Edward West.  
Second Letter on Cause of Depression.
SECOND LETTER

TO THE

FARMERS OF DORSETSHIRE

ON THE

CAUSE OF DEPRESSION

IN THE

PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE.

BY

EDWARD WEST,

OF WARRINGTON.

LONDON:

CHARLES GILPIN, 5, BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT.

1844.
SECOND LETTER

TO THE

FARMERS OF DORSETSHIRE.

To the Farmers of the county of Dorset.

In my first letter to the Farmers and Farm-Labourers of Dorsetshire, upon the low rate of Wages paid to the Labouring Population, it is shown that the cause of my interest for the prosperity of that county originates from being myself a native of Dorsetshire, and that I left it in 1817, to reside in other parts of England; and, in 1826, settled at Warrington in Lancashire as a woollen-draper.

Warrington contains a population of about 20,000, and is situate within 20 miles or less of Manchester, Liverpool, Bolton, Stockport, Wigan, Chester, and other smaller places; and a populous rural district of, in the whole, upwards of one million inhabitants. Of these, a large proportion are dependent upon manufacturing employment, and many upon agriculture, in helping to supply the immense demand for provisions which those towns require. Amongst that population, I sell as much woollen cloth and fustian goods as are annually bought by all the male inhabitants within four miles of Shaftesbury Town Hall. My customers being master and working manufacturers, merchants, farmers and farm-labourers, tradesmen, mechanics, and a few gentlemen, &c., with some of every class of whom, and with manufacturers of whom my goods are bought, I have frequent conversations upon the subjects hereinafter-mentioned. Up to the time of leaving Dorsetshire, as a residence, I had never seen a steam-engine, and was as unacquainted with the value of machinery and manufacture to the prosperity of Great Britain, as the gentlemen of whom I am about to allude, evidently are now. These
particulars are thus minutely given to show the sources of information, on which the following statements are founded.

With this introduction, the cause of my addressing you, originates from reading the speeches of each of your Representatives in Parliament, particularly two of them, at the Blandford Agricultural Meeting, about the end of 1842, which, had they fully understood the injurious tendency that those speeches were calculated to cause to the country at large, and especially to the farmer, by preventing the working manufacturer from earning wages to buy farming produce with, and thereby destroying demand for it, they surely would never have spoken them.

They appear to suppose, that the manufacturing and commercial interest of Great Britain is secondary to that of agriculture, and dependent upon it. But if they will investigate into all the channels through which most of the known world is supplied with the manufactures of this country, and by which the working population who are infinitely the great proportion of consumers, earn wages that enable them to buy so much agricultural produce, thereby so increasing the demand for it, as to cause the price of every article which the soil grows, to be higher in Great Britain than in any other country upon the globe; they will find, that without such sources of employment for acquiring wages to buy farming produce with, the prices of it would be no more in England, than in the poorest districts of Ireland, or the Continent of Europe, where such means for earning money do not exist. And they would also learn, that what they call “protection to agriculture,” by depriving the master manufacturers of markets for the sale or exchange of their goods in foreign lands, prohibits the working manufacturer from earning wages wherewith to buy and consume farming produce, to the injury of the British farmer, by obstructing demand for that produce, to a much worse extent than he would suffer by the competition of a few cargoes of foreign grain, and also depriving tens of thousands of manufacturing work-people of employment whereby to support themselves and their families comfortably, and enable them to consume increased quantities of provisions.
For how can a master continue to employ work-people to manufac-
ture goods, while our Corn and Sugar-Laws prohibit or prevent
his disposing of, or exehanging those goods, for that produce of
foreign lands which will best repay him, and where they have
not money to pay for those goods with. Food is the first
essential of human life, and whatever wages are earned by the
working classes the greater part is expended upon it; and by
so much as the labourers are deprived of sufficient provisions,
either in quantity or quality, will the consumption, and, conse-
quently, the demand for food, be diminished.

Your representatives apparently do not consider that it is
demand for farming produce which affects its price. That is
always admitted in the market reports, as “in the absence
of demand, the market was dull and prices were lower,” or
“with a good demand at our market this day, prices are
improved,” &c.

And to show that it is the want of employment by the
working-manufacturer and farm-labourer which causes the
absence of that demand,—last winter some benevolent persons
of the religious Society, of which it is my privilege to be a
member, subcribed money, “to relieve the unemployed in the
manufacturing districts.” A part of that money was remitted
to be distributed in and near Warrington, which I assisted in
doing. In the populous village of Croft, except a few farmers,
most of the inhabitants capable of working, men and women,
boys and girls, are silk-weavers, nearly all of whom, when we
called, had been without employment from ten to fourteen weeks.
In one family, consisting of a man, his wife, and six children;
wife ill health, they had three looms, by which, if in work, they
could earn in all 24s. a week; but had had no work for twelve
weeks; had no breakfast that morning (then about 11), but had
just given their last two-pence for ten pounds of potatoes, which
they were preparing for dinner. Thus the consumption of food
by that one family, at the same proportion, would be fourteen-
pence in a week, or 28s. 10d. in three months; while, but for
the Corn and Sugar-Laws, which prevented their employers from
supplying them with work, they would have earned 24s. a
week, two-thirds of which, or 16s., would have been spent in
bread, milk, cheese, bacon, beef, butter, beer, or other farm-
ing produce, beside potatoes, being 14s. 10d. a-week, or £10. 12s. 10d., in three months, less provisions consumed by that one family. And last winter, from what came under my own knowledge, there must have been at least ten thousand families in Lancashire alone, exclusive of all other parts of this manufacturing empire, who for want of employment had not an average of 4s. a-week to live upon, but whose earnings, if in work, would have amounted to at least 20s. a-week.

