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OLD SERIES]

Nec aranearum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.

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European News.

[According to promise, we continue our extracts from the SPEECH of Sir ROBERT PEEL, developing his new Commercial Policy.]

The uniform duty on manufactures I have fixed at 10 per cent., and I propose that the duties on seeds shall not exceed 5s. per cwt.; hitherto in some cases, such for instance as onion seed, the duty has not been less than 12s. per cwt., but now with respect to all seeds I propose that the maximum duty shall be 5s. per cwt. I have already spoken of articles, which are of the utmost importance to agriculture, namely, those used for the fattening of cattle. I believe sincerely that it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of promoting the fattening of cattle, because it tends to advance an improved system of agriculture. It has tended to restore the fertility of many soils more, I believe, than any of the artificial means that are sometimes resorted to, and I am sure the house will see that any measure, which will promote the fattening of cattle must prove highly beneficial to the country. I believe there is no manure so valuable as that which is directly derivable from the soil itself, and nothing, I am convinced of it, will lead more to the improvement of agriculture than by encouraging the fattening of cattle on the land itself, and thus promoting the acquisition of manures for agricultural purposes. I propose, therefore, that the article of grain, which I believe would be much employed for the fattening of cattle, shall be hereafter imported duty free. There is another article which might be applied with great advantage to the fattening of cattle, namely, Indian corn, which I also propose shall be introduced duty free. By removing the duty upon grain I do not consider that I am depriving agriculture of protection, but rather conferring a benefit upon it. Maize is an article that is much used abroad for human food, and I believe its utility for this purpose has been much disregarded in Europe, and in no place more so than in this country. It is used, if I am not mistaken, for human food in Italy, America, and many parts of France, and looking at its utility for the fattening of cattle, I think, with respect to this article also, I am conferring a benefit, rather than impeding the progress of agriculture in this country, by removing the restrictions on its importation. I also propose that an article called buck-wheat should be subject to the same rule; that is, that it be admitted at a mere nominal duty. I propose that the meal or flour should be admitted on an equal footing with Indian corn. If any gentleman will ascertain the very large sums paid annually by the best farmers throughout Great Britain in the purchase of linseed cake and rape, he will agree with me that an increased facility for the admission of articles that can be used for the fattening of cattle will be of no disservice. The demand for the articles I have last named is very considerable, and the consumption by some farmers being very great, I am informed correctly, the chief object upon some farms is to provide an adequate quantity of manure for the purpose of improving the soil. The prices of linseed and rape cake has been gradually rising of late years. In the year 1843, linseed cake was from £9 to £10, in 1844, from £11 to £12, and in 1845 from £12 to £15. The price of rape cake was in 1843, £4 5s.; in 1844, £4 10s. to £5 10s.; and in January, 1846, the price rose to £6. I hold now in my hand a letter from a merchant, a resident of the United States, who recommended that there should be a free importation of all the articles used to fatten cattle. He recommended especially for the purpose an article termed rice-meal. Now surely a cheap supply of that article is very desirable. It is the refuse of rice ground up, and is much less costly than oil-cake or the other descriptions of artificial food now used by farmers, and therefore, is admirable fitted for the feeding of cattle. The admission of such an article would, in my opinion, be so far from a disservice, a positive advantage. I come now, sir, to the consideration of these articles immediately connected with the food of the people. Sir, on introducing this question I anticipate the greatest difference of opinion. I have those to meet who want no delay and no qualification, and I have also to meet those who insist upon it that there shall be no relaxation of, or reduction in, the present amount of protection. Sir, my object will be, if possible, to make some adjustment of this important question. I know that no body will approve of my plan—but our desire is, without favour or undue partiality towards any class, to suggest that which we believe to be just, and calculate to terminate that conflict the continuance of which might be fatal to the country. I do trust that by the plan which I have proposed and jealousy and dissension between the differ-

