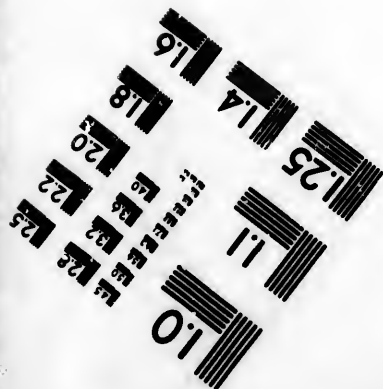
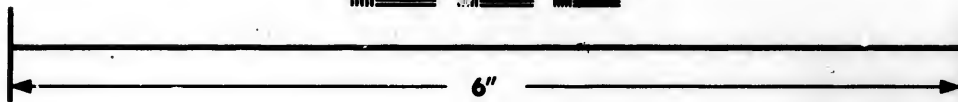
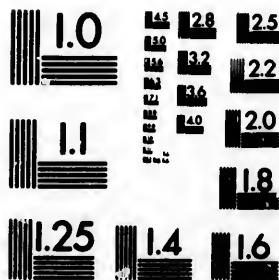


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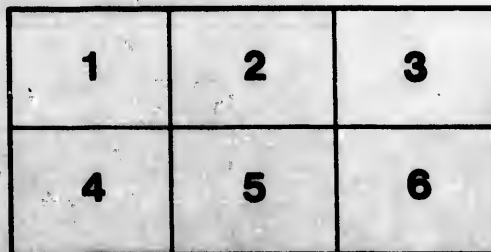
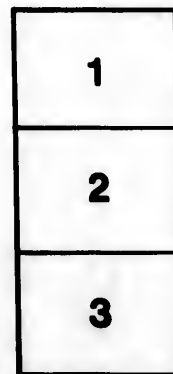
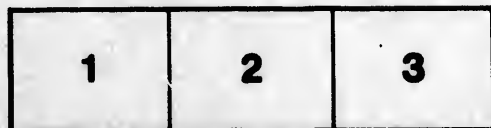
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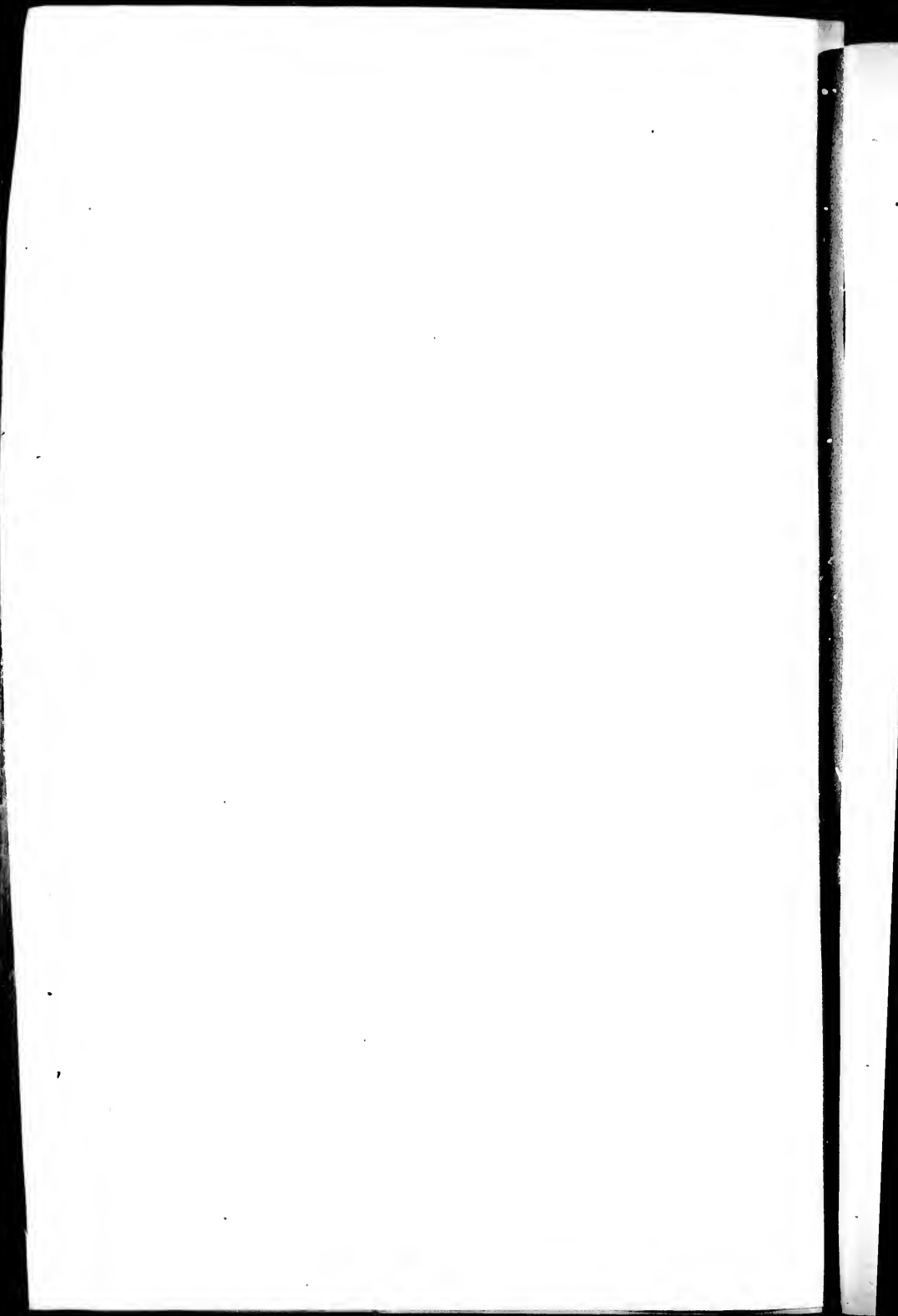
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AN

Inquiry

CONCERNING THE PROPRIETY

OF

Increasing the Import Duty

ON

FOREIGN CORN.

By JOHN NAISMITH, Esq.

AUTHOR OF ELEMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, &c. &c.

*Certe est miserrimus, cui semper patriæ salus et dignitas, posterior
sua dominatione et domesticis commodis fuit.* CICERO.

ORIGINAL.

1814.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Controversial writers generally introduce their works to the public by claiming exemption from prejudice. The claim indeed is seldom well founded; for in the discussion of questions which come home to men's business and bosoms, it is almost impossible for the most vigorous mind to divest itself completely of prejudice. I am far from supposing that I am possessed of this vigor; but I am confident that my prejudices, if I have any, with respect to the following subject, are not hostile to the cultivation of land, having spent a considerable part of a long life in the study and practice of Agriculture, and now, on the verge of life, feel no temptation to misrepresent the truth which experience has taught me. It is only from this experience that I think myself entitled to attention; for I am fully aware that my language wants those graces which have attracted readers to other tracts on this most interesting controversy. Such, however, as this inquiry is, I bequeath it to the public as the legacy of a man who is not likely to intrude himself more upon its attention. If it be found to throw any light on the great question now at issue, my sole end in publishing will be gained.

J. N.

Stirling, 29th October, 1814.

AN INQUIRY, &c.

A BILL has lately been brought into Parliament, and warmly supported by a number of landholders, to lay an additional restriction on the importation of foreign corn, in order to give domestic corn a more decided preference in the market. It is alleged, that, by the prosecution of this measure, the cultivators of land will be prompted to greater enterprise, and make more efficacious exertions to bring forward a sufficient quantity of corn, and thus the market would be more regularly supplied, the prices kept moderate and less fluctuating, and the nation no longer be dependent on other countries for the first necessary of life.

The body of the people have, however, expressed great hostility to this measure. Corporations and public bodies of all kinds, have formed resolutions, and presented petitions to both houses of parliament against it: and perhaps no public measure has ever been more universally reprobated. An unhappy ferment is thus excited, heart-burnings and jealousies are awakened, the landed and manufacturing classes regard each other as adversaries, and the concord and harmony of society is greatly disturbed. The bill has been now laid aside, but with the understanding that the consideration of it shall be resumed next session. In this interval it may be proper to take a dispassionate view of the measure, in its different bearings, to try if we can discover the real interest of the parties, which perhaps may coincide more intimately, than the

present passions and prejudices of people will allow them to admit. It will be happy if any thing can thus be contributed to put an end to baleful controversy, allay animosity, and restore unanimity. In the execution of this important task it will be proper to inquire,

I. What is the real cause why corn which generally abounded in Britain, in the first part of the last century, has been insufficient for the subsistence of the inhabitants ever since.

II. In what manner the successful industry of a growing population affects land property.

III. If any new restrictions which may be laid on the importation of foreign corn would make corn more abundant at home.

IV. If the state of society and the agriculture of the country would be improved by the exclusion of foreign corn.

V. We shall add a few miscellaneous observations.

But before commencing the discussion of these points, the following axioms, to which there may be sometimes occasion to refer, shall be submitted to the judgment of the reader.

Axiom 1st. The food or subsistence, the most urgent want of man and other animals, being ultimately obtained from the earth, the physical strength of a nation, so far as it depends on numbers, is chiefly derived from the natural and acquired fertility of the soil of which that nation is possessed.¹

2nd. But the produce of the soil will not go far in the subsistence of man and his dependent animals unless skill and labor be employed to increase and bring it forward: and those who cultivate the earth will only apply as much skill and labor as they think will serve to support themselves, and those who can give them in exchange something for which they have a value.

3rd. Before, therefore, agriculture can become a profession, and the skill, capital and industry be employed in it, which are requisite to excite the fertility of the soil, and bring forward its most valuable produce, a class of industrious consumers must exist, who have the fruits of their labors ready to exchange for the fruit of the earth. And it will not be difficult to determine whether it be most advantageous to agriculture that these be part of the inhabitants of the country, or those of a foreign nation, especially in a country surrounded by others possessing a more favorable soil and climate.²

4th. That enlightened and liberal-minded philosopher, Dr. Adam Smith, has ably explained how labor stamps a value on every subject on which it is employed. It is by labor, guided by

¹ Wealth of Nations, b. I. chap. 11.

² Principle of Population, b. I. chap. 9.

the intelligence of man, that all those subjects which nature offers to his acceptance, are fitted for his use and enjoyment. Hence labor is the source of all exchangeable value, and the universal agent in the creation of wealth.¹

5th. Thus land produce, and the labor of the other industrious classes of the society, mutually become the prices of each other. The balance of exchange, indeed, sometimes hangs on the one side, and sometimes on the other. When corn abounds, he who is possessed of it must give a greater quantity for the other commodities which he wants; when it is scarce, he purchases the same commodities for a less quantity. But the operatives in the other various productive labors can give no more for the corn requisite for their subsistence, than the value of their labor, after the necessary items of clothing, lodging and fuel are deducted. When the price of corn exceeds this, their desire for food becomes unavailing, and the effectual demand for corn must be proportionally diminished. The average value of the labor of the bulk of the laboring people is therefore the natural maximum price of corn; so that whatever be the fluctuations, labor and corn are mutually measured by each other, and the value of the one is limited by the extent of the other.²

6th. All nations indeed have introduced a medium for facilitating this and other branches of commerce; but this medium, whether it be coin or bank money, is not the measure, but an arbitrary symbol by which the measure is applied. Money therefore cannot be a certain standard for adjusting such regulations as may be deemed necessary respecting the commerce of corn.

