     | Quarters.   | Quarters.     |
| Av. of 5 years from 1791 to 1795 | 260,431       | 165,410     | 425,841       |
| Do. 1796 to 1800                 | 409,588       | 101,160     | 510,748       |
| Do. 1801 to 1805                 | 549,365       | 216,108     | 765,473       |

Of this latter period, 350,820 quarters annually were consigned to England, and the greater part of the remainder to France. Mr. Jacob gives the state of the exportation for the last five years, as a striking contrast with the corresponding term in the periods here seen, viz.

|                                  | <i>Wheat.</i> | <i>Rye.</i> | <i>Total.</i> |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
|                                  | Quarters.     | Quarters.   | Quarters.     |
| Av. of 5 years from 1821 to 1825 | 83,523        | 22,933      | 106,456       |

Mr. Jacob says—"the circumstances which produced that great exportation of corn, from 1801 to 1805, are of much importance in the consideration of the prospects of future expor-

tation; and the causes by which, in the space of the previous years, they were enabled to attain to that height, deserve to be traced.

Under the act 31 Geo. III. cap. 30 (1791) the ports of England had been constantly open for ten years, for the importation of wheat. If the average price of wheat was below 50s. the quarter, it was charged with a duty of 24s. 6d., if above 50s. and below 54s. a duty of 2s. 6d., and if above 54s. with a duty of only 6d. From the year 1791, when that act was passed, the price of wheat, with the exception of a short period in 1798, was constantly above 54s.; and what was imported was therefore charged with only the duty of 6d. per quarter. During two of the ten years, wheat in England had been above 80s. per quarter, and in the last of them, rose as high as 127s.

The ports of England were not merely open during this term; but by the act of 36 Geo. III. c. 21., large premiums were given on corn imported, to secure the importers, whether in British or in neutral vessels, certain prices, till 500,000 quarters should have been imported, after which the premiums were to be reduced.

During the ten years from 1791 to 1801, there was a constant demand in France for foreign corn; several deficient harvests had been experienced at the beginning of the revolution. Sweden for many years had looked for some supply from Prussia, not indeed of wheat to any extent, but chiefly of rye. These combined circumstances gave to the agriculture of Poland and Prussia, a portion of capital and motives to exertion, which produced the vast surplus that was exported from 1801 to 1805. The impulse given by the open markets, and by the high prices which had opened them, acted with accumulated force in the next five years, and raised the surplus, as we have seen, somewhat higher. By the constant application of all these powerful stimuli, which were in operation during ten years, we have seen that at length the surplus of wheat, which the Vistula and its borders extended to unusual dimensions, could yield, amounted to 550,000 quarters annually, or about sufficient, supposing the whole to be sent here for the consumption of this kingdom, with its present population, during the space of twelve days."

Mr. Jacob states that the price at which

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| wheat could be afforded to be sold in the ports of Prussia, is | 31s. per qu. |
| And the expense of shipping, freight, profit, &c.              | 12s. do.     |
| Making the price at which it could be sold here                | 43s. per qu. |
| That wheat from Warsaw could be sold here at                   | 48s. do.     |
| Do. from Cracow  | 45s.6d. do.  |

Mr. Jacob concludes by saying—"if we suppose the cost of wheat to the grower in the vicinity of Warsaw, to be about 28s. per quarter, and all the expences of conveyance to our markets to be 20s. more, and that it could be sold here for 60s. or 64s., we may presume that such a stimulus would produce great exertions, and a correspondent increase of supply; some abatement in the force of that stimulus would be probably felt in an increase of freight, and other charges, but the prospect of a profit of twelve or fourteen shillings would give a powerful impulse to cultivation. What is here stated, is upon the supposition, of course a mere supposition, that no duty would be imposed on foreign wheat in its introduction into this

kingdom. Supposing a duty should be imposed, it will of course weaken the force of the stimulus; and if it should be so high, as, when added to the costs and charges, to raise it above the price at which it could be sold in our markets, it would become a repellant instead of a stimulus, especially if it should be viewed as a permanent enactment. If a duty in this country of 10s. or 12s. per quarter was imposed, it would not allow of such a profit, on the supposition of the price being from 60s. to 64s., as to induce any great exertions to increase cultivation in the bordering districts in the Vistula."

Having given this short account of Mr. Jacob's report, I shall only add what appears to me as the conclusion to be drawn from it, viz. that the surplus produce of wheat of those countries in the north of Europe from which we generally draw the greater portion of our supply, in the event of a scarcity, cannot be taken at more than about 500,000 quarters. That since the demand for such surplus, has so greatly decreased, in consequence of the prohibitory system of this country, the cultivation of wheat in those countries, has been so much diminished, that in the event of a scar-

city in this country, with the exception of the present old stock in hand, but a scanty supply could in future be depended upon from this quarter, unless the price at home got so enormously high as to encourage the expensive supply from the interior. That the ruinous condition of the agriculturalists of the north of Europe, from the want of a vent for their surplus produce, must greatly discourage the import of foreign goods, which from this country has greatly diminished of late years, as appears by official returns.

