

Lord William Wyndham Grenville

Corn Bill
(1815)

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CORN BILL

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Lord Grenville rose to state his opinion on this question—a question of the highest national importance as relating to an article of the first necessity—a question respecting which no consideration, no feeling, no intemperance either of one party or of another, should prevent him from discharging his duty. He owned that the first moment he heard that such a measure as that before their lordships was in contemplation, he had formed a decided opinion that if the project were carried into effect, it would be productive of infinite mischief to the community at large. At that time he conceived that it originated with a very few individuals; but when he discovered that it was not founded on the insulated opinion of a few individuals, however respectable in character, but that it had been adopted by his Majesty's Government, and was to receive the support of all their influence, he felt the seriousness of the occasion; he felt that the interval which would elapse before the measure would come under the consideration of their lordships would be too short, even with all that previous knowledge of which an attentive examination of it at former periods had possessed him, to admit him even satisfactorily to review that previous knowledge, and the grounds of that original opinion, in a way commensurate to the importance of the subject, much less to acquire all that additional information which recent circumstances had rendered so indispensably necessary to a wise and deliberate decision upon it. But while he thus lamented the unbecoming precipitation which had been manifested on this occasion, he begged that that regret might not be attributed to any new doubts which had arisen in his own mind, or which had been produced by any thing which he had seen or heard in that House or elsewhere, or by the mass of enlightened discussion which had been in various ways submitted to the public on the subject. On the contrary, his original opinion had been strengthened by all that he [188] had thus seen and heard, and most of all by that which had just fallen from the noble earl on the opposite bench. He was now no longer left to conjecture the reasons by which the supporters of the Bill were influenced. The noble earl had detailed the motives by which they were actuated; and he must

say, that the decided conclusion to which that detail had brought him was, that the motives were inadequate to the support, not alone of a measure of the extent proposed, but of any legislative interference whatever on the subject. Precipitate as had been the steps taken by the advocates of the Bill, and much as it was to be regretted that so little time had been allowed for investigation and discussion, it was some consolation to their lordships that no inconsiderable information was to be derived from the report of their lordships committee. Any one who looked at that report, as well as at the report of the committee of another place—who recollected the conversations which had occurred among their lordships on the subject last year, and who had read the publications which had appeared upon it, must allow that he would not be guilty of any great misstatement, if he declared that he had conceived the arguments of the advocates of the Bill to rest principally on the urgent distress of the agriculturist, and of the indispensable necessity of relieving him from the pressure which the diminution of the price of corn had brought upon him. It was an unquestionable principle of domestic policy, that a legislature had no right to relieve one class of the community at the expense of another class. To do that, would be not to distribute that equal justice which they were bound to distribute to all classes. If it were possible to relieve the distress of one class (and he could assure their lordships that no one felt more sensibly than him-self the distress of any large portion of the people) without throwing the burthen on any other class, a measure by which such an effect would be produced, should receive his cordial concurrence; but on the contrary, in a case in which gain could not be created, in which loss could not be avoided, in which all that could be done was to change the pressure from one body of people to another body of people, he would earnestly deprecate any legislative proceeding whatever. If, therefore, the measure under their lordships consideration had rested on these latter grounds, he must have characterised it as one utterly [189] unbecoming, and utterly unworthy of their lordships adoption. It was therefore that he felt great pleasure (from whatever cause the change might have proceeded) in bearing the noble earl disclaim any intention on the part of the supporters of the Bill of considering the agricultural interest in preference to any other interest of the country. So partial a proposition, had it been

made, would, he trusted, have been received by their lordships as any partial proposition ought to be received—the more especially as the interests which it would have advised them exclusively to consider, were so intimately connected with those of their lordships. This intention, however, had been disclaimed, and the question now remained to be argued as a question of a general nature, to be determined on the grounds of general advantage or evil—without reference to the farming or to any other particular interest—without reference to present times or circumstances—but with reference alone to such a system of enlarged and liberal policy as might ultimately, if not immediately, be productive of the greatest benefits to the whole mass of the population of the empire.