And it was that want of employment throughout the country, especially in the manufacturing districts, whereby the working population were unable to earn wages to buy food with, that caused such a depression in the price of provisions. As a further proof of which,—in another populous village, where the inhabitants were also chiefly silk-weavers, and without employment for the same length of time, we bought for distribution 50 loads or sacks of 252 lbs. each of potatoes, at 3s. 10d. a load, of the principal farmer, who at that time of year had used to sell them at 5s. or 6s., or upwards; but then, his own poor neighbours could scarcely afford to buy even potatoes at that low price, because the Corn and Sugar-Laws in their ultimate operation, destroyed so much market for manufactured goods, that the employers of those work-people were prevented from supplying them with the means for earning money to buy and consume farming-produce with, a result which your Legislators appear not to foresee, nor to have calculated upon.

When engaged in distributing that little relief, we had sufficient evidence that it was not charity which those distressed people wanted, but employment, to enable them to live by their own independent industry. In one case, that of a widow who had been left with a family, for whose support she had laboured hard, on our inquiring as to her being unemployed, and asking if a load of potatoes would help her? she remarked, “yes it will, and thank you for it, but I was in hopes you were bringing me work, for it would have been more comfortable to have worked for it.” In another case, a man aged about 70 said, he had never asked for, nor before received any assistance, though how the twelve persons in that
house continued to exist upon their scanty means, would have puzzled most parish officers.

The great error of the promoters of the Corn-Laws arises from supposing the quantity produced to be the cause of depression in price, instead of, the want of demand for that produce. And this error misleads them into the consideration, of how to prevent an increase of that quantity? in the place of reflecting, How can demand for it be improved? That can only be done by promoting every source of employment, manufacturing, agricultural, and mechanical, and by giving "fair wages for a fair day's work," amongst every branch of the working-population, who are infinitely the greatest proportion of consumers. It is by that means alone, that demand for agricultural produce can be naturally and effectually increased. But the pursuits and station in life which your representatives occupy, appear not to afford them opportunity to ascertain these facts, nor how greatly the tendency of their exclusive system is to counteract and destroy many sources of employment, to an extent far beyond the power of any or all charity to compensate for.

As a proof how much demand in the manufacturing districts causes an advance in the price of grain, even under increased supplies; in consequence of the improvement in almost every branch of manufacture within the last four months, there has been a proportionate demand for manufacturing labour, and corresponding amount of wages paid to the additional number of work-people employed, which supplies them with the means of becoming increased consumers of provisions. The effect of which has been, that even during the late excellent harvest, with such quantities of new wheat poured into the markets, and 800,000 quarters of foreign released from bond about that time, there was a continued advance in the price of that first article of consumption, wheat. And as another proof,—it appears by the returns from Leeds and Wakefield, the two great corn-markets for the manufacturing population of the West Riding of Yorkshire, that the wheat sold in the eight weeks ending, October 5, 1843, was 64,265 quarters, but in the eight weeks of the same time of 1842, only 41,475, being an increase of 22,790 quarters' consumption in that district
alone, which shows how greatly improvement in demand for farming produce depends upon manufacturing prosperity.

And wherever the working manufacturers and mechanics can earn sufficient wages, they also like other good living, beside bread and potatoes only, as beef, bacon, butter, beer, milk, cheese, eggs, &c., as well as a covering of warm woollen clothing, which hundreds of thousands of them, have of late years, and especially last winter, been strangers to, in consequence of the artificially dear price of food, and want of work for earning the wages to obtain it with. Had all the working population been employed to enable them to buy all the provisions which they would then have consumed, instead of only 800,000 quarters of Foreign wheat, five million quarters would have been scarcely sufficient to supply the deficiency in the crop of 1842, beside a proportionate increase in the demand for every other article of food, which must as a natural consequence have occasioned a corresponding advance in the value of them. It was the want of manufacturing and other employment, which by compelling a great portion of the working population to live upon potatoes only, and often but a scanty supply of them, that caused the falling off in the consumption of every other article of agricultural produce, which decreased the demand for that produce, and caused the depression in its price. A consequence that your representatives appear not to be aware of; neither could have been that Gentleman of Oxford, who, last year, at an agricultural dinner at Buckingham, in his inexperienced simplicity, declared, that the high price of grain made no difference to a large proportion of the working population, because so many of them “rejoiced upon potatoes” only. But had that uninformed man been as intimate with common intelligence as in University learning, and seen the effect which that living upon potatoes had, in reducing the demand for bread, and consequently the price of it, he would have known it to be one chief cause of the depression in the value of grain which was then so much complained of. But it is a fact, that those who are possessed of wealth, and accustomed to the luxuries which it supplies, unless they condescend to personally inquire amongst all classes of the working population, as to their privations, how they are compelled to limit their scanty
fare in proportion to their scanty means, the various sources by which they earn those means, and how greatly the channels for employing them are liable to be interrupted, and cut off by the restrictions upon commerce, manufactures, and trade, unless they have themselves examined fully into all these details, like the Gentleman of Oxford, they are not fairly competent to form a correct opinion of the question.

The following calculation, which is in addition to the first "Letter" upon the Low Rate of Wages paid to Agricultural Labourers, and borrowed from it, will show, or thereabout, the manner in which a family consisting of a man, his wife, and four children, have to limit their expenditure in proportion to their incomes, of 6s. 8s. 10s. 12s. and 16s. a week, and how much low wages and want of employment restrict the consumption of, and, consequently, the demand for farming produce by the working population,

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*As the cost of one pound of Flour will generally buy at least four pounds of Potatoes, the latter being the cheapest food is most in request when wages are lowest, which then causes a falling off in the demand for Wheat, and consequent reduction in its price.
The wages paid to the manufacturing or mechanical labourer, are upon an average much higher than those received by the farm-labourer, as the master manufacturer in valuing his goods, calculates every item of the cost, including that of labour, below which cost he will not sell, unless compelled by adverse circumstances, consequently, those wages are not lost, but returned to him in the price of his goods. Therefore, a master manufacturer has less temptation to reduce wages, or to pay below what his work-people can afford to sell their work for. But as the price of farm-produce is regulated by the state of the markets when it is prepared for sale, whatever calculation the farmer makes of its cost to him by wages, or any other source, he cannot add them to the price. Therefore it is more to his present interest to pay the lowest wages that he can get his work done for, as all he can save of that or any other expense is so much addition to his profits, though, it is not a just reason for reducing the earnings of his labourers to less than they can afford to sell their work for. His rent, tithes, taxes, poor-rates, &c., being fixed charges, he has no control in avoiding them; but wages being almost his only optional expenses are the more exposed to be unmercifully dealt with by him, which is the real cause why those paid to the farm labourer are reduced so low. And for that reason, instead of obstructing and interfering with manufacturing labour as the Legislature does by its exclusive and prohibitory system, it ought to encourage by all means that can be devised, every source of labour, not only to reduce the competition for farming work, but to enable the whole of the working population to earn the means wherewith to subsist upon.