7th. Labor is a very simple commodity, consisting solely in the value which the laborer adds to the subject on which he is employed, by the application of his strength and dexterity, without any mixture, except the tear and wear of the tools or implements which he usually handles. This is never considerable, but is greatest in countries which have made the greatest proficiency in mechanic knowledge, and greater in some employments than in others. The value of corn is more complex, being compounded of the labor of cultivation, the necessary manure, the seed, a proper remuneration to the cultivator for the capital, skill and attention which he employs in the culture of the soil, and carrying the product to market; for the tear and wear of numerous implements, indemnification for the loss suffered by unfruitful seasons and other calamitous incidents which unavoidably occur, all mixed with the gratuitous bounty of heaven. The sum total of

¹ Wealth of Nations, b. III. chap. 4.

² See Sir James Steuart's Works, vol. 5.

these, or something considerably above that, to stand for the bounty of heaven above mentioned, is the minimum price of corn. When it does not exceed, cultivation must cease, and the land lie fallow. The excess is the profit of the cultivator, if he be the proprietor of the soil; if he hires it from another, it belongs to him from whom he hires it. It is the annual value of the land, the property of the land-holder, and is called rent. This would seem to be all that the land-holder can claim, and indeed he can get no more, when the land has already been highly cultivated, and put in the most productive state. But for uncultivated land, on which improvements are to be made, even when these are executed at the expense of the farmer, the land-holder regards the capability of his land as a joint stock, along with the farmer's capital and attention, and exacts a share of the profit, expected to arise from the future improvement, as rent, besides the present annual value of the land. This annual value, which should go for rent, varies greatly according as the climate is more or less propitious, the natural or acquired fertility of the soil greater or less, together with a number of concomitant circumstances favorable or adverse to cultivation; and this variation is not in exact proportion to the breadth and fertility, but in an increasing ratio. For one acre of land, which, on account of these circumstances taken together, is as productive as three acres less favorably circumstanced, deserves much more than three times the rent, the expense of culture, hazard, &c. of the former being less than a third of the latter: hence bad land is often dearest rented. When rent does not exceed the value of the land proportioned to all circumstances, it is the just right of the land-holder; and it stimulates the farmer to exertions, which he feels are not beyond his power. But all attempts to raise it higher must defeat the purpose, and retard the improvement of the country.

I. We now return to the first branch of our inquiry, why corn, which abounded at a former period, is now become scarce. Those who think that the conduct of mankind is best guided by acts of parliament, ascribe this to the laws which have been made for regulating the commerce of corn. They contend that those laws promoted the agriculture of the country in the first period, and caused abundance: but that having undergone unwise alterations in latter times, they are become hostile to it, and a continual scarcity is the consequence.

As the nature of these laws is probably not thoroughly known by every reader, a short view of them may make the subject better understood.

The parliament of England seems first to have taken the agriculture of the nation under its protection in the reign of Charles II.

By an act of the 12th of his reign, the exportation of corn was permitted when the price of wheat did not exceed 40s. per quarter; in the 15th this liberty was extended till the price of wheat exceeded 48s.; at the same time, some improper obstructions on the inland trade of corn were partially corrected; by an act of the 22nd exportation was allowed at all higher prices; in the 1st of William and Mary, a bounty was given of 5s. a quarter on the exportation of wheat, till the price arose to 48s. per quarter, with a proportioned bounty on other grain. By the 22nd of Charles II. a duty of 16s. per quarter was imposed on the importation of wheat, when the price at home did not exceed 53s. 4d. and a duty of 8s. a quarter from that to 80s.: the importation of other sorts of grain was restrained by duties proportioned to the value. Some subsequent duties were added, and till the year 1773, the 13th of the present king, the duties on importation stood as follows:

	s.	duty s.	d.	s.	d.	dutys.	d.	d.
Beans to 28 per quarter	19	10	after which till	40	16	8	then	12
Barley to 28	19	10	till	32	16		then	12
Oats to 16	5	10	after					9 $\frac{1}{2}$
Pease to 40	16		after					9 $\frac{1}{2}$
Rye to 36	19	10	till	40	16	8	then	12
Wheat to 44	21	9	till	53 4	17		then	8

After the union, these regulations extended to Scotland. Several temporary acts, expressing times of dearth, passed between 1741 and 1773, prohibiting exportation and allowing importation for a limited time duty free. In the year 1773 a considerable alteration was made in the corn laws. The duty on importation of 16s. per quarter was continued till the price of wheat was 48s. and the bounty on exportation withdrawn when the price was 44s. In the year 1791 the duty on importation was made 24s. 3d. per quarter of wheat, and was exacted till the price exceeded 50s., to 54s.—2s. 6d., above 54s.,—6d. The law, which is still in force, passed in 1804, by which imported wheat pays the duty of 24s. 3d. per quarter, till the price at home be 63s., to 66s.—2s. 6d. The bounty on exportation of 5s. is allowed till the price be 48s. Above 54s. exportation forbidden.

Such are the much famed corn laws, both in their extolled and reprobated state. Much ingenuity has been employed to persuade the public that the abundance of corn in the first period above-mentioned, was produced by their beneficial operation, in their perfect state, and the succeeding scarcity to this operation being suspended by injudicious alterations.¹ Many people will find dif-

¹ Those who admire the wisdom of the first corn laws, say that a duty of 16s. a quarter on wheat imported, when the market price did not exceed

faculty in believing that this operation could be considerable, either in the one way or the other. They will admit probably, that as Britain is circumstanced, her corn grown at home requires a pre-

53s. 4d. was, at that period, equal to a prohibition, and left the market to the domestic husbandman, free of all competition; that the bounty of 5s. a quarter on exportation enabled him to sell the surplus corn to advantage in foreign parts; and thus being free from the dread of ever growing too much, his interest prompted him to grow as much as possible, and hence there was constantly abundance; and it seems to be presumed, that the increase of the quantity of corn to answer the demand would have been unlimited, had the corn laws been kept up to their original force. The succeeding scarcity, is, therefore, imputed solely to the alterations made on these laws, and their force being weakened by change of circumstances. The committee of the House of Commons on the corn laws, last session, appear to be strongly impressed with this notion. In their report to the house, they state "that so long as the system of restraining importation and encouraging exportation was persevered in, Great Britain [not only supplied herself, but exported much; and the prices were steady and moderate: And since that system was abandoned, and during the whole period of the continuance of the system that was substituted in its place, of encouraging importation and restraining exportation, that is from 1765 to the present time, Great Britain has not only not supplied herself but has imported vast quantities from foreign countries; and also that the price has been progressively advancing from an average of 33s. 3d. for 68 years under the old system, to an average of 88s. 11d. for the last nine years under the new one." But notwithstanding all which has been said, it is evident that the corn laws have not had the effect ascribed to them. When these laws were new, and in full vigor, a dreadful famine occurred, between the years 1693 and 1698, which they do not appear to have had any effect in palliating, and it is probable rather inflamed. Nor did they prevent the scarcity of 1741 and 1757, when the legislature was obliged to suspend their operation. The committee represents that corn was abundant so long as government persevered in giving these laws effect: but the temporary suspensions just mentioned, prove that experience had satisfied the wisdom of the nation, that the operation of the corn laws was unsuitable to the circumstances then existing. What kind of government would it have been, which persevered in institutions found so unsuitable to the times, and saw its subjects starving? It is unfair therefore to attribute the alteration of the corn laws, which circumstances had made indispensable, to any wanton fondness of innovation. Mr. Rose, in his speech to the house, has shown the assertions that the system of the corn laws was altered in 1765, that Great Britain has since been importing vast quantities of foreign corn,—and that the price has been progressively advancing, are equally incorrect. Indeed it is not a specimen of great candour to compare the high prices of nine years of unexampled hardship with the prices in quieter times. There was only a temporary suspension of the corn laws in 1765, like those in the years 1741 and 1757; and as neither of these gave any sensible discouragement to agriculture, so neither could that in 1765. The system of corn laws was not altered till the year 1773; and of the years which followed that till 1790, there were eight in which the exports exceeded the imports, so that there was no progressive dearth or scarcity in consequence of this alteration of system. And as far as can be judged from the few facts above stated, the abundance and scarcity of corn seems to have depended little or nothing on the operation of the corn laws.

ference in the home market: but as this has never been withheld, except for short periods and urgent reasons, they will not be able to discern the influence of the corn laws in the alteration which has occurred. To examine the solidity of this abstruse proposition, which has been chiefly supported by fine-spun speculative arguments, recourse should be had to the standard of facts. The state of the nation, its relations with other powers, the goodness or badness of the seasons, and many other circumstances, must be compared with the prices of grain, and with the exports and imports, at a number of periods at short distances from each other, before a just conclusion can be formed whether the operation of the corn laws has had any of the effects attributed to it, or not. But this laborious task is not necessary: for by taking a view of the history of the two kingdoms, now happily united, we shall find that the alteration from abundance to scarcity has proceeded from causes altogether independent on the corn laws.

The furious religious and political contention by which both nations were convulsed in the 17th century, and the bloody civil war proceeding from them, which continued long to devastate the country, and which ended only with the overthrow of the throne and the assassination of the monarch, are still remembered with horror. The sagacious usurper, Cromwell, in the course of his vigorous administration, having checked the rage of contending parties, and somewhat allayed the existing ferment, internal peace was restored. By his effort to introduce the Flemish agriculture into England, the people were taught to attend to this most essential branch of national industry, and in a short time the English, next to their teachers, became the best cultivators of land in Europe. The calm was not of long duration. Mutual jealousies between the crown and the subject soon arose, theological and political contentions were rekindled, accompanied with many of the horrors proceeding from such a state of society. These were most severely felt in Scotland, where the religious tenets of the people stood in most direct opposition to those of the prince. Internal quiet was not restored till the throne was again overturned, and a new monarch placed upon it. Thus from the destructive rage of civil and religious quarrels, and its disastrous consequences, the national spirit was benumbed, industry languished, and little or no improvement in the state of society was made in the 17th century.

Nor did the incidents which occurred in the first part of the 18th century tend much to revive the spirit, or promote the prosperity of the nation. A bloody and expensive foreign war, which though it had been concluded with glory, had exhausted the resources, and embarrassed the finances of the nation, was but lately ended and

the union of the two ancient kingdoms, which had met with much opposition and created great strife and perturbation, had been just concluded, when the monarch died. The prospect of a disputed succession had, for a considerable time, occupied the minds of the people, and the whole nation was arranged in two adverse parties. As religious considerations were mingled with those of a political nature, the animosity was little less fierce, and the minds of men little less agitated than in the preceding contentions. A new dynasty of kings was now seated on the throne, and two rebellions followed, at no great distance of time, which spread alarm, terror and dismay, by which the police of the country was unhinged, peace and security banished, and the minds of the people diverted from a steady application to peaceful industry.

While society existed in this paralyzed state, the laboring poor, having few prospects of constant bread, and steady establishments, were deterred from entering into the cares of conjugal life, early marriages were not frequent, and the children born not numerous; a great proportion of these was also carried off by the small pox, inoculation not being practised among people of that rank, and vaccination was not then known. Young men of spirit, about the same time, emigrated in crowds to the rising colonies of North America and the sugar islands, not finding room to exercise their activity at home.