Sure he was that there was no man among their lordships so destitute of enlightened views on this subject as not to feel that it was with this general, and not with any particular bearing, that it ought to be discussed. There was, however, one remark made by the noble earl, which he was sorry to hear, and which he confessed had excited his surprise, as it appeared to attach importance to a consideration, which he had hoped better information had dismissed from all their minds. The noble earl had told them that they were to look at the actual situation of the policy of the country; and in considering the propriety of adopting measures for the permanent protection of agriculture, to recollect that legislative measures had already been adopted for the protection of commerce and manufactures. He owned that he should have thought the noble earl's speech more consonant to a wise policy, had such an allusion been altogether excluded from it. The consideration, whether the duties which had been imposed some centuries ago on the importation of foreign manufactures, were founded on a wise or unwise view of the subject, had nothing to do with the present question, which rested on its own merits, and which ought to be de-[190]cided without any extrinsic reference. The just and only consideration for their lordships at present was, what effect the present measure would have on the interests of the community? If the measures which had formerly been adopted for the protection of trade and manufactures were right, let them be continued; if wrong (of which the noble earl himself seemed to have little doubt,) let them be abrogated; not suddenly, but with that caution with, which all policy, however

erroneous, so engrafted into our usage by time, should be changed; but let it be consecrated as a principle of legislation, that in no case should the grounds for advising the Legislature to afford any particular protection, rest on the protection which might have been afforded in any other quarter. In fact, he could not well conceive how the noble earl could argue, that measures, which he admitted to have been wrong with respect to manufactures, would nevertheless be right with respect to agriculture. If there were two great branches of national interest, the one subject to the operation of a system comparatively termed wise, the other subject to the operation of a system allowed to be erroneous and mischievous, what necessity, he would ask, existed for making these systems uniform at all? If such a necessity did exist (which he absolutely denied), ought not the Legislature to endeavour to produce that uniformity, by taking such steps as would bring back to the line of right the system that was acknowledged to be unwise, rather than to distort from the line of right the system which was acknowledged to be wise? Was not the first of these attempts to be advised, and was not the last to be deprecated? And let it be considered that our national interests did not form themselves into two great branches. A great majority of the people, as on the one hand they could not be benefitted by any prohibition for the protection of the manufacturer, so on the other they could not be benefitted by any prohibition for the protection of the agriculturist, unless, indeed, that prohibition had the effect of lessening the price of corn, which was a subject of separate and subsequent consideration. This great majority however, uninterested as they were on the subject, were already subject to great restraint, in consequence of the prohibitions that had been adopted for the protection of the manufacturer; and, if the Bill before their lordships should pass into [191] a law, they would be subject to farther and much greater restraint, in consequence of the prohibitions that would be adopted for the protection of the agriculturist. It would be an extraordinary mode of doing justice, thus to declare that because a large, the largest, part of the community were already oppressed by favours shown to one particular class, they should be still farther oppressed by favours shown to another particular class. The facts on which this argument rested were these:—It was about three centuries ago that this

prohibitory system commenced, by the entire prohibition of some articles of foreign commerce, and by the imposition of prohibitory duties on others. But if the operation of those laws were considered at the present moment, it would be found that they were almost null. They were not entirely null, because the abrogation of some of those prohibitions would much benefit the British manufacturer. A great mass of the manufacturers of this country were so far from wishing for the protection of the Legislature against foreign competition, that it was well known to their lordships that those manufacturers were able to undersell their competitors in foreign markets.

He stated this with the more confidence, because it was not his single opinion. He had that morning received the result of a meeting of the woollen manufacturers of Gloucestershire—forming no inconsiderable portion of the manufacturers of the kingdom, and whose manufacture had in former times received, in a peculiar degree, legislative protection,—and he would communicate to their lordships their opinion on the subject. He should do this with the more satisfaction, as that opinion would tend to solve a doubt which seemed to exist in the mind of a noble friend of his (earl Grey), who had so eloquently but so fruitlessly endeavoured to persuade their lordships to allow further time for the consideration of this most important question. His noble friend had observed, that it would be difficult to say that the agriculturist ought not to be enabled to obtain more for his corn if he were compelled to pay more for his coat. To this remark the Gloucestershire woollen manufacturers made a most satisfactory reply. He would read to their lordships an extract from their resolutions. After expatiating on the advantages which the country had derived from its commerce, those resolutions proceeded in the follow-[192]ing words, viz. "Although the principle of protection to trade may at different periods have been carried to an extent incompatible with the true principles of political wisdom, yet the statute-book of the country may be adduced as historical evidence of the different view which, our ancestors (themselves great land proprietors) had of the value and effect of commerce." Then came the passage to which he wished particularly to direct their lordships attention: "It is true that the progress of reason and the developement of the real causes of the