By the present exclusive system, such is the number of unemployed agricultural labourers who are anxious to obtain work at however low wages, were it not under the fear of increasing the poor-rates, the earnings of many of those labourers who are employed, would be reduced so low as to subject them to even greater destitution than they are now in. The money paid for manufacturing labour, especially that for export, has a national advantage, which if investigated would prove to be one of the great sources of the wealth of Great Britain.
The earnings of the working manufacturers being calculated and included by the master in the price of his goods, there is an absolute gain by this country of the amount that has been paid for manufacturing of goods sold for export from that part of the globe which such goods are exported to, as the loss of those wages ultimately falls upon the consumers of the goods wherever they are consumed.

There is a numerous party in Great Britain so uninformed upon the value of the foreign market for the sale of British manufactured goods, and thereby of British labour, who, in their mistaken zeal to protect the farming interest, argue, that manufacturing for the home-trade only deserves to be encouraged. And that Foreign trade being in their estimation of little or no national advantage should be neglected to take care of itself.

That sentiment is the drift of the reasoning of many of the unreflecting leaders of Rural Agricultural Societies, and also of most of the newspapers which profess to be "the Protectors of Agriculture." But those parties who would thus sacrifice the Foreign market for British manufactured goods, cannot have considered that, the same proportion of wages to be spent in provisions are earned by making goods for the Foreign trade, as by those made for home consumption. And, consequently, that by cutting off the Foreign market for British manufactured goods, they would be destroying so much demand for provisions. Therefore, instead of "proteeting" the farmer, they are, no doubt, unintentionally, but in effect, injuring him to their worst ability. Like the shopkeeper on London Bridge, who preferring his customers from the city-side, to those from Southwark, he neglected the latter, and declined to sell goods to them; by which loss of that portion of his trade, the profits of his business were so reduced, as to be only sufficient to pay his rent and taxes, and leaving him nothing to live upon, he in consequence became a ruined man.

It is the real interest of the country at large to encourage manufacture, commerce, and agriculture, at home and abroad, without restriction to either, as that restriction will ultimately, in one way or another, defeat its own object by destroying some other source of industry, and consequent means for buying pro-
visions. For as a bundle of sticks when divided are more easily broken, so "the farmer's friends," in their mistaken and uninformed zeal for "the agricultural interest," by legislating for that alone, and separating it from the manufacturing interest, are destroying the prosperity of both.

It would be impossible to ascertain the amount of wealth that is annually created in Great Britain by the industry of its manufacturing work-people. For instance, a cargo of 500 tons of cotton, which is 1,120,000 lbs. weight, at 6d. a pound, on arriving in England costs £28,000, which at first incurs the expenses of unloading, carting, warehousing, porterage, commission, carriage, &c., by each of which it affords some wages for the purchase of food, and next gets into the mill when it undergoes the manufacturing processes of spinning, weaving, bleaching, printing or dyeing, calendering, making up, &c. &c., by which time it is worth an average of at least 2s. 4d. a pound, which after deducting £28,000, the first cost of the cotton, leaves a clear gain of £102,000, and if one-half of that sum be allowed for the expense of machinery, rent, insurance, dye, stuffs, &c. and master manufacturers' profits, there remains for wages only £51,000, of which at least two-thirds or £34,000, would be spent by the work-people who earned it, in farming produce. That sum, at 50s. per quarter, would buy 13,600 quarters, or at 60 lbs. to the bushel, 2914 tons of wheat. A source of demand for agricultural produce by one small cargo of cotton, that may not have been conjectured by inexperienced "protectors" of farmers.

In the manufacture of iron goods, the proportionate increase in value by labour, is even greater than on cotton. The intrinsic worth of iron-ore is not more than the soil on your farms, being obtained by labour from the earth, as are also the coals by which it is melted; and if that ore be worked into scissors or other articles of equal value at 9d. each, or 9s. a dozen, weighing one pound, it would amount to £1008 for one ton, or £100,800 for 100 tons, and many thousand tons of iron-ore are annually converted into equally valuable articles at the expense of labour and coals only.

The same remarks will apply to the article of glass which is converted by means of coals and labour into the state in which
we see it. The working-glass maker earns from 20s. to 40s. per week, and he spends it as freely, his being what is called "a dry" business, and he lives proportionally well in other respects. But such are the restraints upon that trade by the excise laws, for the sake of a few thousands a year in direct duty to the revenue, that it is only men of large capital who can engage in it, and that under regulations which materially restrict the manufacture. But for those impediments in the making of glass, and the high duty which it is subject to, that article might be made so cheap as to increase the demand for it many times more than it now is, which would require proportionate additional employment for work-people, and consequent improved demand for provisions. And the increased consumption of other excisable articles by those additional workmen, would nearly compensate for the loss of revenue on glass. When the immense consumption of agricultural produce by the manufacturing population is fully considered, it will be evident, that the great source from which the farmer can hope to derive a good demand, is in the prosperity of manufacturing trade; and that the system which is miscalled "Protection to the Farmer," is really the very means for promoting his ruin, by counteracting demand for his produce.

