







of the land as at present circumstanced. He particularly objected to the mode of striking the averages, into the calculation for which the price of Irish grain did not enter, as well as to the permission to foreign vessels to bring grain upon the same terms as British shipping, although the foreigners usually returned in ballast, carrying back nothing but British money, without a ton of British manufactures. He was then brought to consider the exclusive burdens to which the land was exposed, amounting at least to 25 per cent. What equivalent had the owner of the soil for this unfair distribution of the public burdens? None. The chief weight of the poor rates, amounting to three-fourths of the whole, fell upon him, by the operation of the Statute of Elizabeth, and subsequent Acts. He supported, almost exclusively, the manufacturing poor. A manufacturer was rated only for his factory, and not upon the whole value of his property; besides, he had his factory in one place, whilst his workmen obtained settlements in the adjoining and agricultural parishes; so that it might be truly said, that scarcely a bale of cloth was exported to which the land had not contributed. Next came the land-tax, originally intended to be paid by every description of property, but every other description of property had by degrees crept out and left the land to sustain the whole weight. The bounty at first given to the proprietor of the soil had been taken away, and many modern taxes were made to bear with much greater severity upon him than upon any other person in the community. Capital, too, had been drawn from the land for the support of the manufacturer; he would not trouble their Lordships with details upon this point, but he would refer them to documents upon the table, by which it would appear, that while every thing produced by the soil of this country might be imported almost at a nominal duty, articles that would interfere with the interests of the manufacturer were excluded by heavy imposts. There was one other circumstance to which he wished to allude. There were great complaints of the distressed state of the country. He believed that representation to be true; but he was convinced that the distress of the manufacturing interest and the commercial interest was but a symptom of that which affected the land. It was impossible but that it must be so. If they looked at Mr. Colquhoun's work, they would see that he represented the landed interest as almost every thing, and surely he was as much to be relied on as those other gentlemen professing political economy who held a different opinion. But there was one criterion even safer than that of Mr. Colquhoun's authority—he meant the proof afforded by the income tax: from a view of the returns under that tax, their Lordships might judge of the different importance of the agricultural and manufacturing interests. In 1815, the last in which that tax was levied, it would be found that three-fourths of the land alone, and deducting two millions for houses, that left six millions as the contribution of the land alone. If they looked, then, at the returns of the same tax upon commerce and manufactures what would be the result? Commerce, manufactures, professions, and trades, together with property abroad, which paid a tax in this country, produced but three millions. Taken from that sum one million for property abroad, that paid a tax here, and that left two millions as the whole of the income tax upon commerce, manufactures, trades, and professions; while the land alone paid six millions. Could it be denied, after that fact, that the landed interest was the most important in the country? He might add, with regard to the calculation he had just made, that he believed it would be found that three-fourths of the money paid on behalf of the towns was produced from the owner of the land and his tenants, and from those concerned in the home trade of the country. He did not undervalue the foreign trade, but he did not think that, in order to preserve it, we should sacrifice our internal means of prosperity. If the foreign trade left us, as there was good reason to believe it would, still we should find ample means for the development of our industry in the home market, and in our commerce with our colonies. Our merchants would still be able to keep us, in any case of necessity, above the possibility of a deficient supply, so that it was impossible a country like this could ever feel itself dependent on any other for a supply of corn. We saw already symptoms of the decline of our foreign commerce, and we ought to provide ourselves with a substitute in the additional encouragement given to our agriculture. Our commerce was declining, because other countries had become, like us, manufacturers. France had her manufactures—America had hers—and to that extent, too, that they had occasioned a great falling off in our exports. The Russians and Germans also had their manufactures. Those people were so stupid as not to attend to the wise opinions of our political economists, who told them to take our manufactures—they refused to do so—they manufactured their own goods. The Danes did the same. He had seen a very clever essay—no doubt very clever—in which the Danes were told not to manufacture their own cloth, because they could get it so much cheaper here; but they said "if I buy from you, I must pay money for it, but if I buy at home I may appear to pay a little more for it, but I can make that payment in paper." His opinion was, ought to follow the same course, and give the same answer to the advice of those political economists who recommended us to buy the agricultural produce of other