That the price at which foreign corn could be imported into this country, if the system of our corn laws was altered, so as to admit importation under a fair protecting duty, is from 45s. to 48s. per quarter, exclusive of duty. That whilst the average price of wheat in England was about 60s. per quarter last year, in the greater part of Europe the price was only 15s. to 30s. per quarter, and in France about 35s., and in America (viz. New York) 28s. 9d.

Can there be any doubt then, of the evil consequences of the present prohibitory system, which has so discouraged the growth of corn

abroad, that in the event of a scarcity at home, we should be subject to all the horrors of a dearth—and also of the disadvantage of encouraging an unnatural price of corn at home, so much higher than the rest of the civilized world, which must have so great a tendency to encourage other countries to undersell us.

The price of corn in this country, from its extensive population, will always bear a higher value than other countries, without forcing its price unnaturally high; all that is requisite is to indemnify the peculiar charges affecting the land, by a fair protecting duty, which 5s. per quarter in wheat, and other grain in proportion, would cover. This would raise the price of foreign corn brought into our markets from 50s. to 52s. per quarter, but to prevent the evil effects of excessive importation, the duty should be raised 1s. per quarter for every shilling per quarter, the average price at home fell below 50s., this would secure the average price in this country at not less than 50s. to 52s. per quarter. And as it appears from Mr. Jacob's report, that corn from the Baltic can be obtained in the quantity which we have formerly imported at a

high price only, the probability is, that the average price here would be much higher.

I will conclude this by subjoining Mr. Jacob's returns of the prices of wheat in the different markets of Europe and America in the year 1825.

Returns of the Prices of Wheat of the best Quality in the different Markets of Europe and America, during the Year 1825.

|                  |               | Year 1825.   |    | Average of a series of Years. |    |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|----|-------------------------------|----|
|                  |               | Per Quarter. |    | s. d.                         |    |
|                  |               | s.           | d. | s.                            | d. |
| Barcelona.....   | June .....    | 48           | 0  |                               |    |
| Santander.....   | August....    | 47           | 2  |                               |    |
| France, average  | 30 September  | 35           | 4  | 40                            | 0  |
| Palermo .....    | 3 September   | 32           | 7  |                               |    |
| Livorno .....    | 1 September   | 32           | 3  |                               |    |
| Genoa .....      | 10 September  | 31           | 5  |                               |    |
| Nizza .....      | 15 September  | 31           | 5  |                               |    |
| Antwerp .....    | 21 October... | 30           | 0  |                               |    |
| Amsterdam .....  | 23 August.... | 28           | 10 |                               |    |
| Ditto .....      | .....         | 32           | 6  |                               |    |
| New York.....    | 1 July.....   | 28           | 9  |                               |    |
| Rotterdam .....  | 5 September   | 28           | 7  |                               |    |
| Dantzic.....     | 12 September  | 27           | 9  |                               |    |
| Ditto .....      | .....         | 26           | 4  | 33                            | 6  |
| Ditto .....      | .....         | 24           | 6  |                               |    |
| Ditto .....      | .....         | 23           | 0  |                               |    |
| Naples .....     | 30 August.... | 25           | 4  |                               |    |
| Hambro' .....    | 6 September   | 23           | 3  |                               |    |
| Riga.....        | 20 October... | 22           | 5  |                               |    |
| Bremen.....      | 5 November.   | 24           | 6  |                               |    |
| Ditto .....      | .....         | 16           | 0  |                               |    |
| Embden .....     | 10 November.  | 21           | 6  |                               |    |
| Triest .....     | 31 August.... | 20           | 10 |                               |    |
| Civita Vechia... | .....         | 20           | 4  |                               |    |
| Wismar.....      | 19 September  | 17           | 6  |                               |    |
| Rostock.....     | 15 September  | 18           | 0  |                               |    |
| Lubec .....      | 1 September   | 17           | 7  |                               |    |
| Warsaw.....      | 5 September   | 14           | 9  | 32                            | 0  |
| Vienna.....      | 27 September  | 14           | 7  | 38                            | 0  |
| Munich.....      | 10 October... | 24           | 11 | 42                            | 0  |
| Stettin .....    | 1 August....  | 16           | 6  |                               |    |
| Berlin .....     | 25 July.....  | 17           | 8  | 34                            | 6  |
| Odessa .....     | June.....     | 17           | 1  |                               |    |
| Mayence.....     | 17 November.  | 17           | 0  |                               |    |
| Archangel.....   | 13 October... | 16           | 6  |                               |    |
| Copenhagen ..... | 31 August.... | 14           | 6  |                               |    |
| Ditto .....      | 20 September  | 17           | 0  |                               |    |
| Cracow .....     | 31 May.....   | 12           | 5  | 25                            | 0  |

New Zealand wheat.  
Konigsburgh ditto.

New Zealand ditto.  
Very fine.  
Fine high mixed.  
Good mixed.  
Mixed red.

Best Brunswick.  
Lower lands.

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