During all those times, little attention could be paid to the industrious arts, save the obvious and necessary operations of husbandry, without which society could not subsist. The enterprising spirit of industry had been stunned by the din of contention; commerce was less active; manufactures had not yet arrived at much refinement, and were of limited extent. But at length, as the times became tranquil, the ferocity of contention subsided—as the minds of men were more enlightened, humanity, mutual forbearance, and social intercourse were more prevalent, and as the blessings of peace, liberty and security were felt, people became more attentive to their secular interest, and more active and enterprising in the pursuit of it. Between the years 1750 and 1760, the basis of that mighty fabric of national prosperity seems to have been laid, which has since been reared to such an astonishing magnitude. The peace of 1763, by which a war was terminated, which ended so gloriously for Britain, set those springs in motion which had been silently collecting force. Commerce was rapidly extended, various new manufactures were established, and the old extended, not only for home consumption, but for supplying the West Indian colonies, and those of North America, to which the success of the late war had added vigor and stability, and numerous operatives were required for every department, by which an

increasing population was promoted. This progress was somewhat interrupted by Britain quarrelling with her North American colonies, and by her haughty deportment bringing the nations of Europe to join in opposing her. But no sooner was this unhappy struggle over, than the same progress of prosperity went on with still greater rapidity. After the peace of 1783 the capital, which had been vested in trade with the Americans, was turned into more lucrative channels. Manufactures were improved and enlarged, the cotton manufacture, in particular, had received wonderful improvements, and Britain not only accommodated her own people, but clothed the nations around her with cheap fabrics.

During this period of prosperity, the industrious poor, being able to earn abundant subsistence, were induced to marry early, and numerous families were the consequence of plentiful subsistence. The progress of increasing population in Scotland is clearly pointed out by comparing Dr. Webster's list taken in the year 1755 with that of Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account in 1793 and after, and those taken by Mr. Abbot's act in this century. The progress in England and Wales is not so accurately ascertained, but it is admitted that there are four millions and a half added to the population of Great Britain since the middle of the last century, or something more than the half of the whole population at that period. When we take, along with this great increase, the more profuse use of bread, induced by greater ability to purchase, the increased numbers of horses of all kinds, and the greater quantity of food given to them, to enable them to perform the more severe labors to which they are put, the victualling a great number of ships, especially fleets of war for foreign service, the supporting of armies in foreign parts, many both sailors and soldiers being mercenaries, the natives of other countries, and add to all the great waste, unavoidable in warlike operations, the whole will fully account for the alteration from abundance to scarcity which has happened in the course of the last 50 years, and of the increased scarcity since the commencement of the destructive war now happily ended, without requiring any assistance from the ideal operation of defective corn laws.

Defective as the corn laws, in their latter state, are said to be, the improvements in agriculture have been greater during this most defective period, than in the preceding one, when they are held to have been well adapted to promote the culture of corn. This may be illustrated by taking a view of the former and present state of Scotland. Previous to the year 1760, the land in Scotland, with the exception of a very few favored spots, was nearly in the same state in which it had been for centuries. Lord Thames, in his Gentleman Farmer, published in 1776, feelingly describes the hum-

ble state of Scotch agriculture, in his time. Previous to that, several landed gentlemen, who had begun to turn their minds to the improvement of their country, had been making sundry experiments, and by communicating their observations to one another, had excited a general spirit of improving their respective properties. These improvements, thus set on foot, have been carried on, as well by farmers as landholders, with increasing spirit and activity ever since. Wilds have been reclaimed, marshes drained, the fields inclosed by fences and adorned and sheltered by plantations, summer fallowing has been generally practised; courses of expensive manure applied, the crops often doubled; and less or greater additions to the productive powers of the soil everywhere made. Though these exertions have not been every where equally vigorous, nor equally successful, amelioration is every where conspicuous; and in some districts, most favorable for the production of corn, the soil is brought, perhaps, nearly to its highest state of productiveness. Hence rents have risen, probably from five to ten times what they were at the period above mentioned. And all this has been effected in spite of the mischievous tendency imputed to the altered corn laws. A great part of England is naturally more fertile; and the improvement of the soil commenced earlier in that country. Such improvements are still going on; if they have not made such quick progress as in Scotland, this cannot be imputed to the defect of the corn laws, they being the same in both countries.

From this historical view, it seems evident that the alteration from abundance to scarcity of corn has proceeded solely from the greatly increased consumption, not from the fault of the corn laws: and that the improvement of the country has uniformly followed the prosperity of commerce and manufacture independent of these laws.

II. The second head proposed was to inquire how a growing population employed in manufacture affects landed property.

It is stated in axiom 2d and 3d that the demand for subsistence of industrious people, who have the various productions of their labor and ingenuity ready to give in exchange for land produce, is the most sure and powerful incitement to an active and skilful cultivation of the ground. Nothing seems to be more obvious. A ready and convenient market, offering a valuable consideration, is the best encouragement for the production of any commodity—for applying the utmost skill and industry to increase its quantity and improve its quality; and land produce can be no exception to this general rule. Impressed with this truth the legislature of England enacted a bounty to be paid on the exportation of corn, sen-

sible that the surplus corn of the country, after supplying the inhabitants, as often as there should be any, could not come in competition with that of more fertile countries around, in the foreign market, without such assistance; and hence that such surplus must go to waste in the hands of the cultivator, and discourage future exertions. This was no doubt giving encouragement to agriculture, as the nation then stood, as it gave the raiser of corn the prospect, by means of this awkward machine, of getting rid of the surplus, without fear of losing it, or selling it to great disadvantage. But a ready demand at home for all kinds of land produce (generally too bulky for distant carriage) to the extent of what can be raised, is a much more powerful motive to exertion in exciting the productive powers of the soil. This is amply proved by the effects which we see the prosperity of commerce and manufacture has produced on the improvement of the country. Mr. Malthus, however, is of a different opinion.

“The high price of corn,” says he, “and of rude produce of every kind, so far as it is occasioned by the freest competition among the nations of Europe, is a very great advantage, and is the very best encouragement to agriculture; but when occasioned merely by the competition of monied wealth at home, its effect is different. In the one case a great encouragement is given to production in general. In the other case, the produce is necessarily confined to the home consumption. The cultivators are justly afraid of growing too much corn, as a considerable loss will be sustained on that part which is sold abroad; and a glut in the home market will universally make the price fall below the fair and proper recompence to the grower.” But the same ingenious and acute author, in other parts of his valuable work, accedes to the doctrine here advanced, that agriculture cannot succeed, unless accompanied by a class of consumers who have something valuable to exchange for its productions.² But here he forms a theory which is not supported by experience, and perhaps can never be brought to that test. The jealousies subsisting among rival nations have never admitted, and probably never will admit, *the freest competition among them*. Nor can the power of monied wealth at home be brought into competition to raise the price of corn. The great body of consumers of corn can give no more for their subsistence than the value of their labor can afford. The price must therefore be limited by the effectual de-

¹ Principle of Population, vol. ii. p. 225.

² Ibid. vol. i. p. 203. “Though this necessary capital might be very small, yet this small sum perhaps the farmer cannot acquire; for when he grows a greater quantity of corn than usual, he finds no purchaser for it, and cannot convert it into any permanent article.”

mand; and no competition of wealth will be so unprofitably employed as to attempt to raise it higher.¹ Neither have cultivators any cause to be afraid of raising too much corn. The demand has exceeded the production for these twenty years past, notwithstanding the late improvements in agriculture, and offers a fair field for every exertion to accommodate the inhabitants with provisions: and unless disturbed by impolitic regulations, or unprosperous circumstances, may probably long continue to do so. The prosperity of commerce and manufacture has therefore been the great cause of the improvement of land in every respect. A numerous population of industrious consumers, dispersed in towns, villages, and hamlets over the country, offers a most encouraging market, now exceeding the actual production for all kinds of land produce. The expense of distant transportation is transferred from the cultivator to the manufacturer. "A piece of fine cloth," says Dr. Smith, "of eighty pounds weight, contains in it not only the price of eighty pounds of wool, but sometimes that of several thousand pounds of corn. The corn which could with difficulty be carried abroad in its own shape, is in this manner virtually exported in the complete manufacture." A ready market is offered at all times and for all quantities of every kind of land produce, and a quick return to suit the convenience of the seller. The successful industry of the manufacturer before his eyes stimulates the cultivator to equal diligence, and both go hand in hand in promoting the improvement of the country. It is even a considerable advantage to agriculture, that the effects are retained in the country, and can be brought to recruit part of the soil from which they were derived. By which means the commercial value of land, its yearly rent, and the rank, dignity, and enjoyment of landholders are advanced to a height, of which the most sanguine, forty years ago, could have had no expectation. The late improvements in agriculture are therefore the offspring of the prosperity of the other classes; and so far as this has been promoted by the economy of government, a more powerful support to agriculture has been administered, than could have been done by bounties, restrictive laws, or any direct encouragement or monopoly in its favor.

People, who have taken a narrow view of this subject, give it an opposite construction, and endeavour to excite in landholders a jealousy of the other classes, and to make them regard with envy that prosperity by which their own has been so greatly advanced. They make loud complaints of the partiality shewn by the British Government to commerce and manufacture. Every

¹ See Axiom 5th.

² Wealth of Nations, book iii. chap. 3.

new object of commerce, say they, has found protection and support. Every infant manufacture has been nursed by bounties, or guarded by restrictive laws in its favor; to support which landed property has been loaded with taxes, and oppressed by unreasonable restrictions and prohibitions.

It is needless at present to enter upon that great question in political economy, of the justice of an unlimited intercourse, and the benefit mankind would have obtained from it, as the subject has long ago been amply discussed.¹ Whatever has been said in its favor, it is not to be expected that all nations will at once be disposed to embrace it. The departure from that just and equitable measure has been common to them all, and Britain is not more guilty than others. An error so general cannot soon be generally corrected, and any partial attempt might be productive of more harm than good. When the world cannot be mended, it must be taken as it is. It will be sufficient to observe, that however erroneous the system may be, Britain has prospered under it. And though the steps which have been taken to encourage this or that branch of industry may not always have been the most wise and politic, and sometimes proved abortive, yet upon the whole, they have contributed to increase the numbers of industrious consumers of land produce, and of course promoted agriculture. Nor are such of the taxes laid on landed people, or of the privations which they have suffered, as are merely the effects of British policy to promote manufacture, more than a drop in the bucket, compared with the enormous load which the peculiar destiny of the nation has brought on. By the bold enterprising genius of the people, under the admired constitution which they enjoy, Britain has been advanced to a rank and glory among the nations, which has excited the jealousy of surrounding states, and demanded an almost constant struggle to support it. Hence wars have been frequent, tedious, and chargeable,—the national debt has accumulated to an almost incomputable height—and the government become extremely expensive. From these causes, taxes have become grievous; but landholders ought not to lay the blame on the other classes, since they themselves have often been the first to call for an appeal to arms; and those classes have, by their success, been enabled to take a large share of the burden.

