

But the importation of cheap food rendered agriculture unnecessary. English farms were depreciated in value by competition with cheap lands everywhere. *Thus Free-Trade in corn has prevented Free-Trade in land.* This caused a great emigration of agricultural labourers. This emigration was just in proportion to the imports of food. England's farms are in foreign countries, and her agricultural labourers have had to go to them. Had her farms been at home, her people might also have stayed at home.

The question therefore is—does England contain enough land to feed all her people. I think there is enough, or nearly. England and Wales contain 35,264,000 acres of land. Out of this there are 31,000,000 fit for cultivation. It used to be reckoned that one-eighth was unfit for cultivation. But recent experiments in pumping and draining marshes have reduced this proportion materially, and one-twelfth would now be nearer the mark. This, therefore, would leave 32,324,334 acres fit for cultivation. But, then, there is the land occupied by buildings, roads, and railways. Allow 1,325,334 acres for these, though I consider this an excessive estimate, being over twenty-six times the area of London. Well, now, what proportion of this land is cultivated? In England and Wales there were this year 3,342,388 acres of wheat, 2,509,598 acres of barley, and 2,664,048 acres of oats. These are the principal crops, and, making due allowance for all other crops, it is evident that between the land that is partially cultivated and that which is uncultivated there is room for a vast extension of agriculture. In his *Principles of Political Economy*, page 166, J. S. Mill shows that in Flanders two and a half acres of land raise food for a man, his wife, and three children. He also shows that this is inferior sandy soil, originally reclaimed from the sea, not to be compared with land in England. At this rate, England and Wales have land enough to feed sixty-two millions of people. If we include Ireland and Scotland, where there is a much larger proportion of uncultivated land, it will make my argument much stronger. Thus England is drawing food from the ends of the earth, often at famine prices, while the best agricultural land in the world is lying waste at home. And the labour expended on the manufactures exchanged for this far exceeds the labour required to extract it from her own soil. To this extent, therefore, Free-Trade has diverted English labour into unprofitable channels. If one-third of the capital invested in merchants' ships and manufacturing machinery was employed in agriculture, it would cause a much larger and better distribution of wealth and comfort and refinement than at present. England's wealth is badly distributed, and this is mainly due to Free-Trade. There is no nation in the world, there never was one, in which the distribution of wealth was more unequal. And this unequal distribution is one of the great questions of the day, and one of the great dangers of society. By discouraging agriculture, Free-Trade has kept the large estates undivided and perpetuated the rule of the aristocracy, and in commerce it has raised up a class of merchant princes and manufacturers. It did the same thing, long ago, in Rome. After the people admitted corn free, and neglected their own agriculture, the inequality of wealth increased steadily. The time is near when men will cease to point to England in vindication of Free-Trade principles.

The *New York Shipping List*, a very ably conducted journal, alludes to the present depression in the following terms: "Many of England's best foreign customers for iron, coal, machinery, and various manufactures, are said to have become independent of her." Are the ships and machinery employed in foreign trade worth as much as her land would be if cultivated? I think not.

There are two causes which may lead to the extension of agriculture in England. One is a duty on corn as formerly. This is not likely. It is more likely to result from a decreasing foreign demand for English goods. Some foreign manufacturers are now not only underselling but excelling English manufacturers in the quality of their goods. This being the case, the purchasing power of English manufactures is becoming inadequate to supply the nation with imported food. Its manufactures are not purchasing its breadstuffs at the present time. For the last few years, large balances have had to be paid for in gold.