wealth of nations, and of the true principles of trade, which, after-inquiries and the lapse of experience through later ages have produced, have proved many of the regulations of former times to have been unnecessary, and the system of protection and exclusive trade erroneous and impolitic. This principle of exclusion has recently been adduced as matter of reproach to the commercial interest, and of imitation to the landed; but a principle so completely exploded and abandoned by the one, is hardly worth the adoption of the other, as the most enlightened and strenuous advocates for the freedom of trade are to be found amongst the commercial members of the community. The woollen manufacturers have been particularly instanced as protected from competition by duties of the heaviest description, to which the manufacturers have only to contrast their recent policy, and to adduce the instance of the commercial treaty in 1787 with France, their greatest and most formidable rival; where all exclusion was readily given up, and the manufactures of each country admitted to the other on a small and equal duty." He could not hope to state to their lordships the liberal principles which he recommended for their adoption more forcibly than they were thus stated by the Gloucestershire woollen manufacturers, who had so well expressed their confidence in the total inefficacy of the protecting system with respect to their manufactures in the present moment. A just argument might therefore be drawn from this declaration against the extension of the system, to an interest in which, by analogy, its effects would be equally pernicious.

Having said thus much on the observation of the noble earl, which in his opinion had demanded animadversion, he would proceed to examine the grounds of general policy on which the proposed measure [193] rested. The noble earl had declared that the Bill was intended to benefit the consumer, by establishing and promoting an adequate, cheap, and steady supply of grain for the consumption of this island. That was proclaimed by the noble earl to be the general principle of the Bill. All partial views, all ideas of benefitting a particular class he disclaimed. The noble earl professed that the measure was calculated to last for twenty years, and to produce the effect which he had already described. The first question that occurred to his mind was, What necessity there was for

legislating at all? There was unfortunately in our times, and more particularly in our country, the most injudicious and erroneous idea prevalent, that all the inconveniencies which must naturally occur in the condition of social institutions might be immediately regulated by legislation. There was a sort of fondness and anxiety for legislation—a kind of zealous persuasion that the wisdom and power of Parliament could do that to which he readily acknowledged if any legislature were competent, the British Parliament was that legislature, but which it was beyond human wisdom and human power to effect. If he were called upon to describe one of the greatest causes of mischief in this country, one of the tendencies the most deeply to be lamented, he knew nothing to which he should be more disposed to advert, he knew nothing which appeared to him to be a more prolific source of evil, than this proneness to, this over-love of legislative interference. He believed it would be much more advantageous to the community at large—he was sure that it would be infinitely more beneficial to the interests of agriculture and of trade, if the Legislature of this country could be persuaded to abstain from endeavouring to meet temporary inconveniencies at every turn, by some bill, some protection, some remedy. He was persuaded that nothing could be more wise than that principle, with the soundness of which the noble earl had declared that he was fully impressed, which it was the fashion always to admire in theory, but always to abandon in practice, of refraining from perpetual attempts to supply defects, to correct errors, to guide speculations, to restrain enterprize, to limit profits, to reduce hazards, by legislative interposition. If this were true, and that it was true in theory at least no man disbelieved,—if it was true that Providence [194] had implanted in the mind of every man an industrious and sagacious view of his own interests, by which he was much better directed to the attainment of his objects than by any legislative assistance, why were their lordships condemned to hear that it was so, and condemned at the same time to witness perpetual and successful attempts at a violation of the principle? If the principle were inapplicable, then it must be false and not true. If applicable—if not an abstract speculation, but capable of being adopted as a rule and guide for the conduct and government of nations, it was applicable to all circumstances and to all seasons. None, however, seemed

so ready to admit the justice of such principles, as those who, the next moment, dared to violate them. But if those principles were true (and no one would deny them in theory), that every legislative interference to protect particular branches of commerce, had uniformly and without exception operated to the diminution of national wealth, then he would ask their lordships, whether there was any one description of trade—any one article of commerce—any one commodity, to which that principle so clearly applied, as that which formed the basis of the subsistence of our population.