As the various branches of commerce and manufacture have

¹ It has been reported of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, that after having perused the works of some of the economists, he observed that philosophers might form what theories they pleased in their closets; but that statesmen would pay little regard to them, and always take what they thought the shortest road to obtain their ends.

been extended, capital has been acquired in the hands of many individuals where there was none before; and they have been enabled to contribute a large proportion, along with land proprietors in bearing the national burdens; and have thus made ample recompence for all that the landed interest is supposed to have suffered on their account. In the awful struggle of the last twenty years, which is now brought to a happy conclusion, what would have become of the nation, without the powerful aid of commercial and manufacturing capital and industry? A gigantic despotism had arisen, which had poured an overwhelming deluge over the surrounding states, and ingulphed the whole in its destructive vortex. Britain alone resisted, and bravely stood in defence of her own independence and that of other nations; and her ruin only was wanting to satiate the ambition of the victorious tyrant. Had there been no funds of defence but such as could have been levied from landed property, Britain might have been overwhelmed by an overgrown power armed for her destruction. But fortunately commerce and manufacture having been uncommonly successful, were enabled to contribute largely to the defence of the nation, and levies were obtained from all, even down to the lowest ranks. Thus the terrific throne of Napoleon was overthrown by contributions from the shopkeepers and weavers of Britain, whom he affected to hold in the highest contempt.

The island of Great Britain, taken altogether, in an agricultural view, must stand in a low rank. The southern parts of England, indeed, are perhaps little or nothing inferior in fertility to the lands on the continent of the same latitude: but the surface of Scotland is rugged and mountainous. It appears, by late investigations, that not more than a fourth part of it can admit the operations of the plough; and some part of that is possessed of so little fertility that corn cannot be cultivated on it to advantage. Some of the northern parts of England, and a great part of Wales, are not less rugged; and it is probable that not half the surface can be regarded as a fit subject for the cultivation of corn. The climate is not less exceptionable than the soil. Surrounded on all sides by the ocean, in a high and stormy latitude, the irregular agitations of its atmosphere visit the land in frequent storms and rains, often unexpectedly interrupting the labors of the field; the temperature, influenced by the vast expanse of northern waters, in which ice is melting, is late in attaining heat sufficient to cherish vegetation, and the spring proves cold and backward; the summer is short and unsteady; and the crop frequently suffers serious injury from the premature frosts of autumn. Even the whole heat of the vegetating season is sometimes scarcely sufficient to bring the corn to perfect ripeness. Towards the end of

the seventeenth century, there were a number of such barren seasons, which occasioned great scarcity and dearth over the whole island. It appears by a private record, that in the years 1692, 1693, 1694, 1696, 1698, the corn did not ripen in Scotland; and in some of these years the snow fell and covered it while growing. It has been also observed that the crops were much injured by the inclemency of the weather in the years 1727, 1728, 1740, 1756, 1777; and the calamitous year 1781 is still painfully remembered by many people still living; and the years 1795 and 1799 by many more; the frost continued at intervals this present year, 1814, till June commenced, and returned to blast the blossoms of the bean in July. Other countries, no doubt, experience such adverse seasons; but in an insular situation, in a high latitude, the recurrence of such must be more frequent. Under such circumstances, and in the present state of this country, compared with the other nations of Europe, British husbandmen are certainly not in a condition to send their corn abroad to meet with that of more fertile countries in the foreign market. Agriculture must therefore have languished if the enterprising genius of the people had not carried manufactures to such an extent as to increase the number of consumers who have ability to purchase provisions to the full extent of what the agriculture of the country can produce, and render such ineffectual competition unnecessary. The home market has now become, in every respect, the best market in Europe for all kinds of land produce, and furnished the most powerful spur to that spirited and improved husbandry practised in Britain. In this manner the industry of the consumer supports that of the cultivator; and both are happily combined in promoting the general prosperity of the nation.

But the celebrated French economists of the last century, observing that the soil was the sole source of subsistence, and of course the origin of all wealth, taught that the labors bestowed on its cultivation were the only labors of any value, those in any kind of manufacture compensating only the subsistence of the manufacturer. Hence the followers of those philosophers contend that the permanent prosperity of a country depends on its having a quantity of surplus corn, the only commodity of intrinsic value, to export. Thus Mr. Malthus states, "It is almost universally acknowledged, that there is no branch of trade more profitable to a country, even in a commercial point of view, than the sale of rude produce. In general, its value bears a much greater proportion to the expense incurred in procuring it than that of any other commodity whatsoever, and the national profit

on its sale is, in consequence, greater."¹ How ever ingenious the speculations of those philosophers are, and how near soever they may approach the truth, it is obvious they are of no practical utility. Capital is acquired by other employments besides that of cultivating the earth; and capital is always accompanied with power, from whatever source it is derived. It is not conspicuous how distant foreigners should be better customers for the bulky commodities obtained from the soil, than the natives on the spot, or that the commerce among the different classes of inhabitants in a great nation should be less beneficial than that between distant nations. If all the neighboring nations were possessed of surplus corn, at the same period, it would be of no value; and that nation which can convert the whole of its land produce, by means of manufacturing industry, into exchangeable commodities, must make more profit than one which does not.

If the market formed at home, by the demand of a numerous population of industrious consumers, be the most advantageous one for the land produce of the country, it may also be trusted to as the most steady and unfailling, if not destroyed by ill-judged restrictions. The demand of foreign nations may cause a spurt at one time which will cease at another; but the home demand is constant and unceasing, and may be expected to increase so long as the national prosperity continues. The profound philosopher, just now quoted, has fully demonstrated that the power of procreation far exceeds that by which food is procured; and that the former is restrained only by the inability of the latter to keep pace with it.² By the preceding historical view of this country, it appears, that, agreeable to this general principle, the population has increased as manufactures, by means of increased capital, improved machinery, and greater dexterity in every operation, have been able to produce a greater quantity of marketable commodities, and enabled the people to purchase more food, till the annual demand for subsistence has exceeded the annual production—furnished the best market for land produce—and hence promoted the improvement of the fields, and enhanced the value of land to an extent unknown in any other age or country. Nor does there seem to be any doubt of the progress of demand, keeping pace with the progress of the productive ability of the soil. From the caprice of fashion, or alteration of relative circumstances, some species of manufacture may fail, but so long as the enterprising spirit of the nation exists, when one channel is choked up,

¹ Principle of Population, book iii. chap. 9.

² Principle of Population, book i. chap. 1.

capital and industry will be turned into another, provided that spirit and the superior advantages enjoyed by British subjects be not counterbalanced by impolitic regulations and restraints.

III. It was next proposed to inquire if any new restriction on the importation of foreign corn would tend to produce greater abundance at home.

If the great success of commerce and manufacture has had such important effects in promoting the improvement of the country, and advancing the value of land, as are represented under the last article, it would surely be proper to be ripely advised, and every probable consequence fairly investigated before any new system be adopted. The surrounding nations have long beheld with envy the successful and extensive circulation of British manufactures over the world; and have been constantly striving to vie with them in different markets. At this period, when the tumult of war has ceased to annoy the continent, and when corn is to be had there in abundance at a low rate, no doubt this competition will become much more animated. At such a period, when all the skill and expertness of the British manufacturers are scarcely enough to compensate for the comparative dearness of their subsistence already, a little addition to the price of corn, which must be the certain consequence of any new restraint on importation, and is the avowed purpose for which such restraint is required, would turn the scale, and exclude many kinds of British goods from the foreign market. In this event, the operatives, who now earn their bread by those manufactures, a numerous body, will be no longer able to purchase corn, the effectual demand will be lessened, and the motive for cultivating corn weakened. Those poor people, no longer able to support themselves, must then emigrate or perish, or become an useless load on public charity, a burden of which the landed interest must bear the largest share. And this is more especially the case in England, where the law provokes the poor early to despair of their ability to support themselves, and to throw that care on the parish. But though the state of British manufacture, in relation to that of other nations, were not quite so critical that the expert operative could not bear a little enhancement on the price of his subsistence, there are vast numbers of industrious poor, who from natural infirmity, want of dexterity, and the like, earn very small wages, and yet have the honest pride to content themselves with this humble pittance, and live upon the most scanty fare. A small addition to the price of meal would overturn the little system of guarded parsimony by which all these live; and throw

them upon public charity, by which landed property and public morals would equally suffer.¹

The price of corn, and of all kind of provisions in Britain, being at present nearly double to what it is in some of the neighboring countries, the proposed additional restrictions on importation, by which the price of corn must inevitably be heightened, and the comparative difference in the rates of subsistence in this island and on the continent widened, cannot fail to contract the manufactures for foreign sale within narrower limits, and diminish the number of people employed in them as above stated. The effectual demand for corn will be diminished in the same proportion, and consequently the motive for cultivating the earth to produce it: for it will be in vain now to resort to bounties on exportation, as the means of promoting agriculture. A bounty, so large as to enable British corn to meet with that of other countries in the foreign market, would make the exporting of corn a most absurd and ruinous traffic. The trade of exporting corn, to any considerable extent, cannot again take place till the glory of Britain be departed, till she have fallen from that height of prosperity to which her enterprising industry has lately raised her, and the value of land be sunk in the common ruin.

But it is said that the industry employed in commerce and manufacture has already out-stepped due bounds, and by the increased demand for subsistence, consuming, not only, the whole land produce, but requiring considerable assistance from foreign parts, has placed the nation in hazardous circumstances. Mr. Malthus lays it down as a general rule, that, "it is of the first consequence to the happiness and permanent prosperity of any country to be able to carry on the export trade of corn, as one considerable branch of its commercial transaction." It shall only be observed on this topic that the commercial and manufacturing industry of Britain has always carried agricultural improvement along with it in the same successful career; and Britain stands equally high in character as an agricultural as she does as a commercial nation. But that without the aid of the former, the latter could never have attained a state so highly advanced. Opposed by inferiority of soil and climate, had the great bent of her industry been turned

¹ Public interest demands that all these people be protected from want; but there are others who have an additional claim on public humanity. All annuitants on small incomes such as military officers who have bravely fought for the safety of their country, widows, and unmarried ladies, &c. these cannot work, and to beg are ashamed. To raise the price of provisions would make many of these people feel not only degradation but hardship.

² Principle of Population, book iii. chap. 10.

upon agriculture, Britain must have stood in a low rank among the nations of Europe. But, by combining commerce and manufacture with the cultivation of the soil, she has arrived at an unrivalled pitch of grandeur, to preserve which some additional corn is needed besides the home produce. And surely after giving a reasonable preference in the market to her own corn, and consuming the whole, she is entitled to import as much as to make up the deficiency. So long as there are other nations possessed of more fertile lands, and in a less advanced state of society, there will seldom be danger of not obtaining from them that quantity, by the nation which has commodities to give in exchange for it, provided the commerce be not fettered by cumbersome and unnecessary restraints. But if this hazardous state, which the course of events has produced, must be corrected, and the country restored to the happiness of carrying on the export trade of corn to a considerable extent; the only means by which this can be accomplished seems to be the violent remedy of shutting the ports, and reducing the number of consumers by starvation. As this is not the interest of landholders, it surely cannot be their wish.