countries, and to continue to pay in gold; for whilst we paid in money, we diminished our means of competition, and threw out of employ the workmen by whose labour we were supported. He would just call the attention of the House to the history of 1813, 1816, 1817, 1818, and 1820, in confirmation of what he had just stated. If they read the history of those years, they would see that our manufacturing interests were at those times always must be affected by the prosperity or decline of our agriculture. When the latter flourished the former were prosperous—when the latter declined, the former felt the consequences of the pressure. In 1813 corn, from the monopoly of agriculture existing during the war, in consequence of which our lands were well cultivated, was very cheap; and though he admitted that manufactures were then suddenly depressed, he knew that depression was occasioned by other circumstances. In 1813 the quantity of corn in the country was exhausted, and the agricultural interests were distressed. In the same manner the manufacturers were affected. In 1817 the corn got up in price; no supply was obtained from abroad, and corn was at 10s. per qr.; yet, in spite of that, and because the agricultural interest was flourishing, manufactures were in a pros-

perous condition, and the Prince B. went, in the opening Speech of the Session, congratulated Parliament on the flourishing state of the country. In 1813 the agricultural and commercial interests were prosperous, but in 1820 corn fell lower than it had ever before been known, and manufactures at the same time suffered a similar depression. At that time his Majesty, in his Speech from the Throne, expressed his sorrow at the unfortunate state of the country. He now begged to remind the Noble Earl at present at the head of his Majesty's Government, that when the Address in answer to that Speech was moved, that Noble Earl desired that some expressions of a stronger nature than those inserted in the Address should be employed, on the subject of the distress of the country. He wished now to mention another circumstance not less important than the flourishing or decayed state of the trade of the country—the means of the danger of famine if the agriculture of our country should be suffered to go without its full support. That danger had existed when agriculture was in a better state than now. In 1817, if we had Corn Laws, such as those now in force, that evil would have happened, for, instead of corn being 10s. a quarter, he believed that a great body of the people would have perished from famine. The same causes which produced a scarcity in England would produce it abroad. He was sure, that unless care was taken to accomplish this object, some dreadful famine would fall on the country. In the course of his professional life he had become a little acquainted with the matter of Exchanges, and from what he had learnt, he was of opinion—and he believed others agreed with him—that the Exchanges of the country ought to be kept as uniform as possible—at least, that they ought not to be allowed to go against us. That which he regarded as an evil—the exchanges being against us—was a matter always determined by the importation or non-importation of corn. During two of the years which he had before referred to, when corn had been imported, the exchanges were against us in one instance to as great an amount as 6 per cent.; when the importation ceased the exchange rose, and in a very short time were actually in our favour. In his opinion, protection ought equally to be given to every species of labour. The same cause which depressed the agricultural interest depressed a part of the industry of the country of that protection which it deserved. The agricultural produce of this country was, in consequence, not equal now to what it had been in some former years. In what he had already stated he had not mentioned all the causes of the present distress, but all those things which were usually described as the causes of it. He would not diminish the security of the fundholder—he would not deny that person's just demands upon the State; but he was persuaded that if things went on as they did, though the fundholder might now have his full dividend, the security of his property would be worth nothing. He would not appeal to their Lordships on the score of interest—that would be the last motive that would influence their conduct; their only motive was to exert themselves in the best manner for the protection of others, not of themselves. Their Lordships held their high situation to protect the interest of the poor, who could not protect themselves—for their sakes he implored the House to adopt some course of inquiry, in order to discover some means of remedy for present evils. Lord Graham, in a most excellent pamphlet that had lately been published, had used these striking expressions, addressed to another Government, but equally applicable to the present Government as to any other. The Noble Lord then read the following extract:—"Let me entreat them to depart from their usual course of awaiting the event; a great and an immediate effort is necessary to burst the cord now drawn so tight around them; if they hesitate, they will be entangled in such complicated difficulties, that resistance and escape will soon be alike impossible." His Lordship would not weary the patience of the House, which he had already tried at so great length, but would at once submit the motion of which he had given notice—"That a Committee should be appointed instantly to inquire into the causes of the present state of the distress in the country, and, as far as might be, into the nature of the remedy to be adopted."