There were two essential properties in which the trade of corn differed from almost every other commodity which formed an article of commerce. In the first place, the increase of the subsistence of a community had a natural tendency to augment its own demand; in proportion as the price of food was lowered, and was rendered more easily accessible to the great mass of the population, the population itself would be increased. In other articles of trade, if the demand for them was foreseen, an adequate supply could be in general provided, to meet that demand: but it was directly the reverse in respect to the demand of an increasing population; for there if the demand was supplied, it only enlarged itself. That general principle had been strongly exemplified in the relative increase of the population of this country, with the relative increase of its subsistence. Much argument had been used by the noble earl to prove that because, at some former period, we had been an exporting country in the article of grain, we could therefore become so again; but he must own that, to him, the whole of the argument had appeared most unsatisfactory. At the same time, he was [195] far from agreeing in another proposition which had been too much insisted upon in the course of this discussion, that an exporting, must necessarily be a poor country. The position was much too general, and required to be greatly qualified, before it could be received as correct. With regard to the system of prohibiting the importation of grain, which had been enforced during the early part of the last century, he apprehended it was not historically true that that system had been found to be unattended by any practical inconvenience; on the contrary, he felt convinced that the adoption of an opposite system in 1766 had been preceded by many and

great inconveniencies. The whole argument rested on an unsound foundation. It was a principle laid down and explained by all those eminent writers who were conversant with the subject, that the population of a country not only kept pace with, but far exceeded the ratio in which its subsistence could be produced; and that it was impossible to raise subsistence as fast as the demand for it would be found to increase. It followed, therefore, that a country whose population was progressively enlarging itself, must, at some given period, be in a state that it could no longer supply food for its increasing population; consequently, if it were even wise and politic to realize the visions of some theorists, to rest only on ourselves for the supply of all our wants, to cut off all foreign commerce, and neither to buy nor sell, could such a system be adopted in all other commodities, still he contended that it could not be done in respect to corn without the greatest danger, because, for the reasons he had slated, every country must, at some time or other, depend upon foreign countries for a proportion of its food, or suffer the most aggravated miseries. Those aggravated miseries, he feared, would be the certain effect of the present measure: that was his solemn and sincere opinion; and could he, therefore, adduce a stronger reason for giving to it his most decided opposition?

No necessity for legislating at the present moment had been shewn by any of the supporters of the measure: it was a mere speculation and nothing else: they were called upon by no immediate urgency; but, in opposition to all true theory, a new and uncertain one was to be adopted without even an attempt to shew why the general operation of free and unrestricted commerce would not [196] apply to the trade in grain as well as to other commodities. For the sake of argument, however, he would suppose that a good and sufficient motive had been established for permanent legislation; a motive founded, not upon present interests, not upon present distresses, not upon partial protection to any distinct class of individuals, for all those grounds had been disclaimed by the noble earl, but upon the ground of a fixed policy; though surely at a moment like this, when all our foreign relations were unsettled, and when every thing was in a state of uncertainty, it was most inexpedient and unwise to adopt a system of permanent legislation. He would ask their lordships, then, what

was the proposed object of the Bill? It was to produce a regular, an adequate, and a permanent supply of food. How was it intended to accomplish that end? By making food, in the first instance, dearer than what it would be without the operation of the Bill, in order, at some future and undefined time, to make it cheaper. When that period would arrive in which the effect of the Bill was to make corn cheap, he knew not; but he was quite sure that the immediate operation would be such as he had described, and not only its immediate but its future operation. It could not, by possibility, have any other. The measure might become inoperative; but while it continued to operate at all, its certain effect must be to raise the price of grain. At the same time he was anxious to remove a misapprehension into which the noble earl had fallen respecting his (lord Grenville's) opinion as to the protecting price of 80s. He never had stated that that price must be the minimum at which corn would be sold in this country; but it was beyond all doubt that its price would be raised above the standard it would be at, were the present Bill not to pass. If that were denied, he would then ask, what other operation it could have, or was it intended to have? What was its meaning? It enacted that foreign corn should not be imported into this country till the home corn had arrived at a certain price. By what ingenuity of argument it could be shewn that its effect would not be to enhance the price, he was utterly at a loss to comprehend. If it would not do that, what would it do? If it affected the price at all, it must operate either upon the demand or supply. Would it lessen the demand? It could only do so by raising the price. Would it increase [197] the supply? Certainly not; for it would cut off one source of present supply without adding any other adequate to our increasing wants.