It has been urged as a reason for laying additional restrictions on the importation of foreign corn, that while the production of other articles of consumption has been encouraged by bounties or guarded by monopolies, the production of corn is left unprotected, and hence capital sufficient for the success of agriculture is withheld or withdrawn, and employed in other branches which enjoy these artificial advantages. The Right Honorable the Earl of Lauderdale, in a letter on the Corn Laws, strongly enforces this argument. "Unless," says his Lordship, "the opinion is ill-founded, that success in every trade and in every exertion of industry depends on the possession of capital, the mischievous consequences to the trade thus deprived of encouragements which all others enjoy, cannot require explanation." The noble author professes himself the warm friend of perfect freedom of intercourse in every branch of commerce, yet he affects to believe that the laws regulating the commerce of corn were the sole cause of the cheapness and plenty in the first half of the last century, and the alteration of the times and of these laws, the cause of the scarcity since. It is scarcely candid, however, to assert that agriculture is deprived of all encouragement or protection, since by the act 1804, the legislature has given it all the encouragement, which its wisdom, at that time, thought consistent with the general safety. But this, it seems, is thought inadequate, and therefore regarded as nothing. Notwithstanding his avowed liberality, his calculations of the value of money at different periods would indicate that he points at violent restrictions. But the

rising and falling of gold and silver, and of the current medium, whatever it may be, is out of the question in this case, since the great body of consumers can give no more for their subsistence than the wages of their labor can afford, according to the state of the medium in which they receive them; and therefore the proprietors and occupiers of land must either board them at that rate, or part with the advantage which agriculture derives from such an excellent market for all its products. But it would be deviating from our purpose to say more on this letter, and we proceed to inquire if any new restriction on the importation of foreign corn, supposing such a measure to be otherwise proper, would tend to increase the capital employed in agriculture, and thus make corn more abundant. In doing which it will be proper to take a view of the system usually followed in letting land to farmers.

Upon the dawn of agricultural improvement in Scotland, farmers, and those who wished to be farmers, appeared to be possessed of an extraordinary high notion of the productive powers of the earth, and of their own ability to call them forth. Every vacant farm was contended for by numbers, out-bidding one another, and offering rents so high as sometimes to astonish the proprietor. Thus instructed, landholders were not tardy to avail themselves of this favorable disposition: and no one wishing to be thought less alert in attending to his own interest than his neighbour, they vied with each other who should display the greatest address in getting great offers, valuing the land, not according to its present state of productiveness, but at that to which it was supposed the activity of the farmer might bring it, leaving him the smallest possible share of the product, by which he could continue to occupy and cultivate the farm. As leases have expired, the renting of land has gone on in the same ratio ever since. By preferring the highest offer, and joining a number of farms into one, much capital has been driven from agriculture never to return. Nevertheless, while some have failed, many farmers have acquired capital greater or smaller, but generally more by a long course of activity, frugality, and good fortune, than by the liberality of landholders. Circumstances peculiar to England have prevented such a rapid rise of rents in that country; but it is not from want of a disposition in landholders to follow such a profitable example. For several years past, the Scotch newspapers have been filled with advertisements from different English counties, inviting Scotch farmers to come with the same spirit which they have displayed in their own country, and rent farms there. If therefore the market price of corn were kept higher, by the exclusion of foreign corn, and more money thus thrown into the hand of the farmer, it would not remain long there to grow into a capital to be employed in agriculture. As soon as the lease ex-

pired, the landlord would take care to add it to the rent, and make it his own property. And while the lease continued, the farmer, foreseeing the consequence, would prefer laying it up as a fund for his family, or his own support in old age.

Again, rent, say political economists, is an annual revenue destined to be annually spent; and fortunately it is seldom long accumulated in the hands of over-grown individuals, but spread around to gratify the desires of the owner, and thus keeps in motion different kinds of industry. But it is not directly employed in the amelioration of the soil. Some small part, indeed, is generally employed in making some kinds of rural improvements, chiefly ornamental, but not in directly augmenting the quantity of corn. The raising of corn is the office of the farmer, and his landlord is seldom in a condition to lend him money for that purpose. Farmers more frequently lend money to their landlords. Neither would it make any alteration, though it were possible to augment the rentals of landholders by the exclusion of foreign corn. People of that class are not possessed of more spare money now, than formerly, when rents were much lower. The landed gentleman whose rental is £20,000, does not find himself in more easy circumstances, than he whose rental does not exceed £10,000. The expedient of shutting the ports, to raise the price of corn with the view of amassing capital to be employed in the more perfect cultivation of land, in order that corn might be afterwards afforded at a lower and less fluctuating price, seems therefore to be altogether nugatory. The capital, which will have the best effect in cultivation, is that which has been acquired by the rigid economy of farmers, with rents, high enough to stimulate industry, without crushing it, and under landholders, whose general conduct gives the farmer the fairest prospect of enjoying the full advantage of his skill and activity.

But we shall still have a clearer view of the inexpediency of this measure if we take a little time to consider, 1st, the present state of society, 2nd the progress which agriculture has already made, and 3rd the limits within which its farther progress is bounded.

1st. Those engaged in commerce and manufacture, form now a considerable proportion of the population—their industry has contributed to the improvement of the fields and the defence of the nation, as has been already shown, and continue to give important aid to agriculture, and to the public revenue—as manufactures have been extended, the structure of society has been much improved—more knowledge, more humanity, more correct and mild manners have pervaded the middle and lower ranks; and hence this large portion of the community is entitled to great consideration, and it is particularly the interest of landed people to study their accommodation. The alteration of condition is accom-

panied by a greater relish for the comforts, conveniencies and delicacies of life. Such of these as are derived from the agriculture of the country, are chiefly milk, butcher's meat, and butter, regularly supplied to suit the command. To accommodate the market duly with these, by importation, in a fresh and wholesome state, would be perhaps impossible, at least attended with ten times more difficulty than to import corn to the same extent. For this accommodation, an extent of pasture must be taken, principally from the arable land. House feeding has been practised for this purpose, in some of the most fertile and highly cultivated districts, and has been found to be highly economical. The same may be partially used with advantage, in most situations, but probably cannot soon become so general as greatly to lessen the extent of pasture which the state of the country may require; but the quantity of corn annually produced, under good husbandry, is not necessarily diminished in proportion to the extent of pasture, as we shall see hereafter.

2nd. The progress which agriculture has already made, during the last fifty years, is very great, as we have already seen, and is still making advances. But in going on, the progress becomes gradually slower, and attended with greater difficulty. After land has been for some time cultivated in a masterly manner, and liberally manured, fertility becomes stationary. The farther the soil to be cultivated is from a disposition to fertility, the greater labor will be requisite to adjust its consistence, to increase its depth, to adapt it to resist the vicissitudes of wet and dry, &c. And it is known to all that every kind of land, to yield a valuable crop, must be possessed of a sufficient stock of putrescent matter, that in dissolving it may contribute to the nourishment of the crop; and this must be renewed, as often as the former is expended, and must be greater in proportion to the natural sterility of the soil. But the greatest procurable quantity of this matter being very limited, compared with the extent of arable land, it becomes expedient frequently that some part be left, till this essential additament can, in course, be provided for it. Here pasturing becomes valuable on a double account. Upon improved pasture a greater number of animals can be fed on a less extent, and to better purpose; and the decayed herbage left, communicates a portion of putrescible matter to the land: the soil also, by lying at rest, resumes a part of the natural consistence of which repeated culture had deprived it, and becomes fitter to bear the operations of returning cultivation, and thus produces a greater quantity of corn with less manure. In this manner, by alternate rest and culture, by cultivating plants of different kinds in succession, commonly called convertible husbandry, now generally adopted in Scotland, the general fertility of the country may be prevented from diminishing, and even augmented where augmentation is admissible.

3rd. Mr. Malthus, comparing the progress of the propagation of mankind, with that by which their subsistence is provided, represents the powers of propagation proceeding in periods of 25 years, as 1, 2, 4, 8, and the powers of cultivation, as 1, 2, 3, 4. But in old countries the most successful cultivators have never experienced the last to go on much farther than the first step. When land which has been imperfectly cultivated, first undergoes a complete cultivation, it will probably yield a double crop or considerably above that, the first year. But no skill or industry which has yet been applied, has been able to keep up constantly for a series of years, an annual return of greater value than the first. Plants cultivated for the immediate food of man must be succeeded by those which are mostly consumed by inferior animals, by culture without crop, by repetitions of manure, &c. and it is only at intervals that a crop of corn can be obtained equal to or, it may be sometimes, superior to the first. But here the progress ends, and it is only by moderate cropping and the strict observance of the rules of good husbandry, that it can be prevented from becoming retrograde. It is said of some lands which have long been kept in constant culture, the best crops which they now yield are not so productive as those which the same land is reported to have yielded 50 years ago. There is some danger, that by forced efforts to produce the greatest quantity of corn, a general retrogradation of fertility may be induced. The fit consistence of the soil for cherishing the roots of cultivated plants may be weakened by the repeated stirrings of incessant culture—the constitution of plants, naturally aliens to the soil and climate, may be enfeebled by frequent recurrence on the same worn-out soil—and be more liable to the attacks of the numerous enemies, animate and inanimate, by which they are commonly injured; these enemies being always most prevalent where the subject of their depredations is most frequently found. Some facts give ground for these suspicions, and there is not sufficient experience to give assurance that they may not in some measure be realised, even on the most fertile plains. But to extend the culture of wheat over the worse constructed soils and elevated lands, and raise a poor shrivelled grain in the cold damp atmosphere of these regions, to be sent to the foreign market, would surely be a gross misapplication of capital. It would undoubtedly be wiser to adapt the cultivation of land to the state of domestic society, and preserve the fertility of the soil unimpaired and in a state of gradual improvement.

When we thus take a general view of the increased numbers and successful industry of the British population, compared with the limited extent of arable land, and its inferiority in soil and climate

¹ Principle of Population, Book I. Chap. 1st.

to some of the surrounding countries—and of the great advancement which agricultural improvement has already made, towards its utmost limits, it will appear that Britain is now advanced far beyond the state of a new people whose best interest it is to cultivate corn for exportation, and that her industrious inhabitants, furnishing an ample demand for every possible production of the fields, and giving all kinds of commodities of use and convenience in return, she is arrived at that state when the mutual exchange of articles of subsistence for articles of use and convenience among fellow citizens is the most important commerce. This, in the opinion of some great authorities, is a most advantageous state of society well worth preserving. Dr. Adam Smith, treating of the employment of capital, observes, “When it sends out from the residence of the merchant a certain value of commodities, it generally brings back in return, at least an equal value of other commodities. When both are the product of domestic industry, it necessarily replaces by every such operation, two distinct capitals, which have both been employed in supporting productive labor, and thereby enables them to continue that support.” It would seem therefore to be the general interest to cherish and support this state, the advantage of which has been already experienced. It is the interest of the proprietors and cultivators of land that the prosperity of the classes of industrious consumers should be supported, so as to insure and improve the excellent market for all kinds of land produce which it has hitherto afforded. It is the interest of consumers to give a decided preference to domestic agriculture, and to comply with every regulation requisite for supporting it, which is not altogether inconsistent with the safety of their respective undertakings, since from thence they must always derive the greatest part of their subsistence, and that in the most regular and convenient manner, and in the most wholesome and agreeable state.