The Earl of ROSEBERRY having been in the course of the last Session a warm supporter of a motion of this sort, he felt bound now to state why he dissented from the present motion. The first reason on which he objected to the present motion, was that a few days ago a Committee on the Poor Laws had been appointed; and thinking, as he did, that the mal-administration of those Laws was a principal grievance of the people, and therefore one of the instruments of the present distress, by bringing a redundancy of population and a constant interference with labour, breaking the spirit of the labourer and destroying all his feelings of independence, inducing him no longer to trust to himself and his own industry—thinking this, he could not but feel satisfied, that if that Committee did its duty, and the Government did their duty (of which he had no doubt), by co-operating with the Committee, the evils now in existence would progressively be removed. It must be a subject of grief to their Lordships, that the state of the labouring classes was, in other countries, deteriorated within the last few years; but what was more important, this depression was co-existent with the elevation of their minds by the diffusion of knowledge, and by the vast strides which education and reading had made within the same time. The second objection which he had to this motion arose from the recent change made in the Government, and from the circumstances which had led to that change, and from the pledges which his Majesty's Ministers had made to the Parliament and to the country. (Hear, hear.) The Noble Earl now at the head of the Government had, immediately upon his introduction to office, on the very first night of his appearing there in his present office, not only agreed to a motion made by the Noble Marquis for a Committee on the state of the Poor Laws, but made a most solemn declaration, that he and his colleagues would take the whole state of the country into their most serious, unceasing, and deliberate consideration; that they would use their utmost efforts to relieve the country, as far as their power could effect its relief, and, as far as their power would, would do their utmost to restore present confidence, and to lay the best foundation for the future prosperity of the country, by Reform in Parliament and in every other department of the State. Under these circumstances, he could not but feel that it was fair and courteous to persons who had so recently been called to fill their stations to inquire in this manner, not only with the difficulties were called on to discharge, but with those which they had expressed themselves willing and

ready to enter upon? Such an interference commenced time and disturbed their labours by compelling them to attend a Committee, when they had as good, if not better, means of examination in their hands, and when they might, in a few weeks, state their own plans to the House. He agreed with the Noble Baron, that the present mal-administration of the Poor Laws was an evil of itself, and the cause of many others—that the present distress was very extensive and dreadful, and that these matters ought to be the subject of a parliamentary inquiry. He should be sorry, either by what he said or by the vote he should give, to side a parliamentary inquiry; but he thought it would be better for them to wait, since he believed it was in the power of Ministers to submit a more effectual measure than could now be submitted by any Noble Lord in particular. It was not their Lordships, if the Noble Lord would withdraw his motion—Lord Wynford, No, no—but, as he found that was not likely, he should take the liberty of saying a few words on some topics introduced by that Noble Lord. The Noble Lord seemed to imagine, that the Right Hon. Gentleman now no more, had asserted that the capital of this country was locked up in strong boxes, or that it was to vary. Although he did not mean to enter into the circumstances of the distress of the country, he had no hesitation to state what he had stated last Session, that one of the causes that contributed to the distress had been the ununiform or improper, and inconvenient distribution of the capital of the country; but it would require more than the imagination of the Right Hon. Individual to suppose, that any part of the capital of the country was hoarded in strong boxes. The Noble Lord had gone at length into the subject of rents, and had stated that rents throughout the Kingdom had materially lowered since the peace; and he had been understood to say, that if rents were more lowered, the distress that might ensue to the landlords, especially those on whom it would be charged, would be such as they could not bear. His belief was, that rents had been considerably lowered, but he would not go the length of saying, that they had been universally lowered to that level which the price of produce, and the expense of farming made necessary, and he did not agree in the interference that the distress on the part of landlords was such as they could not bear, for the farmer was unable to pay the present rents, they must be reduced to the price of produce. At the same time he must be allowed to say, that, in his judgment, the distress among the agricultural population did not arise from the high state of the rents; low wages existed from the competition of the labourers, arising from the excess in the number of labourers above the demand for them—an excess which was mainly attributable to the mal-administration of the poor laws. In reference to the general internal state of the country, and perhaps more particularly with respect to the observations of the Noble Lord with regard to the increase of crime, he could not close the few observations he had to make without adverting to the state of the Game Laws. He was convinced that the Game Laws of England demoralized the people, and no good was obtained from their continuance. As he saw by the votes of the other House that a bill on this subject had lately been introduced with enactments similar to those which this Session would not pass away without a total alteration of those laws. He felt the greatest confidence in the rectitude of the Noble Lord now at the head of the Government. He believed that the Ministers would co-operate with the Parliament, and do not only as much as Parliament required, but more; and would lend their utmost ability and all their faculties, to ascertain the causes of the distress—a matter more easy than to discover a remedy.