To give some idea of the quantity of provisions required for the manufacturing population, one of the masters of a cotton-mill, in which 1000 work-people are employed, and between whom and their employers a good understanding exists, informs me by letter, that "in a conversation with our work-people, we found by the accounts they produced, that they paid for agricultural food alone in 1839, £18,500." That is, for the consumption by those who are dependent for support upon employment in one cotton-mill only. And although an exact account could not easily be obtained, it is supposed, that when trade is good, at least £300,000 are paid weekly, in Lancashire alone in wages, for manufacturing purposes, of which £200,000 will be spent in provisions. By that large weekly amount, a calculation may be formed of the effect which a stagnation in trade causes upon the prices of farming produce. Therefore whenever a great depression in the price of food and want of demand for it exists, it may be traced to a depression in trade,
which prevents the consumption of nearly all other provisions, except potatoes, by manufacturing work-people who are unemployed, and as much of that want of employment is occasioned by the interference of the "Protectors of the Farmers," in preventing the exchange of manufactured goods for the produce of many Foreign countries. It is those mistaken and uninformed "Protectors" who really cause that depression in the price of provisions, by restricting the free exchange of manufactured goods for corn, sugar, coffee, and other Foreign produce, without understanding the effect which that restriction will have, in depriving the operative manufacturing population of the means wherewith to buy and consume any farming produce.

There is good reason to believe, that millions of pounds would be insufficient to compensate the working population of the manufacturing districts for the loss of employment, which the prohibitory policy of your county members and those who act with them, inflicted upon those work-people in the winter of 1842 and 1843, by depriving them of the means to earn and buy food with; beside the injury which it caused to the farmers of the whole country, by destroying so much demand for their produce which that unemployed population would otherwise have consumed.

It is well known that the population of Great Britain and Ireland increases nearly 1000 a day, and is now about one-third more numerous than it was at the end of the war, in the year 1815; and yet since then, except by a few unimportant enclosures, the land whereon wheat is grown has not increased. At that time, five quarters an acre was "a very good crop," and it is still considered "a very heavy crop." And how is it, that with the addition of one-third in the number of consumers, and but little increase in the quantity produced, there is no greater demand for that which is grown? It can only be accounted for, because so many of the working population, manufacturing, mechanical, and agricultural, who are the large proportion of consumers, for want of employment are compelled to "rejoice upon potatoes," and often but a scanty supply of them, and to abstain from nearly all other food.

But whatever their good intentions may be, the effect of the
system of your representatives is to annihilate manufacturing labour; rather than permit Foreign grain, or sugar, or coffee to be imported to this country, however much the exchange of manufactured goods for that foreign produce may promote the consumption of British agricultural produce, by increasing demand for manufactured goods, and consequently for manufacturing labour. A principle that with their limited information upon those subjects, they ought never to have proclaimed, without making themselves thoroughly informed upon all the circumstances connected with it, and ascertaining that instead of benefiting, it is not more calculated to injure the real interest of the farmer.

It is not only for food, that wheat-flour is a necessary article of trade. Thousands of sacks are annually consumed as paste for papering rooms for starch and other similar uses. And the quantities required for manufacturing purposes, and for which no other article is found to answer so well, would be almost incredible to those who have not opportunity for observing it. But a calculation may be made of what is used by sizers, stiffeners, dyers, and others, from the fact founded upon authentic information by the parties who use it, that there are establishments which require from 100 to 150 sacks of flour per week, whereby, it may fairly be supposed, that in Great Britain, at least 2000 sacks a-week are used for those purposes, which is 104,000 sacks a year. Another manufacturing use, in which flour is essential, is, starching linen and cotton warps for weaving, without which they would unravel and could not be woven. For that purpose, an acquaintance of mine uses 50 sacks of flour per month in his steam-loom works; some power-loom manufacturers require considerably more, but many not nearly so much, and supposing there are only 200 power-loom factories in Great Britain, requiring on an average but 35 sacks per month, and that hand-loom weavers use the same quantity as those who weave by steam, though they require much more, especially for linen, it shows that 168,000 sacks of flour are annually consumed by weavers in Great Britain, for starching warps only. That quantity with the 104,000 sacks used by sizers, stiffeners, &c., makes a total of at least 272,000 sacks of
flour required for manufacturing purposes alone, which if made of sound wheat, its being stale, or sour, is of little or no consequence.

And as the surface of the whole county of Dorset is 643,840 acres, supposing one-twentieth part, or 32,192 acres to be the proportion upon which wheat is annually grown in that county, and the other nineteen-twentieths to be tillage, pasture, down, wood, heath, park, garden, and waste lands, and that covered by towns, buildings, roads, rivers, fences, &c. And calculating those 32,192 acres of wheat-land, at 32 bushels of 60 pounds to an acre, to produce 1,030,144 bushels, from which allowing one-fifth for bran and loss by grinding, there remains 206,029 sacks of flour, as the whole quantity annually grown in Dorsetshire. Consequently 272,000 sacks, the quantity of wheat-flour used for manufacturing purposes alone, is more by 65,971 sacks than is grown in the whole county of Dorset. Did any of those who profess to be "the Friends of the Farmers," ever make these calculations of the value of manufactures?

The diminution in the consumption of barley, and loss of value occasioned by the interference and tampering with manufacturing industry of those Legislators who profess to be, "Protectors of the Farmers," cannot have been anticipated by them, or they would find themselves to be acting in direct opposition to the real interest of the growers of barley also, by destroying demand for it. As although there are many thousands of tee-totalers, it is computed that more ale, by at least 100,000 pints a-day, would be consumed in Lancashire only, if so many of the manufacturing and mechanical work-people were not by the ultimate effects of the Corn and Sugar-Laws, deprived of employment, to earn wages wherewith to buy it. That quantity at eight bushels of malt to the hogshead, for those people like ale good, if it is to be had, would require an increased consumption of 84,490 quarters of malt in a year for Lancashire alone, exclusive of all other manufacturing districts. But these effects of the Corn and Sugar-Laws, and the injury which they cause by preventing the employment of work-people, are not calculated upon by that class of Legisla-
tors, who do not know anything about trade, or of the importance of that employment to the labouring population for earning wages to subsist upon.