By accommodating the system of agriculture to the state of society, intermixing with the application to the culture of corn, attention to the improvement of grass and pasture and all those plants by which domestic animals are most profitably fed, the fertility of the soil would be preserved unexhausted, and brought by easy gradations to the highest possible state of productiveness. Nor would the success of domestic agriculture be interrupted by importing under judicious regulations the quantity of foreign corn in which the growth at home might be deficient in any year for the subsistence of the inhabitants. Though corn may, and sometimes does, suffer injury by being amassed together in a cramp situation, not

* Wealth of Nations, B. II. Chap. 5th. Lord Sheffield published a very sensible volume on this subject, about 25 years ago, which the writer cannot at present quote.

properly ventilated, it is perhaps better adapted for sea-carriage than other articles of subsistence, and that by which the deficiency of subsistence can best be supplied; and such supply is absolutely necessary to preserve the numbers and industry of the inhabitants, by which domestic agriculture is supported. But if, by restrictions to raise the price at home beyond the abilities of the consumer, and by bounties on exportations, the energy of agriculture be directed to the impracticable project of raising a large quantity of surplus corn to contend with that of more fertile countries in the foreign market depopulation must ensue, and agriculture, losing its best support, and unable to struggle with the difficulty of disposing of the surplus abroad, must fall from the high rank which it has attained, and the value of land must sink.

IV. The fourth head of enquiry was, how the state of society and the success of agriculture would be effected by the exclusion of foreign corn.

The business of this head being partly anticipated by the foregoing, we proceed to add, though it does not appear that the corn laws have had all the extraordinary effects which are frequently ascribed to them, it is obvious from the tenor of the foregoing observations, that the agriculture of Britain, in the present state of Europe, could not now keep its ground without protecting laws, to give its products a preference in the domestic market. The heavy taxes, the highly advanced wages of labor, partly occasioned by these taxes, and the inferiority of soil and climate, are such odds against it, as not all the acknowledged superiority of energy and skill of the cultivators could overcome without such assistance. It is extremely fortunate that the powerful industry of the other classes, invigorated by the liberty and security which they enjoy under an equitable government, has enabled them to bear any inconvenience which this assistance demanded, and give such prices for corn and every kind of land produce, as have brought the cultivation of the soil, and the situation of the proprietors, to the present highly respectable state. But this is because consumers have been able to bear the monopoly laid upon them by the lenient hand of a wise government, desirous "to preserve them in every possible contingency from scarcity and distress." Had this power been in ruder hands, a fatal alteration would probably have been the consequence.

People of all classes will probably admit the propriety of giving domestic agriculture a certain degree of preference; but the quan-

¹ See the report of the committee of the Privy Council to the King in the year, 1790.

tum is the great subject of dispute. The supporters of the late bill seem to indicate that it should be very great. They represent money as being much depreciated since the beginning of the last century, and would have the price of corn raised in proportion to this depreciation, not reflecting that money cannot possibly be the measure in this matter, since in whatever state the money may be, in which the industrious poor receive the wages of their labor, they can give no more for their subsistence than can be spared from this fund, agreeable to that just maxim laid down by the eminent political economist the late Sir James Steuart, "that the price of subsistence cannot be raised higher than is compatible with the gains of the lowest class of manufacturers," a maxim which has all along been inculcated in the foregoing observations. The committee of the House of Commons on the corn laws last session, observing that corn was more abundant in 1813 than some preceding years, ascribed this abundance to the high prices in 1812 having stimulated a more extensive culture. But had they noticed that the high price in 1800 had no such effect, they would have been convinced that such variations were owing to the seasons and other circumstances, not to the temptation of high prices. However, they, in their report, give it as their opinion that, "if the regulating price for allowing importation is made a very high one, it is the best possible protection the grower of corn can have." By which, perhaps, is meant such a price as would virtually shut the ports against foreign corn; and this would be killing the hen at once, which every day laid a golden egg.

¹ The prices of Windsor market kept in the records of Eton college, are 1812, 6l. 8s.—1813, 6l.—1800, 6l. 7s.—1801, 6l. 8s. 6d. It is remarkable, that the committee, in perusing the tables to which they allude in their report, had not discovered their error in ascribing the plenty of corn, and steady price, to the system of restraining importation and encouraging exportation and the scarcity succeeding to an opposite system. They might have seen that corn was scarce, little or none being exported, and the price high in some years, which must have been unfruitful years, and in the years when plenty had returned, that corn was exported, and the price lower, just as would have been the case, had no corn laws existed. They might have seen that after the year 1763, the greater consumption of a growing population began to decrease the exports, and to overtake the annual production; that after the alteration of the corn laws in 1773, so much reprobated, matters went on in the same way as before, in years of plenty, the exports exceeded the imports, and the average price was not much higher than in the beginning of the century, the average price from 1705 to 1715, being 2l. 4s. 2½d. and from 1775 to 1785, 2l. 7s. 8½d. per quarter. It was not till after the year 1793, when the waste of war was added to the increased population that the great deficiency of corn took place: and that the deficiency is less at present, and the price moderate, is owing jointly to the war having ceased, and the summer of 1813 having been a favorable one.

A considerable part of the manufacturing population is employed on commodities for foreign sale:—the nations of the continent have long been aiming at the manufacturing of those goods, which they have been in the habit of purchasing from Britain, and have now, it is said, made great improvement in several:—the jealous spirit, which has always induced the different powers to lay high duties and prohibitions on the entry of goods from other countries, with the view of promoting the industry of their own, seems at present to be very alert:—the comparative cheapness of provisions on the continent, which is always a balance against the British manufacturer, is said to be very considerable at this time. At this critical period, under such circumstances, to exclude the quantity of foreign corn which may be requisite to supply the deficiency of the growth at home, by means of such high regulating prices, as to put it beyond the ability of the industrious poor to purchase, is an expedient fraught with present danger, without any prospect of public advantage to follow. Such an exclusion would occasion a continual scarcity, with all the misery to the lower class, by which it is accompanied, till their numbers were thinned, the enterprise of industry damped, public prosperity suspended, and the effectual demand for provisions diminished. Agriculture then, deprived of the excellent market which its products have hitherto enjoyed, must sink along with the other branches of industry; and the scheme, proposed for its advancement, will be the cause of its downfall.

But if such a dangerous experiment be avoided, and the spirit of the nation not overpowered by oppression, though some branches of manufacturing industry may labor under difficulties, at the present time, and should even be cultivated by other nations, by means of the enterprising genius of the people, the superior capital, skill and expertness, to which they have attained, it may be hoped that employment will still be found for the industrious poor, their numbers kept up, and the general prosperity preserved, which will be of more importance to agriculture than any monopoly which can be given.

It is, however, the interest of consumers, as already said, to submit to such restraints on the importation of foreign corn as are not inconsistent with their comfortable existence, in order to give more effectual encouragement to the growth of corn. It is acknowledged by all, that starts of plenty, followed by scarcity and dearth, prove much more distressful to the poor than less fluctuating prices, somewhat higher. In the present state of the world, when an uncommon plenty happened in a neighbouring country, by unlimited importation, corn would be poured into Britain as the best market: the growers at home would be undersold, their

energy checked, and the produce of the country diminished, which is the surest source of subsistence, not subject to other fluctuations, than such as the difference of seasons occasions. It becomes necessary, therefore, that importation should be so far restrained as to keep the price nearly up to the ability of the lowest rank of the industrious poor. In unfruitful seasons it will even go rather beyond this, a higher price being then necessary, not only to prevent improvident consumption and husband the slender stock, but also to make some compensation to the grower, in the price, for the deficiency in the quantity. To all this consumers must submit; and they have submitted, through the trying times which have been lately experienced, with a firmness and patience beyond example. But to bring forward a project, not only so offensive to their prejudices, but so dangerous to their comfortable existence, as the bill which was lately introduced into the house, without any clear prospect of public advantage, and that too at a time when the consumers of all ranks, on the return of peace, had cherished the pleasant hope of enjoying some compensation for the great privations which they had so long suffered, can only serve to divide interest which should be held inseparable, and create animosity, where none should subsist.

What the restriction on importation should be, it would be presumption in the writer of this to say. It is evident they should equally embrace the interest of all. The high duty on wheat imported is 24s. 3d. per quarter, as the law stands at present, and in a note annexed to Mr. Rose's printed speech the charges on importation are 26s. giving the domestic grower of wheat a preference over the foreigner of £2. 10s. 3d. for each quarter, when the market price does not exceed £3. 3s. With such a preference, it may be thought there was no great need of being in a hurry to apply for new regulations; and it is to be hoped the legislature will, in its wisdom, weigh all sides of the business before it grant any. The act allowing exportation which is now past, it is believed, can do little either harm or good: for to what country can Britain now export corn, to contend with that of other countries, without a bounty, and that an extravagant one?

But if we can suppose that any landholders, regardless of the general good, have supported the bill in question from interested motives, it is evident their views are altogether fallacious. Their interest is so intimately connected with the general prosperity of the country that they must fall or rise together. As the increasing wealth of the country has given employment to a greater number of working people, and increased the demand for land produce, the rent of land, the revenue of the landholder, has closely followed, and increased in full proportion; and as wealth shall increase,

labor will be more liberally rewarded, and a correspondent increase of the rent of land will succeed. This is the natural order, which no artificial arrangement can alter. The wealth of the society must increase before the rent of land can rise, and the latter will always be the certain consequence of the former: hence all attempts prematurely to raise the rent of land must prove nugatory. But the rise of rent, in this country, has, from peculiar circumstances, been made to outstep this natural order. Some notice of this has been taken under the third head of the foregoing inquiry, and it is well explained in the declaration of Mr. Turnbull, before the committee of the house of Lords, last session. The number of people who wished to be farmers, far exceeding the number of farms to be let - the ardor of their competition—and the address with which land-holders and their agents used to inflame it, have provoked lessees to go beyond the bounds of common prudence, and offer rents higher than they could have any rational prospect of paying, without injuring their stock and credit. The great dearth occasioned by the late perilous situation of the kingdom, has kept these new tenants lingering in their possessions: and now, on the return of peace, landholders and farmers are panic struck with the prospect of moderate prices: and this is too plainly the motive of many for clamorously demanding the exclusion of foreign corn. This exclusion, however, we have endeavoured to show, would at present give a violent shock to the prosperity of the country; and hence would be injurious to agriculture, instead of promoting it. It would surely be better that a few farmers should suffer than that a national calamity should be incurred by an ineffectual effort to save them. The rage for renting land at a rate beyond what there was any prospect that ordinary industry and good fortune could draw from it, reserving a sufficient remuneration for the stock and attention applied, has for some time prevailed in Scotland. It is like every other temporary rage, by all of which the natural order of things is deranged, and this, like all others, must find its cure in the disorder which it produces. The sooner, therefore, this cure is accomplished, the better for all parties.

But it would be more prudent as well as more equitable in landholders to make immediately such deductions from those overstretched rents as may be necessary, leaving the legislature, so soon as it shall be convenient, to adjust the corn laws in the manner, which, after due deliberation, shall be found best adapted to the general welfare. Nor need the mention of this excite great alarm, as it would not probably so much reduce the amount of rentals, as such a proposal may seem to indicate. The general testimony of the witnesses, examined before the committees of both houses of Parliament, is that to defray all the expense of cultiva-

tion and pay the farmer, the price of wheat should not be lower than about £4 per quarter, and it cannot be supposed that such witnesses, and on such an occasion, would calculate on too low a price. By this it must be meant that foreign wheat should be prevented from coming in competition with domestic wheat in the home market at a lower rate than £4 : for surely it is not expected that the legislature should fix £4 as the minimum ; and prohibit farmers from selling and consumers from buying wheat at a lower price. By the testimony of other respectable witnesses, before the same committees, it appears that the best foreign wheat cannot be sold in London at present under £4, and that from the difficulties, risks and uncertainties attending the trade, it can seldom be imported much lower. Hence the market is protected from the intrusion of foreign corn, nearly up to the required price. It would only be necessary therefore to make a reasonable deduction from the extravagant rents of those new leases, into which the long dearth had tempted farmers to enter, and to give up all expectation of any greater rise of rent in future, than the increasing wealth of the nation, and the higher improvement of land can warrant.