The Earl of ELDON and Lord KING rose together; the House called for the former, and he observed that he should get in the House but a few moments. He was surprised that the Noble Earl opposite should object to the motion; and for himself he must say, that he had long felt a parliamentary inquiry to be absolutely necessary. It differed from the Noble Lord who had made the motion, with respect to machinery. There were, he knew, many persons who declared the necessity of altering the laws relating to machinery—in other words, ought to be put an end to in this country. But how was that to be done? In this country, as in every other, labour had at first been performed by the hand of man; but afterwards machinery was invented, and the various combinations of it gave us the means of easily and cheaply manufacturing many things that we had before been obliged to make slowly by the hand. Machinery had, therefore, given us wealth; and if we were to destroy it, and return to the old course of hard labour, we should but ruin ourselves, by throwing into the hands of foreigners the benefits we now obtain from machinery, and thus enabling them to beat us by the very means by which we had at first obtained an advantage over them. He was for some inquiry, but he did not wish it to be understood, that, by what he now stated, he presumed to cast reflections on any administration that was past or to express his distrust of any present administration; but he would say that in the state in which this country now was, they were imperatively called on to grant a parliamentary inquiry. He had no objection now a Committee could support it.

Lord KING could not but confess that moving an inquiry into the causes and remedies of the present distress, the Noble Earl had taken a view of the matter peculiar to himself. In taking that view, he showed that an inquiry so conducted would be utterly fallacious; for he had marked out a path which if followed by the Committee—as it was likely to be by a Committee of his own nomination—no good could arise from it. The Noble Earl had had a deal of at once the science of Political Economy and the Public Peace. He must produce it. Why, it was because the political economists had not been attended to; that the country was in its present state of distress—now, let their Lordships see what was the political economy of him who derided political economists. Elected economy was this—He said that there was capital in the country, but that it was locked up in strong boxes. Now, what was capital? It was, and yet, said the Noble Lord, it was locked up in a strong box! Yes! indeed, in a strong box as big as the island itself—long might it be so locked up; the longer the better. (Hear, hear.) The Noble Lord had quoted Sir Robert Peel where the opinions of that Right Hon. Gentleman would answer his purpose; but where they were opposed to him, he said nothing of them, though in the very same line with that which he did quote, for the noble and learned lord recommended that £1 notes should be again brought into circulation, while it was Sir Robert Peel who had introduced the Bill to put an end to them. The noble lord and the right hon. gentleman were, therefore, as much opposed to each other as condemnation to approval of the same thing could possibly make them. Another part of the political economy of the noble lord was, that the Russians and Danes were now about to be the ruin of us, for they had engaged in manufactures. Why? The reason was, no doubt, that we would not take their raw produce in return for our manufactures. The reason the noble lord gave was, that they paid in paper for their work.—(Lord Wynford: "No.")—He certainly so understood the noble lord. The noble lord forgot why they had manufactures, and why their manufactures flourished; it was because we refused to take the raw produce of their hands and return our own manufactured goods for them; it was because we had acted on the system of exclusion. The noble lord was perfectly wrong on that part of the question. Did he imagine that the goods we received from them were given us for nothing? We must pay for them; but that was the mistake of these people, that they fancied what we got from foreigners was obtained for nothing; they thought we obtained the raw produce for nothing. He wished it was so; but foreigners did not exactly do this; they did not exactly give their produce for nothing; but expected an equivalent advantage for it. Another sample of the noble lord's political economy was, that he talked of the importance of maintaining the uniformity of the Exchanges. If that could be maintained, he said, we must not import corn, for the exchanges went down when we imported foreign corn—there could be no doubt of that. He asked the noble lord whether, in case of necessity, he would not rather have foreign corn than not have it? If he would not have it regularly, he must be content to be subjected to known rules, he must be content to put up with the sudden effects with which its introduction in cases of necessity was attended. But the noble lord had not said he would not have corn when necessity required it—he only insisted that when it was introduced it turned the Exchanges against us. For himself he would rather have the corn when it was wanted, than not have it, though at the expense of the much-valued Exchanges. As the noble lord had given them a notion of his political economy, he (Lord KING) would give them a notion of his political economy. He took the distress of the country to arise from their legislative measures, which had a tendency to encourage the over supply of population with an under supply of food. The first was produced by the mal-administration of the poor laws, by the detestable practice of under-paying single men, and over-paying married men; so that they made it an advantage to a man to be imprudent. A clergyman of his acquaintance had told him an anecdote that showed the spirit in which these laws were administered, and sufficiently proved its effect.