To impose a duty upon Foreign corn as a protection to the British farmer, is an erroneous doctrine. For, although the object contemplated by it, may be to exclude competition by the Foreign corn grower, the concoctors of those laws in their short-sighted zeal for that mistaken “protection” appear to have overlooked the counteracting injury, that in the ultimate effect of those laws, by depriving hundreds of thousands of manufacturing work-people of employment, and preventing them from earning wages, they destroyed so much demand, not only for British grown corn, but for all other agricultural produce, except potatoes, and often, but a short supply of them, which millions of the British population have thereby been driven to exist upon. The falling off in the consumption by that unemployed population of all other articles of farming produce, as corn, meat, butter, cheese, bacon, &c., being in fact, one result of those very Corn-Laws.

There is another circumstance, which those protectors may not have considered. That the value of money and money’s worth, is as well understood in Foreign countries, as in Great Britain, in consequence of which, the prices of most articles of Foreign growth are regulated by the value of them in this country, deducting the cost of shipping and other charges. A clear instance of which effect, exists at the present time in the advance of cotton at New Orleans, immediately on the arrival of the news that the price was advanced in England; and by that same rule, as soon as it can be ascertained in Foreign countries, that the restrictions upon the importation of corn grown by them are removed, will the price of it advance in proportion to its value in Great Britain.

The only reasonable argument in favour of fixing any duty upon Foreign corn, is, that of benefit to the revenue. But for that purpose, the imposing of a high duty would defeat its own object, by obstructing the consumption of many other articles which pay better revenue duties. Therefore, for that purpose, perhaps 2s. 8d. a quarter, or 4d. a bushel, which is sometimes
the fluctuation in price in a single week might not be much felt. Possibly so high as 4s. a quarter might not have a serious effect. But as every 1s. a quarter of duty would by so much interrupt the exchange of manufactured goods for grain, it would thereby prevent the earning of wages by the making such goods, which is one great advantage to be gained by the removal of the Corn-Laws, and throw that trade into the hands of the dealer in corn only, who would often have to pay for it in hard gold and not by manufactured goods.

As for the sliding-scale it is a decided injury to the farmer, especially to those who are worst off for money. As the stocks of British grain being nearly all consumed at the commencement of harvest, it is then most valuable, and the duty being consequently reduced to the lowest point, all the Foreign grain then in bond is loosed upon the market again to depress the value of all other, just at the very time when those poorest farmers having something to sell, are compelled to convert it into money for whatever they can get. And that Foreign grain being the property of corn speculators which they have generally bought when it is at the lowest price, and the duty at the highest, the taking off of every shilling of that duty as corn advances in price, is adding so much increase to the value of their bonded grain, so that in fact it is the corn speculators who receive most benefit by the sliding scale, and the poorest farmers who are the greatest sufferers by it.

And as the merchant in manufactured goods could make no certain calculation of the amount of sliding duty, he could not tell when exchanging his goods for Foreign corn, whether he had disposed of those goods to a profit or not, without knowing which, it is not likely that he would part with them, consequently the sliding scale by preventing the exchange of manufactured goods for Foreign grain, totally deprives working manufacturers of that source for earning wages. The ultimate effect of prohibiting Foreign corn from being imported to Great Britain, is equal to telling the working population, that “although you have not employment now to enable you to buy the corn which the British farmer grows; we will not permit you to make goods for Foreign countries, in order to prevent you from
eating their corn as well as our own, and rather than you shall earn wages by manufacturing goods to be exchanged for Foreign corn, or sugar, or coffee, we will support you as paupers.” Whatever may be the intention, that is the consequence, and the cause why poor-rates generally are so high.

For want of inquiring into the real cause, many have attributed the depression in the prices of cattle, cheese, butter, and meat, to the influence of the Tariff, for allowing those productions of the soil to be imported at certain duties. With regard to cheese, the duty upon it remains unaltered from the previous Tariff: it is so much loss of consumption by the working population, who are prevented from earning the means for buying it, that has reduced the price of cheese. And as for cattle, the whole number imported would be scarcely equal to one week’s consumption by London alone; and so many British cattle have died of disease, some farmers and cow-keepers having, to my own knowledge, lost from four to twelve each, it is computed that not half the numbers of Foreign cattle have been imported into England as of British cattle, which have been taken off by disease.

But if those who profess to be the “friends of the farmer,” will investigate, they will find that instead of the Tariff, it is depression in all branches of manufacturing and mechanical industry, by which hundreds of thousands of work-people who used to earn high wages, and to spend them as freely in bread, beef, beer, and other good living, have been compelled to exist upon potatoes or oatmeal, or other cheap food, and but a scanty supply of that. And by further inquiry of the wants of food by the people, they would also learn, that had trade generally been equal to that of 1835, with the increase of population since that time, the supply of those articles from abroad would have been quite inadequate to the demand for them, by which, advance in prices instead of depression must have been the consequence.

There is another source by which the exclusive policy of our Legislature destroys an immense market for manufactured goods, which is, in prohibiting by higher duties than they are worth, the importation of sugar and coffee from Brazil, Columbia, Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba, and other countries of
North, South, Central, and Western America, by which, demand for manufacturing labour to the amount of millions of pounds is annually lost to Great Britain.

There is said to be an understanding between those who call themselves the "Landed" and the "West India" interest, to support each other in what they call the "Protection" of their interests, by preventing the importation of corn, sugar, coffee, &c., from Foreign colonies and countries not dependent upon Great Britain. It would be impossible to calculate the injury which this combination inflicts upon the whole British population, except the few who are interested in the cultivation of sugar and coffee in the British colonies. One consequence is, that the market to Brazil which used to annually consume five millions worth of British manufactured goods, is being turned off by this country to Prussia, Belgium, France, and other European nations, that accept in exchange, the sugar and coffee which the absurd policy of these Legislators refuses, thereby giving to those nations the benefit of that manufacturing labour. Another effect is, that much of the cotton goods which used to be wholly manufactured in this country for that trade, are now only spun here, as spinning, requiring greater skill, is still done best and cheapest in Great Britain, and exported as yarn to be woven, bleached, printed or dyed, calendared and made up, which are profitable sources of employment by Foreign manufacturers and Foreign labourers who spend their wages in Foreign provisions. And the making of much of the iron and other goods for the Brazil market, is being lost to the British manufacturer by the same cause.