And this is not requiring of land-holders a sacrifice to the convenience of others, but what their own interest imperiously demands. When a farmer is oppressed by an overstretched rent, his mind is embarrassed, his funds are diminished, his energy is paralyzed ; and being deprived of the ability, he scarcely finds the disposition to do justice to the soil, and to draw the greatest possible return from it ; a listless despair accompanies all his operations, his labors are imperfectly executed ; and in the end, his circumstances are ruined, and he leaves the farm in a neglected and exhausted state. The land-holder, who from avidity to augment his rental, puts his land into such miserable occupancy, not only injures his own personal interest, but is an enemy to his country by depriving the public of the more abundant product which superior management would bring to market.

When a reasonable abatement of the most extravagant rents is made, by a remission of the war taxes which have been laid on farmers,—by a diminution of the wages of labor,—and by the observance of a rigid economy in every department of agriculture, the expense of raising corn might probably be moderated so as to meet the ability of consumers, and render the violent remedy of shutting the ports unnecessary. The British government has always been tender in taxing those absolute necessities of life on which the very existence of the poor depends ; and nothing probably, but the dire necessity of the late times would have induced them to lay direct taxes upon farmers, whose office it is to bring

those necessaries to public use, on the most moderate terms. Such taxes are very unsuitable to the situation of husbandmen, unavoidable inequalities occur, and much trouble and uneasiness is given, besides what they add to the expense of cultivation. It is to be hoped, therefore, that now, when peace has returned, these distressing taxes will be removed. As many are now returning from military service to peaceful occupations, and the price of subsistence become moderate, a considerable diminution of the wages of labor may be expected. But above all, the great fund of saving will arise from frugal habits of farmers, carried into all their operations and transactions. A simplicity of life, a strictly guarded frugality in all their conduct, seems to be the genuine characteristic of husbandmen in all ages. It was by the *duro, cum parca colona, viro*,¹ that the agriculture of ancient Rome was conducted, in the best days of the republic. It was by people of the same character that the foundation of agricultural improvement has been laid in all countries. It was particularly on this frugal system that the agriculture of Scotland, which now makes a conspicuous figure, commenced and has been carried forward to its present respectable state. Let then a strict frugality through every part of rural economy be ever kept in view, shunning all vain and unnecessary expense. Let the accustomed energy of husbandmen accompany their frugality; and let them be satisfied with such moderate restrictions on the importation of corn, as may be consistent with the safety of the community. And let their energy be, as it has hitherto been, equal to the difficulties which it has to surmount. Matters will thus return to their natural order; and by patient perseverance, diligent cultivators will receive in time the recompense of their labor, which no restrictive laws can give them. The national prosperity will be preserved, and harmony and unanimity restored.

V. Having in the foregoing sketches endeavoured to show that the prosperity, to which Great Britain has arrived, has been attained by the joint enterprise of commercial, manufacturing and agricultural industry—that the different classes are united together by the strongest ties of mutual interest—and that the jealousies which have lately existed among them are ill founded, we shall now add a few miscellaneous observations on some of the erroneous positions which have been advanced in the course of the late dispute.

One of the most ludicrous of these, is that in which land-holders are represented in a depressed and neglected state, and merchants

¹ The hardy frugal husbandman and his thrifty wife.

and manufacturers envied for having great command of money, and gaining great profits. To hear this melancholy ditty of the distresses of landholders, compared with the joys and comforts enjoyed by the other classes, reminds us of the observation of the poet,

Nemo, quam sibi sortem,
Seu ratio dederit, seu fors objecerit, illa
Contentus vivat : laudet diversa sequentes.*—HOR.

The enjoyment and advantages of landholders differ from those of all others ; and their situation bears no analogy with that of those who are engaged in the busy walks of life. It consists in security, ease, and dignity, in the enjoyment of fortune, not in the pursuit of it. Their minds being less encumbered with the load of little selfish cares in which those who struggle through the business of active life are engaged, frequently obliged to juggle with others in their pursuits, the former are expected to be possessed of more large and liberal dispositions, and are thought worthy of the highest public trusts. From among them a considerable proportion of the great legislative assembly is formed, and these have always been deemed the most honorable of that illustrious body, and the most watchful over the public welfare. They are honored, in their respective provinces, with regulating part of the public revenue, with the power of preserving peace and good order ; with the direction of works of public utility, and of every thing tending to the general advantage—of settling disputes among their fellow-subjects ; and thus they are regarded as the patrons and protectors of orderly society, and a great degree of respectability is attached to their character. Even the pursuit of their private interest in the improvement of their estates has something generous in it, as it promotes also the permanent advantage of the community. Who would have thought that people of such a dignified character would, like peevish children, behold, with a malignant eye, that prosperity of their countrymen by which their own has been so greatly advanced and is so well supported ? The tranquillity of a country life, and the profit gained in the bustle of business, are incompatible among the few who gain the prize in the great lottery of busy life, multitudes draw only blanks, and sink into oblivion.

But however much landholders may undervalue the comfort of a country life, it has not only been the darling theme of the poets in all ages ; but there are perhaps few of mankind, even the most sober minded, who have not panted after it, in some time of their

* No man is satisfied with his own condition, whether it be of his own choice, or such as destiny has allotted him ; but admires other pursuits.

lives; and those who have it in their power are always ready to lay hold of it. As soon as a landed estate appears in the market, some of those who have obtained capital in trade hasten to purchase it, at a high rate, willing to exchange their profits, their toils, and their anxieties, for the security, dignity, and tranquillity of a landholder. There does not appear to be any other way by which much capital can be invited from other employments to be invested in land. When a man lays out his capital in any business to gain profit, he naturally inclines that the return for his capital and attention should be his own. But this is what the cultivator of land must not expect. The landholder will take care to contract for the greatest part of it, however high the price of corn be raised by restrictions; and in the largest and most fertile part of the empire, not only the landholder, but also the church and the poor must have their respective shares, before the cultivator can touch a morsel. And this is not an inviting prospect for any who have not been previously inured to the laborious life of a husbandman. Nor could much good be expected from capital without skill and experience to apply it. The prudent farmer will keep clear of a barren field, and apply his industry to such as he knows will yield him the greatest return upon the most moderate expense, that is, such as have natural fertility, improved by repeated applications of manure. He may, indeed, if he has in his possession neglected grounds, naturally fertile, the fertility of which is suspended by being overcharged with water or overrun with brushwood, &c. apply himself to the improvement of such, because he knows he will obtain a quick and adequate return: but he will wisely avoid attempting to raise corn on a sterile ill-constructed soil, destitute of vegetable pabulum, convinced that others will reap the product, not leaving him the prospect of recovering even his expense, in the course of his lease. But if the landholder himself becomes the cultivator of such poor land, and it is he only by whom it should be attempted, he ought not to expect that he is to be paid all at once. His return must be gradual, from the improved crops of the ameliorated soil, whether he let it for rent or retain it in his possession.

The progress of agricultural improvement being more limited, the investment of stock cannot affect it in the same manner as it does other employments. Capital, in skilful hands, applied with judgment and frugality on land, will, in favorable circumstances, produce a plentiful crop. Make a more lavish application on the same land, and plants will spring up with unprofitable luxuriance, fall down and not ripen to perfect grain. In the same manner nature has, in all cases, drawn a certain bounding line, and pronounced to fertility this imperious dictate, *hitherto shalt thou come*

and no farther. It is in vain to say that the high price to which corn has been raised during the war was the cause of more corn being produced. The improvements in agriculture, which have made the land produce more corn, were in a progress of great advancement, long before the war commenced, or there were any prospects of these high prices. The high price of corn certainly threw more money into the hand of the farmer, and enabled him, if he chose, to apply more on his farm; but whatever was applied, it does not appear to have had the effect to make the produce more nearly to meet the demand. In the years 1799 and 1800, the seasons were unfruitful, and of course the deficiency in 1800 and 1801 was very great, and the price of corn rose to an exorbitant height, being £6. 7s. per quarter of wheat, in the one year, and £6. 8s. 6d. in the other. But these high prices had not the effect to make corn more plenty in the years which followed: for in the year 1805 the deficiency was near to 900,000 quarters, and the average deficiency of six years after the high price of 1801 was 500,000 quarters. During these six years, the average price was not much more than half of that of 1801, being £3. 14s. 3d. and after these more moderate prices, in 1808 the import exceeded the export by no more than 3499 quarters. But again in 1810, a million and a half were imported. These facts refute the doctrine that corn would become abundant by shutting the ports and raising the price, and shew plainly that after all the improvements which have been made, or can be made, it is only by the blessing of Heaven on these improvements that plenty comes.

It seems to be bad policy therefore, by great restrictions on importation, to raise the price of corn, and distress the laboring poor, as it can serve no purpose but to diminish their numbers, and of course the effectual demand for provisions. So long as their numbers continue, the quantity of corn used cannot be greatly diminished. The poor, in straitened times, may abstain from other things, but the necessary quantity of bread cannot be much curtailed. Nor will the most active exertions of agriculture insure plenty in adverse seasons. In the present state of Britain it would seem to be proper to give no unnecessary obstruction to the importation of the quantity of corn which may be needed to make up the deficiency of any year. The agriculture of the country will not be thereby injured when home-grown corn has such a decided preference in the market as it has at present, or any similar which may be judged consistent with the general welfare. For, as the land produce of every nation is absolutely necessary to the nation itself, agriculture, though intercourse in all other cases were unrestrained, would require to be guarded by the legislature, and receive such protection and encouragement as cir-

circumstances demanded. And this not only on account of that respectable portion of the society whose revenue is derived from the sale of corn, but by steadily keeping up the price of subsistence nearly to the ability of the lower ranks, to give the cultivators of land greater ability to supply the market, and come as near to the demand as nature will admit. By giving every possible facility, consistent with the circumstances above stated, to the importation of what quantity of corn may be wanted, importers of corn would be prepared to provide against expected exigencies, and those starts of scarcity which occasion such fears and alarms, and are the cause of such real distress to the lower orders, might be greatly palliated, and less frequently recur.