He was aware of the general argument which might here be urged, that as the ultimate effect of the Bill would be to encourage and give a stimulus to our own agriculture, we should, hereafter, grow an independent and ample supply, which would secure a steady and moderate price; but, in order to give that encouragement, they were beginning by raising it above its natural level. Nothing else was intended by the measure. What might be its future operation he could not undertake to say; but it was now brought forward for the avowed object of preventing corn from falling back to that price which it would bear if no restrictions upon

foreign importation were imposed. Another purpose, contemplated by the supporters of the Bill, was to afford encouragement to the agriculture of Ireland; but that encouragement could be extended to Ireland only, by securing her from the foreigner who could sell his corn cheaper. In that way, also, the price would be raised; for how it could be possible to shut the market against him who would sell cheaper, and open it to him who would sell dearer, without raising the price of the commodity, might be comprehensible to the ingenuity of some, but for himself he confessed he was too dull to understand it. How was the cultivator to be protected by this measure? The land at present in cultivation was not sufficient to grow an adequate supply of grain; and how could it be made sufficient, but by bringing that soil into cultivation which was not now under the plough, because the actual price of corn would not repay the capital and skill that must be employed upon it? The whole price of corn would thus be raised, by throwing into the market that which had been grown upon those inferior lands at an increased expense. Nor could that effect be considered as at all surprising, as it was nothing more than the ordinary consequence of a restraint upon importation, which always caused the price of the commodity so restrained to rise above its natural level.

With respect to the object of the Bill in its future operations, he regretted that no intimation had been held out, by any of the supporters of it, as to the period at which it would begin to produce its advantageous results: its immediate disadvantages were obvious; but how long those disadvantages were expected to last, they had not been told. He thought the assertion quite too vague to satisfy their lordships, that the country was capable of growing corn sufficient for its consumption, because the assertion of that capacity did not state whether it referred to the present amount of our population or to our probable increase. In what ratio to our population, therefore, he would ask, was this capacity of production conceived to exist, or what amount of capital should be employed to render that capacity effective? When this capacity was asserted, he thought it should be also shewn what sacrifice of national wealth would be necessary to render our produce of corn adequate to the wants of our population. For it was a very material question to consider, whether, in order so to extend our agriculture, capital might not be

withdrawn from other objects in which it was likely to be more providently employed for the benefit of the nation. For instance, it would be most preposterous to hold out an inducement to capitalists to abandon pursuits yielding a profit to the country, in order to embark in the culture of lands incapable of producing corn without considerable expense, because the amount of such expense could never be fairly drawn from the consumer by a price which corn could reasonably bear. The idea, indeed, of providing adequate remuneration for such agriculturists at the expense of the public, would be quite as unreasonable as an attempt to render this a wine country by excluding the import of that article, and by thus rendering us independent of foreign supply.

But to enable the House to decide upon the subject of an adequate growth of corn for our supply, a further investigation was indispensably necessary; for the report of the committee, and the evidence taken before it, had by no means furnished sufficient materials. Yet with this insufficiency of materials and information it was proposed to legislate for a considerable period. It was, indeed, proposed to fix the price of corn at such a rate as to provide a permanent encouragement for the farmer; but how was this encouragement to be secured? By preventing importation, it was calculated that the farmers would be induced to grow enough of corn for the consumption of the country; but in order to do so in an average of seasons, they must grow too much in a plentiful season; and how were they to dispose of the surplus? Where was that country in which corn was to be made dear by law, to dispose of its surplus produce? That surplus could not, in fact, find a market in any other country, and therefore must remain on the hands of our farmers. Thus the object of this Bill was likely to be defeated, and the farmers become more distressed than they probably were at present. Thus the farmers would be rendered unable to sell cheaper, while they would be also rendered unable to export, through the operation of this measure, for forcing an increased price of corn.

But the fallacy of the arguments, or rather the assertions, adduced in support of this measure, was in no case more glaring than in that which referred to the danger of our dependence upon foreign supply. That such apprehension was utterly groundless was quite evident, from the experience of the last twenty years, when the general state of the country,