The importance of the Brazil trade is too valuable to be thus sacrificed for the benefit of those only who are interested in maintaining high prices for sugar and coffee. It used to take upwards of five million pounds' worth of British manufactured goods. All its coast is within two months' sail of England, and manufactured goods may be exported there, and payment in money or the produce of that country received back again in six months, from the time when they left Great Britain. Brazil is nearly as large as all Europe, and most of its soil for growing sugar and coffee is said to be equal to the best upon the globe. The same remarks will apply to the
sugar and coffee of Columbia, Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, and other countries of the Gulf of Mexico, and of the west coast of America, except that the distance to the latter is greater.

The benefit to Great Britain of importing Foreign produce, is not only in the luxuries, which it supplies, to those who can afford to buy it, and the duties derived by it to the revenue, but much more by the employment which it creates for the manufacturing population. As those countries not having money wherewith to pay for the goods which they require, their only other source of payment is by their produce; and by so much of that produce as is denied importation to this country, is demand for manufactured goods prevented. It is shown elsewhere that at least two-thirds of all wages earned by the manufacturing population, whether by making goods for the home-trade or for exportation, are spent in farming produce; consequently, the prohibition of any Foreign produce, is by that much frustrating the consumption of any British provisions, and giving the advantage of that consumption to those other European nations which will admit that Foreign produce, refused by Great Britain. And, it is supposed, that the British Government thus turns away sugar, coffee, and other produce of those Foreign countries, to the amount of millions a year, a heavy sacrifice of commerce, manufacturing employment, and consumption of farming produce.

The object of this exclusion from Great Britain of Brazilian and other Foreign sugar and coffee, by prohibitory duties, is to enable the British colonial sugar and coffee growers to obtain a greater price for those articles; and so effectually is this object answered, that Brazilian or other Foreign sugar may now be bought exclusive of any duty upon British or Foreign, at about 2d. a pound below, and Foreign coffee at 4d. a pound under the prices of them from the British colonies. The only parties who derive benefit from this immense loss of traffic and of manufacturing employment, are the growers of British colonial sugar and coffee, who thereby gain an extra 2d. for every pound of sugar, and 4d. on coffee, which they can send to this country. And that 2d. and 4d., not out of Foreign pockets, but from all the buyers of those articles in Great Britain and Ireland only,
as the British population alone are subject to those extra charges.

This policy of self-interested Legislators so manifestly unjust towards the inhabitants of this empire, is acknowledged by the fact, that although the Brazilian and other Foreign sugar is prohibited from being consumed in Great Britain, it is permitted by law to be refined or converted into lump sugar in bond, but for re-exportation only: and in that state, it is actually sent out to be used in our own West India colonies, the bounty which the poorest consumer of sugar in this country has to pay for that of those British colonies of 2d. for every pound, being a temptation to the growers of it, to send to Great Britain all the sugar which they can raise. Which is exactly the same, as if the people of Newcastle receive such a bounty for all the coals which they can send to London, that it will best answer their purpose to obtain back from London, all the coals which they require for their own use.

There are other sacrifices which the exclusion of Foreign sugar subjects the British population to, beside that of having to pay an extra 2d. for every pound of sugar which they consume. In the neighbourhood of all large towns, many of the small farmers and country cottagers depend upon the sale of their fruit, as gooseberries, plums, &c., towards the payment of their rents, or for other purposes. But as certainly as there occurs a bountiful crop of these fruits, does that exclusion of Foreign, enable the growers of British colonial sugar to take advantage of that Providential bounty, and to advance the price of it, thereby discouraging innumerable careful housekeepers from buying those fruits for preserving, the economy of which is defeated by sugar having thus become so dear. Hundreds of cottagers and small farmers in the county of Chester, will remember, how in 1842, they were thus prevented from obtaining more than 10d. or 1s. per dozen quarts for their plentiful crops of plums, instead of about 2s. for the same quantity, as they had often before received for them. And there are many of such farmers and cottagers, who some years grow from 20 to 100 bushels of those preserving fruits, to whom a high price of sugar becomes a serious injury; but these little advan-
tages to small farmers and cottagers seldom engage the attention of county Legislators.

Foreign grown coffee, though not quite so shut out as sugar from British consumption by a duty exceeding its value, is chargeable with 4d. a pound, or 37s. 4d. per cwt. more than that from the British colonies, which obstructs its importation to this country in sufficient quantities, to much affect the demand for manufactured goods by those Foreign countries where it is grown.

The heavy duties which even British colonial sugar and coffee are subject to, operate powerfully against the consumption of them, by increasing the prices, and in proportion to the reduction of those duties would the consumption of those articles be promoted. But if the British colonies must obtain a bounty out of the pockets of the consumers in Great Britain, of more than the prices which Foreign countries can supply those articles for, although the principle is wrong, let the duty on British sugar be reduced from 24s. to 14s. per cwt., and Foreign sugar be admitted at 21s., which still leaves an advantage of three-farthings a pound to the British planter; and let the duty on British colonial coffee be reduced from 4d. to 3d. a pound, and that on Foreign, from 8d., as it now pays, to 4d., which gives the British grower an extra benefit of 9s. 4d. per cwt., and by that reduction in cost, the consumption of those articles being then brought more within the means of the working-population, would soon be so nearly doubled as to cause but little or no loss to the revenue, but would also offer proportionate inducement for exportation of manufactured goods to those Foreign countries where that sugar and coffee are grown, and thereby create additional sources for the earning of wages, and consequently increased demand for agricultural produce.