—A young—very young couple came to him to get married; he observed that they were young, and asked the reason of their marriage; he was told by the young man the cause in these words—"I am a very young man; I can't get work; if I am married, they must feed me for me." That accounted for the excess of the population. The under supply of food was occasioned by the Corn Laws. (Hear, hear.) Since 1815, the supply of food in this country had been gradually diminished. He could prove that fact. It was admitted by all persons who had the means of taking a view of the agriculture of the country, that it had been driven hard lately, and that the produce of the land now was not equal to what it was in 1815. In the same manner abroad large quantities of land had been laid down in grass—they were told so on the Wool Committee, and that was given as a reason why, instead of corn, wool was received from our foreign agriculturists. By the effect of the corn laws the quantity of food or capital was diminished, and the labouring classes could not get a belly full; and if the quantity of food was diminished while the population remained the same, that must be a cause of great distress; and if the quantity of food was diminished while the population was increased, that must be a cause of most severe distress. But the population had increased by two millions within these last fifteen years; and could it be wondered at that the distress was most acute? Food was diminished while the population was increased, and so the proportions between population and capital or food were deranged, while it was in the appointment of the amount of food to the population that the prosperity of a country consisted. If food was scarce, then the masses were under a peculiar temptation to employ machinery, and the diminution of food was, therefore, the occasion of a diminution of manual labour. Then the Corn Laws had diminished the supply of corn from foreign countries, and diminished the demand there for our productions; and these acts might, therefore, be considered as one of the greatest sources of the insurrections in England, owing to the severe distress which they occasioned; and although advantage might have been taken of it by ill disposed persons, yet there could be no doubt but that distress did exist to a very serious extent and intensity. Then the distress led to an advance of wages, and that led to a great consumption of capital or food. The capital thus consumed could not be replaced with the usual rate of profits, and it was doubtful, if such a state of things continued for any great length of time, who would be reduced at all, and if not, then the loss of capital became permanent. An advance of wages, therefore, under such circumstances, was an expedient that could not long be continued; and what was wanted as a remedy for the distress was not a temporary expedient, but a measure for the permanent improvement of the general prosperity. In the course of the three last winters the distress of a great portion of the labouring population had been severe to a degree that almost exceeded all endurance. But how was that distress to be remedied? If you augmented the wages of labour, the burden must fall on the rents of land. To that the thing must come; and then the question was, whether the wages of labour were to be augmented in a manner that led to a permanent loss of capital, or by the permanent removal of the operation of the

considered the gratuity of Parliament convert to form which to destroy—Constitution reform in He saw no eminent talion of the from him Reform as and at the volution. held out very much delusive hope at the head great delusion of re- tresses from trenchment question of his opin from them with refer denied that which were escape. T paper circu- tected that sent curres to reduce a all paymen- ments to th and then th the thing co As to the ch- aged; i- ble to repe- tion of fore he would h certain con- would look must enable pte with ab- the land m- chandise, m- If the Mini he would s- tem of the with the p- ought to b- conditions 7- occasion for Inquiry on poor laws. Noble Murs sufficient. a Committee scale. Tho that of Ho- thy of his l- his hire as- on the land- results of t- equivalent t- of bankrupt- dustry. In variety of distress, the public min- motions wh- he was dete- he should s- machinery w- numbers of those moder- quantity of The Earl in explanation. The Earl voted for in vote against him to make a line of pr- wear the ap- always had- tes of Inq- years much- that they t- verment o- Majesty's s- to relie- responsibility- bond to hel- himself, if he happ- most probab- with a y- thought it- that the l- country to t- fusion and d- vance to t- Several M- Lord THY- He put it- not transg- such a term- Lord? Earl STA- the subject- Earl RAD- all the pers- body of th- the term ve- it; but the- words did n- opinion, how- be some ex- ment of his- his present- by the Nob- now vote fo- he had don- circumstances- The present- results in off- cession, he- to declare- the country- that he wo- some remed- find in main- rent state fr- was refused-