and especially the improvement of our agriculture, afforded the most conclusive answer to those who professed to entertain the apprehension of such a dependence. He not only deprecated this apprehension as quite visionary, but some observations connected with it, which he deemed illiberal; for he protested against the language used to excite a prejudice with regard to what was improperly called our "natural enemy," because he saw no reason why we should not be as ready to open a just and liberal intercourse with France as with any other nation. But further, as to the idea of dependence upon France: it has been stated by the noble earl, that the price of corn in France was 47s. a quarter, and that its export was prohibited when it arrived at 49s. Now, if this country were so dependent upon France, how came it that our demand had not been such as to raise the price from 47s. to 49s.? But the fact was, that our import from France was insignificant, not exceeding 145,000 quarters, while our national consumption was from 13 to 15 million quarters. How, then, could it be rational to entertain any fear of our dependence for supply upon what was called our natural enemy? The idea of such dependence was, in fact, quite nugatory. We had, indeed, usually a much larger supply from Poland and Holland; but was it therefore to be inferred that we were dependent upon either of these countries? They were [200] entirely ignorant of the principles of commerce who could entertain such a notion, for it might be as well said that those countries were dependent upon us. But every commercial transaction was an exchange of equivalents, in which both parties were equally interested. It could not be pretended that we were dependent upon Russia because this country afforded the principal market for her produce. On the contrary, Russia was by that circumstance so dependent upon us that this dependence notoriously occasioned that effort on the part of Russia which had led (God grant that it might lead !) to the deliverance of Europe. The fact was, that the interest which the Russian landholders felt in their commercial intercourse with this country, was the great cause of the restoration of the pacific relations of Russia; and why should not the landed interest of France feel equally well disposed towards this country, if our market were opened to their produce through a free trade in corn. Such a circumstance must indeed serve to excite a strong interest in France in the maintenance of peace with this country.

But could it be supposed, that because France would thus feel an interest in selling her produce to us, we should therefore become dependent upon her? The idea was absurd, quite as absurd, indeed, as the wild maxim prevailing among some politicians on the continent, that we were dependent upon those nations to whom we sold our manufactures; the buyers in such cases being just as dependent as the sellers. Yet from this absurd measure it was often assumed that this, the most independent nation in the world, was dependent upon its customers, who were its customers only to supply their own wants. But if it were maintained that we were dependent because we brought from other countries, then we must contrive to supply all our wants at home, in order to guard against the imaginary danger of dependence. This supply was, however, impossible. Some of our most essential articles must be had from other countries—naval stores, for instance. But this apprehension of dependence upon other nations, because we purchased from them, was quite a new notion. We must, in fact, buy, or we could not sell; we must export, or we could not import. And here he took occasion to observe, that the old maxim, that the balance of exports over imports constituted the wealth of a country, was [201] quite fallacious; that wealth being, in fact, created by the profit arising out of the exchange of those articles which one country could produce cheaper than another, and which, exchange must of course, be mutually beneficial. But if this country endeavoured to supply herself with corn and manufactures, she must possess a double capital, enough to supply the loom and the plough, or one or the other must be neglected. Now, the question was, whether it would be wise on our part to abandon or to hazard the loom, which was found so productive of national wealth, in the speculation of becoming a great agricultural country. The country had been hitherto found incompetent to grow sufficient corn for its consumption; and the question was, whether by pursuing our prosperous system of manufacture, we should not be able, through the disposal of that manufacture abroad, to procure corn considerably cheaper than we could possibly grow it at home.

Adverting to the petition from the city of London, the noble lord forcibly pressed the necessity of inquiry upon the important point referred

to in that petition, namely, as to the influence which this Bill was likely to have upon the price of bread. He asked their lordships, whether they could reconcile to their sense of justice, to decide upon the merits of this measure without hearing both sides? And it was to be recollected, that as yet only one side had been heard, no evidence whatever having been adduced on the part of the manufacturers and the other petitioners against the Bill. In his opinion, the tendency of this Bill would be to raise the price of bread above its natural level; and considering the influence of the price of provisions upon the price of labour, he conjured their lordships maturely to inquire and deliberate, before they determined upon such a question. The consequences to our national wealth from any considerable check to our manufactures he thought it unnecessary to dwell upon, for those consequences must be obvious to their lordships judgment; but he begged to impress upon their minds the serious injury likely to result from that provocative to emigration, which must arise out of any enhancement of the price of provisions, especially combined with the known pressure of our taxes. Indeed, it was a lamentable fact, that numbers even of the higher order of our gentry had already felt it advisable to seek in other countries [202] those conveniencies, which, from our peculiar circumstances, their means could not reach at home. If the Bill passed, there was no labourer who had a family of three children, who would not be obliged to apply for parochial relief: the manufacturers would be reduced to this resource, which was at present but too generally resorted to by the agriculturist; and even the artificer, if the reward of his toil did not increase in the same proportion as the price of bread, would be reduced to the same painful resource. The noble baron concluded by observing, that he had studiously avoided every thing which might be construed into an imputation of improper motives to the supporters of the measure, and by thanking the House for the attention with which he had been heard.