It is evident, that when fixing the alteration of duties in the present Tariff, the ministers suffered the private interests of some of their colleagues in office, whose family connections are largely concerned in the cultivation of British colonial sugar and coffee, to influence their judgment in deciding to continue the prohibitions of those articles from Foreign countries. It being well-known, that those parties are greatly extending their
plantations of sugar, for whose benefit, that continued exclusion of Foreign sugar will be of immense advantage. I do not impute that an actual agreement was made to that effect, but that the private interest of those planters, was mentally, if not openly considered. And so immensely wealthy as those parties already are, it is not just that the interests of the whole population of Great Britain and Ireland should be sacrificed to increase their overgrown riches. For, if that exclusion of Foreign produce is persisted in, the effect will be to drive away the remaining demand of those countries for British manufactured goods to other nations of Europe, which will take their sugar and coffee in exchange, and thereby occasion so much further destruction of British manufacturing employment, and consequently, of demand for agricultural produce.

As for the pretended objection, that so admitting Foreign sugar and coffee would encourage slavery in the countries from whence it might be imported (although slavery is not permitted in some of those countries), the self-interest of that objection is evident, from the fact, of its being raised by the West India colonists, or their connections, who used to be the greatest advocates for slavery. Though they do not object to the cotton, rice, or tobacco of the slave-states of America, nor to the produce imported from Russia, where the wealth of the landowner depend upon the number of slaves or serfs on his estates. But as some compensation, not to the West India colonists, for they have already had enough, but as interest for the twenty millions of pounds which Great Britain has so generously paid to its colonial slave-owners for the freedom of their bondsmen. Let 5 per cent. additional duty be imposed upon all articles imported from every country or state in which our fellow-men are so held in bondage: that would assert the principle held by British freemen of their abhorrence of slavery, and be some return to the revenue for the sacrifice which our country has so liberally made.

But to return to the object of this letter. I do not charge your representatives with intentionally misleading you by their remarks at the Blandford dinner in 1842; but allow them due credit for acting to the best of their limited information upon
the subjects in question. But, what I complain of them for, is, for proclaiming opinions, as two of them especially did, by anticipating incorrect results from the freedom of commerce, and for separating the interests of agriculture and manufacture from each other, without previously investigating and making themselves thoroughly acquainted with all the circumstances connected with those great questions, to ascertain whether those opinions were right or wrong; and for uttering with the power of their respectable names, sentiments, which, for want of fully understanding themselves the subjects to which they relate, are calculated to injure, instead of to benefit those very cultivators of the soil whom they are professing "to protect," as neither the society with whom they associate, nor their own occupations in life, are capable of affording them that essential information without making such ample inquiry. Did they previously inquire how much of the wheat, or barley, or beef, or mutton, or wool, or butter, or cheese, or any other agricultural produce, not only of Dorsetshire, but of all Great Britain and Ireland, found its way to be consumed by the working population of the manufacturing districts, and to be given in exchange for the wages of manufacturing industry; and did they consider that every restriction upon manufacturing employment, by the exclusion directly or indirectly, of any Foreign produce in exchange, for manufactured goods, for the purpose of interrupting the consumption of Foreign grown corn would interfere to prevent the consumption, not only of British corn also, but of every other article of produce which the British soil supplies.

Had they visited amongst the clothing districts of the West of England; the iron-manufacturers of Wales, Worcestershire, Staffordshire; the densely populous towns and neighbourhoods of Birmingham, Sheffield, and other parts of England and Scotland; the stocking-makers of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Scotland; the linen-manufacturers of Barnsley, Leeds, Carlisle, Aberdeen, Dundee, Belfast, Coleraine, and many other towns of Great Britain and Ireland; the woollen-manufacturers of Leeds, Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford, Dewsbury, and other parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire; the flannel-makers of Wales, Rochdale,
and Bury; the innumerable cotton-works of Manchester, Stockport, Oldham, Bolton, Ashton-under-Lyne, Blackburn, Preston, Glasgow, Staley-Bridge, Wigan, Tamworth, Todmorden, Barnsley, Paisley, and other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland; the silk-manufacturers of London, Coventry, Macclesfield, Leek, Manchester, and many of its neighbouring villages; the glass-makers of Bristol, Dudley, Birmingham, Warrington, St. Helen’s, Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds, and of Scotland, and the variety of every other description of manufacturing and mechanical employments throughout the United Kingdom, whereupon perhaps from eight to ten millions of people are dependent, in one way or another, for their daily bread.

Had your representatives observed the thousands of tons of every description of provisions which those manufacturing towns and districts are constantly consuming? Had they learnt from the shopkeepers, how much more food they sell when trade is good; and how much less when it is bad? (important effects upon demand for your produce.) Did they ascertain at the various ports of Liverpool, Hull, Goole, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, Belfast, Gloucester, Bristol, and London, how many hundreds or thousands of ship loads of British manufactured goods are now annually exported, and consider how much more would be exported, but for the absurd restrictions upon trade? Did they calculate the millions of pounds in wages which must have been paid for making those goods? And did they imagine the mountains of agricultural produce of all kinds which those wages enabled the work-people who earned them to consume? Had they reflected, as was the case last winter, and at the very time while they were uttering those speeches, how the depression in manufacturing employment occasioned the want of demand for bread, beef, bacon, butter, barley, and all other farming produce, and the very low prices of all those articles which that want of demand caused? But they evidently never calculated how those prices would have improved, by removing the restrictions upon commerce which they were then advocating the continuance of.

And if they could have ascertained how many millions of people there are in Great Britain and Ireland, and in all Foreign
countries, who by the various sources which the restrictions on manufacturing industry create, are, in want of clothing and other manufactured goods, they would have discovered that, this country so far from being overdone with machinery, does not contain nearly sufficient to supply that deficiency of manufactured goods, whereby hundreds of thousands more of British labourers might then be employed to earn wages wherewith to buy increased quantities of farming produce.