By giving a suitable indulgence to the importation of the annual deficiency of the product of corn at home, it would appear that, in a country possessed of a great population of manufacturing inhabitants, the price would be less fluctuating, than if it were obliged to depend solely on its own resources. The experience of all ages has proved that the expectations of the husbandman may be blasted, in every country, by incidents, over which he has no control, and in consequence of which scarcity ensues; and this is peculiarly the case in Britain, where the climate is more unsteady than on the neighbouring continent. It is also known that seasons which are very unfruitful in one country are less so in others. Now, in a country of such extensive commerce as Britain, in the regular habit of supplying its wants, a scarcity, or the appearance of a deficient crop, would be foreseen, and importers would make it their business to provide against it. The ports being guarded by the duties on importation, the domestic cultivator would have a due preference in the market, and no improper glut could take place. When the country was in the custom of purchasing corn from those nations which possessed a fertile soil, and were less advanced in civilization, such nations would adjust their cultivation to the demand, and the supply wanted would be readily procured. By such a system, for the improvement of which the warehousing of foreign corn has been often recommended, and it is believed very properly, the prosperity of the country might go on for ages without obstruction. The quantity of foreign corn wanted to supply the deficiency of the crop at home would probably for a long time not be very great, as by the spirited cultivation which now prevails, fertility will be gradually advanced as far as soil and climate will admit, and be making additions to the annual produce; and that quantity being always provided, the distressing fluctuations of prices would be in a great measure prevented. Whereas, if the protecting duties be made very high, the dearth,

in a year of scarcity, will be great and distressing, before the ports can be open, and prices be not only high but fluctuating.

Though the supporters of the corn bill set out with the flattering proposal of making corn plenty and cheap, it is evident they were not serious; for there is no argument they make more use of than this, that the expense of cultivation is so great that the price of corn must be raised by high duties on importation to indemnify the cultivator. It has been shown in the preceding pages that making the price of corn high, by additional restrictions on importation, would endanger the prosperity of the country in the present state of things. But though the price of corn could thus with safety be kept at a high rate, the cultivators of land would probably not be greatly benefited by it, as the rents, the wages of labor, the price of implements, and every necessary for cultivation would, perhaps, be raised in the same proportion; and it surely would not be the duty of government to indulge them. The high price of corn, the depreciated state of money, and the heavy taxes, have made subsistence so much dearer here than in the other countries of Europe, as to make commercial intercourse with them difficult. By greater restraints on importation, subsistence will become dearer, money more depreciated, and intercourse may be still more straitened. But really this argument is a two-edged weapon, and cuts deeper the opposite way than that to which it is directed. Gold, says the adage, may be bought too dear. If corn costs three times the price to raise it in Britain of that at which it may be bought in other countries, the raising of corn is surely an unprofitable business to the public. "The general principles of political economy," says Mr. Malthus, "teach us to buy our commodities, where we can have them the cheapest; and there is, perhaps, no rule in the whole compass of the science, to which fewer justifiable exceptions can be found in practice." But cultivators of land enjoy a very considerable monopoly over their fellow citizens; and it does not appear that a greater is necessary. Since 1773, when the law past which has been declared ruinous to agriculture, that business has made greater progress than in any former period. The execution of agricultural labors has been methodized, great improvements have been made in machinery, and every kind of implement better adapted to its purpose, and all the labors of cultivation have been so judiciously and so successfully conducted as to keep the annual product of land nearly up to the increasing population. The circumstances of farmers are apparently in an improved and comfortable condition; nor is any complaint to be heard among them but of the exorbitant rents occasioned by the late extraordinary times.

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Some of the facts and arguments, which have been adduced in favor of keeping the price of corn high, are futile; but there is one which bears still a worse feature. A proof has been attempted before the committee of the House of Lords, that laboring people perform more work when meal is dear than when it is cheap. There is no doubt that the powerful call of parental affection will, in times of dearth, force the parents of a number of helpless children to make uncommon exertions to still the clamor of hunger in their families; but such exertions, if long continued, must produce diseases, premature old age and depression of mind in the parents, and a total neglect of proper education among the rising generation. Humanity shudders to think that it should be the desire of people in the higher ranks to reduce their inferiors to such a miserable situation.

Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superfluous to them;
And show the Heavens more just.—KING LEAR.

But would it avail society, or any particular class in it, to reduce laboring people to this state? Much is said of the heavy taxes, in proportion to the number of individuals, which the circumstances in which Britain has been placed has obliged her government to levy from the people, far exceeding those on the individuals of the other nations. If these nations had been able to pay similar taxes, their governments would have found occasion for such, and taken care to impose them. The scope which a happy constitution has given to the spirited industry of a free people has enabled them to pay those heavy taxes, which have been the means of preserving the independence of the empire. But of what advantage would the boasted privileges of British subjects be, if their government were to make laws by which they were to be deprived of the prospect of a comfortable subsistence? Their labors would become worthless, like those of the slaves, in the countries where barbarism still reigns, and the revenue could derive little support from them. Or what benefit could it be to the wealthy, that the great body of the people were reduced to beggary? And particularly could it be any advantage to the proprietors and cultivators of land, that the half of the laboring people, goaded by hard necessity, could be made to perform all the labors of the nation, which now employs the whole? Take away from mankind the hope of bettering their condition, and their industry will become languid. Necessity is, no doubt, the first motive to industry, but it is the prospect of deriving comfort from it, which makes industry animated, persevering and successful. Let no man therefore, who regards the prosperity of his

country, or his own interest in it, think of such preposterous means of promoting it as oppressing the poor.

CONCLUSION.

From the above desultory observations the following general conclusion may be drawn.

Corn being the most absolutely necessary support of life, and the strength of a nation depending on the abundance it can command, especially from its own soil, which is always the most sure and steady fund of subsistence, it becomes a subject which demands the wise and impartial interference of government to make such regulations regarding the culture and commerce of corn, as may best provide for the wants of the people. The purposes of these regulations can only be the two following ;

- 1st. As far as possible to provide, at all times, a regular supply of this first necessary, for all the inhabitants, at such a rate as to meet the abilities of the great body of industrious consumers ;
- 2dly. To give all due advantage to the landed interest of the country, proportioned to its scale in the community and the value of its products.

1st. As seasons occur, in all countries, when the crop comes short of its expected product, and insufficient for the support of the inhabitants, where there are no magazines in store, the calamity of scarcity can only be averted, in such seasons, by purchasing corn from foreign parts. For this reason, the laws for regulating the commerce of corn would require to have a kind of foresight, allowing dealers to provide against the scarcity, of which appearances gave any indication. It is no less requisite that internal commerce in the market and from one part of the country to another, be protected in the most unlimited freedom. This appears to be the duty of every wise government, and all that can be done to make any visitation of scarcity fall as light and be as equally distributed as possible.

2d. In civilized countries, the soil, from which the food of the community is derived, is the exclusive property of a particular class of the inhabitants ; and in them is vested the direction of cultivating and distributing the subsistence of the whole. This charge of itself so important, and in the exercise of which their own interest is so closely united with the prosperity of the public, is expected to inspire them with enlarged and liberal feelings, and places them in a respectable light ; their important station in so-

ciety, and the share they bear in all kinds of public burdens, thus entitles them to high consideration and respect. Every privilege therefore which the success of their important functions demands, should be guarded by the legislature of the country with the greatest care. Agriculture should be held honorable as it is useful, and protected from every degrading circumstance,—every obstacle removed and every facility given to promote the success of its valuable labors, regarding always the landed interest as inseparably connected with that of the whole community. And every encouragement given in that view is a bounty to the whole society, being the most effectual means of providing subsistence.

The corn laws of Great Britain do not appear to be altogether adapted to fulfil these purposes. They have, in some measure, set the interest of the raisers of corn and that of the consumers at variance with each other; and, in some cases, favored the one in opposition to the other.

As to the consumer, the manner of shutting and opening the ports has often thrown such difficulties in the way as to leave sudden starts of dearth unprovided for; and when that came to be felt, government has been obliged to suspend the laws. From the necessity of these repeated suspensions, Dr. Smith, with seeming justice, infers the inadequateness of the corn laws for their intended purpose. The average price of corn was, indeed, lower in the first half of the last century than it had been in the preceding period of the same length: but there is no ground to suppose that this proceeded from the influence of the corn laws. The judicious author just named ascribes it to the price of silver having become higher, in this period. This might possibly have been partly the cause: but it was certainly much more owing to the awakened spirit of industry bestirring itself, in the more opulent and fertile part of the united kingdom, as times became quieter. The acquisition of more skill, more experience, better implements and more diligent culture enabled cultivators to raise better crops, and to afford corn cheaper. There was perhaps no period in which the agriculture of England made such progress. The spirit of improvement once aroused, cultivators went on as they found most for their own advantage, just as they would have done had there been no corn laws, or as they have since done in Scotland in spite of the defective corn laws. Had there been no bounty on exportation, less corn would have been raised, but the fertility of the country would have remained in reserve to produce more corn as a growing population demanded it.

The corn laws have, no doubt, given support to the landed interest, by preventing a wanton importation of foreign corn, which is more especially requisite in Britain, surrounded by other countries

where soil, climate and other circumstances enable cultivators to furnish corn at a low rate. Freed of a vexatious competition, the British cultivator is encouraged to cultivate the soil to more advantage, and produce more subsistence, and so long as the price is not raised above the ability of the lower order of industrious consumers this regulation is beneficial upon the whole. How far the bounty on exportation tended to the general good seems to be more problematical. It was prompting cultivators, with a large bribe, taken from the revenue levied from the whole community, to strain the fertility of the country, in order to feed strangers with the children's bread; it tended to keep the home market sparingly supplied—and all the surplus being exported in a plentiful year, if the succeeding one was deficient, there was nothing left to supply the deficiency. Hence the question is suggested, whether or not it would have been as wise to have allowed the soil, in the course of a more moderate tillage, gradually to have collected fertility, and to become fitter to feed a population continually increasing?

But though the corn laws, at a former period, had greater influence than experience shows they have had, the times are now altered. The population is so much increased that the demand for subsistence exceeds the product of the land, notwithstanding the great improvements in agriculture, which in many cases have been lately carried perhaps nearly to their utmost extent; the value of money is much more depreciated in this than in the neighbouring countries; and the difference in the price of subsistence greatly increased; and the corn laws are acknowledged to have become of no effect. It is in vain, therefore, now to attempt to raise any structure on that foundation. The regulating prices for admitting importation have been repeatedly raised, without giving satisfaction, and are perhaps nearly as high as the condition of the people can bear. To raise them much higher would increase the evils which are presently felt, and might as completely insulate Britain commercially as she is literally; and then farewell to her exalted prosperity. It is time to adopt a more sober system—to get agriculture relieved from its present improper burdens—to conform the rents of land to such prices of provisions as the great body of consumers is able to pay, leaving to the farmer the power of conducting his labors with spirit—to conduct the cultivation of land in a frugal style, bestowing the principal attention on such soils as are possessed of some portion of fertility, and promise the best return at the most moderate expense, and applying only the culture and manure on barren unpromising soils which can be spared without prejudice to the other—and the landed interest of the country having a just and reasonable preference in the home market for all its products, to allow such facility of importing fo-

reign corn, to the extent of the deficiency of domestic product, as to save the industrious poor from frequent recurrence of distress. When landholders, satisfied with the large share of the public income which circumstances assign to them, renounce the impracticable project of advancing their own interest by the distress of the lower orders, and pursue it by the more natural and effectual means of promoting the improvement of the country, the alarm which has lately prevailed will be quieted, harmony restored, and by the concurrence of all classes in the peaceful pursuit of their respective employments, it may be hoped that the public prosperity may be preserved and still farther advanced, commerce and manufacture be still farther extended; and as this country, and those with which it has intercourse, increase in wealth, the rent of land and the comfort of those who cultivate it will increase in the same proportion.