If your representatives would also take the trouble to examine into all the details whereby the British nation, and especially the "agricultural interest" are dependent upon the prosperity of manufacture, and upon the wages of the working-population, who, could they be fully supplied with employment, would consume infinitely more Foreign produce than this country grows. Unless blinded by prejudice, or unwillingness to admit themselves to be in error, I believe they would acknowledge that the most effectual means of promoting prosperity to the farmer, and demand for his produce, will be, to remove all the restrictions that interfere with manufacturing industry, and that instead of being alarmed by the importation to this country of a few cargoes of Foreign sugar, and coffee, and corn, they would welcome them as so many channels for promoting the employment of thousands more of working-manufacturers, who would thereby earn the means for consuming increased quantities of every description of agricultural produce.

It appears that nearly thirteen millions of gold, according to the last quarterly returns from the Bank of England, are now locked up in its coffers for want of being profitably employed. Which, if your Legislators will inquire into, they will discover, is one effect of the restrictions upon commerce with Foreign countries, which causes such uncertainty of receiving remunerating returns for whatever might be exported, as to discourage mercantile confidence in that trade, by which that gold is prevented from being used upon commercial and manufacturing enterprise, to the destruction of so much employment of work-people. And if fully inquired into, that would prove to be a principal cause why money is so scarce amongst farmers and tradespeople, for it cannot be in circula-
tion throughout the country, and in the coffers of the Bank of England at the same time.

In conclusion. I feel sincerely obliged to your noble and humane representative for the good which he has done towards alleviating many of the abuses which those employed in factories, especially young children, have heretofore been exposed to; and give him every credit for purity of intention to do still more. But, so far as I can understand his proposed plans, if completed, to the extent to which he is endeavouring to effect them, I fear they would not only prevent millions of wages from being annually earned; but would also shackle the master manufacturer by regulations, which, if not impracticable, would so increase the cost of manufacturing, as to lay it still more open to Foreign competition than it now is. For, if amongst other changes, the time for working factories be reduced from 12 to 10 hours, or one-sixth in the day, and calculating the average wages of the work-people to be 12s. a week, as the masters' nett profits after paying all expenses do not amount to so much as one-sixth of the wages of his work-people, he will have no alternative, but to reduce their wages by one-sixth, or an average of 2s. a week out of 12s., there being no other source from whence that reduction can be taken without ruining the master, as he already gets the highest price that he can obtain for his goods, therefore, the reduction cannot be compensated by increasing the price of them; nor is that all the sacrifice of wages which the shortening of the hours of labour would subject the working manufacturer to. In nearly every manufactory, there are essential expenses incurred whether it be working or not; and by an estimate ascertained for the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, it appears that the annual fixed charges on a Cotton-mill, employing 440 work-people, for interest on capital and machinery, rent, insurance, poor-rates and other taxes, salaries of manager, overlooker, and salesman, &c., are £6334. a year, or £121. 16s. weekly, exclusive of wages to work-people, coals, and other expenses of working the mill, those fixed charges amount to an additional proportionate expense of 5s. 6d. a week to each of the work-people. And if the working hours of the mill be reduced by one-sixth, that
proportion, or 11d. a week, will also have to be further deducted from the wages of each of them, being in all an average of 2s. 11d., or £7. 11s. 8d. a year, which each of the working manufacturers would be liable to lose by the shortening of their hours of labour, as the master manufacturer being unable to add that difference to the price of his goods, unless by ruining himself, he will have no other source for making up the deficiency than deducting it from the wages of his work-people.

The annual produce of some of the great departments of British manufacturing industry is considered by McCulloch to be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>£35,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linen</td>
<td>£8,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woollen</td>
<td>22,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron &amp; Hardware</td>
<td>17,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glass &amp; earthenware</td>
<td>4,250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches, jewellery</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leather</td>
<td>13,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hats</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>To which may be added, cabinet and all other wood-ware, exclusive of that for building purposes, say</td>
<td>3,350,000</td>
</tr>
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</table>

making a total of 120 millions of pounds.

And if one-third of that amount, or 40 millions be considered as the average proportion for wages earned by making those goods. By that calculation, the effect of shortening the hours of labour by one-sixth, and the further loss that must ensue to the establishments, equal in the whole to from one-fifth to one-fourth, which deducted out of the 40 millions earned by making those goods, will create a clear sacrifice of about 8 millions from the wages of the work-people. A loss to the whole working-population, which your noble representative cannot have anticipated when endeavouring to obtain a reduction in their hours of labour. Nor could he have considered that that loss of 8 millions of wages would cause a falling off in the demand for farming produce of two-thirds, or nearly six millions of pounds, which the working-population would thereby be prevented from spending in provisions.

A residence of seventeen years in this manufacturing town has enabled me to observe that very often the master-manufacturer does not derive so much benefit from his establishment, as the work-people whom he employs. For of nine Cotton-
mills which there are within this Borough, failures have occurred in seven of them since I came to Warrington. One has been twice given up by the separate parties who occupied it; and one only continues to be worked by the same Firm who then held it. And also to observe, that whatever obloquy or prejudice against master-manufacturers, exists in the minds of those gentlemen who profess "friendship for the farmer," and whose occupations in life afford them but little opportunity for ascertaining the benefits conferred by those manufacturers upon the nation at large, in employing so many thousands of work-people, and supplying them with means to earn such wages. The tradesmen at least of all manufacturing towns well know the value of the working population being fully employed, by the wages that are constantly circulating amongst them; a large proportion of which wages find their way into the hands of the farmer, and through him into the pockets of his landlord, in the shape of rent, although that landlord may not be aware of the source from whence that rent is derived.

Finally, if your representatives really regard your interest, let them be cautious how they tamper with manufacturing industry, either by interfering with, or obstructing the exportation of manufactured goods, or preventing the exchange of them for the produce of other countries; or offettering that industry by legislative regulations, which for want of sufficiently anticipating their effects, may be more calculated to injure than to benefit the working population, and to excite disagreement and uneasiness between them and their employers to the loss of all parties concerned; and to increase the wretchedness and misery of the wives and families, not only of the working manufacturers, but, through diminishing the sources for employment, of the whole labouring population of Great Britain.

Edward West.

Warrington,
24th of First Month, 1844.