ent classes of her Majesty's subjects may be removed without any injury to any particular class, and thus, it is to be hoped, that we shall promote the general interest of the country. I consider it is for the public advantage that this subject should meet with a final settlement. I am not about to propose an immediate repeal of the duties which are imposed upon corn. What I have to propose is an earnest of the principle upon which I shall act. I am induced to propose an immediate reduction upon many articles of primary importance, and which constituted a principal portion of the food of the people; but I must state this in respect to the plan which I shall propose, that there shall be immediate reduction of the duties on those articles on which I do not propose an immediate and total repeal. I propose that the duties—speaking of the articles of consumption—I propose to take that extensive review of the articles included to the tariff relating to the articles constituting the food of the country—I propose to make a reduction—an immediate reduction—upon the duties of the whole of them. I propose, on the part of her Majesty's Government, that the duties should be immediately reduced upon butter from 1s. to 10s. per cwt.; upon cheese from 10s. per cwt. to 5s. per cwt.; and upon lard from £4 10s. to £2 5s. I will now mention the articles of agricultural produce upon which I propose an immediate repeal. With respect then to those articles of general consumption, upon which the reduction will be total and immediate, I propose to abolish entirely the duties upon bacon, also upon tresh and salted beef, upon salt and tresh pork, all other articles of animal food enumerated in the last tariff, these I propose to be admitted duty free. With reference to potatoes and other articles enumerated under the head of vegetables, and which form articles of general consumption, I propose that the whole of the duties shall be total and immediately repealed. Everything, then, included under the heads of vegetable and animal food, will be admitted duty free. In this acting, observe that I have dealt equally with the agricultural and the manufacturing interests. To the agricultural interest I give increased facilities, by removing the duties now levied on seeds and other articles. The reduction in bacon, butter and other articles of food, will also benefit the manufacturer. I believe that the growing and increasing skill of the country, and the stimulus that will be afforded them by competition, will give them an increased advantage over foreign countries. Then, having removed the duties from all articles of food, I propose also to remove at once all the duties upon the importation of cattle. In short I propose that all cattle imported into this country shall be admitted duty free. There is no necessity for mentioning the amount of duties now levied upon cattle, still less occasion have I to mention the several amounts of duties upon other animals mentioned in the last tariff. I will now propose the reduction of all duty on cattle, both lean and fat. The increased facility for getting the lean cattle will, I hope, be some compensation to the agriculturists for doing away with the duty on all animals. Those who may be disposed to find fault with this measure, will, I hope, bear in mind that I have proposed the removal of protective duties from some of the great articles of manufacture. But I call on the manufacturers to show the first example. I now come to the proposal which I intend to make with respect to corn. We propose at once to remove the duties upon all animals enumerated in the tariff; and I propose, Sir, as a proof of an adherence to these principles, that the duties upon animal and vegetable food, and also upon cattle and other animals, shall at once cease. I do not propose an immediate repeal of the duty on that article, but to come to a gradual repeal, to give time for the adjustment of agricultural interests. I think it would be out of my power to suggest any modification of the existing corn laws, which would meet with the approbation of the country, and I will not in consequence propose such a measure. Some persons have complained of the manner in which the duty upon foreign cattle is now levied, these duties will now be entirely abolished. I propose that a very considerable reduction should be made on corn, and that the reduction shall be limited to a period of three years. My measure shall contain a provision that at that period of the year, namely, on the 1st of February, 1849, oats, barley, and wheat, shall be subject to a nominal rate of duty, which I have already proposed to affix to Indian corn. My impression as the policy of providing immediate relief for a great portion of the people remains unchanged I cannot admit—and I sincerely regret it—but I cannot admit that I take an erroneous estimate of the pressure for relief which, before the arrival of the next harvest, may arise. I think, not only looking in the prospects of the next spring, but looking at the consequences of the deficiency in Ireland, that it is of the greatest importance

as far as legislation can take precaution against the suffering, which it was painful to consider might prevail. Indeed, I wish it were possible to take advantage of these unhappy circumstances, and extract benefit from them, namely, by introducing in Ireland a taste for a higher description of food. The potato, in which there was such a deficiency and disease, is the food of millions of our fellow-countrymen. We have, then, to consider what provision is to be made; for we cannot make an immediate change in the tastes of the people. I propose to make such a reduction on the present duties as shall realize a great part of the advantages which would attend the opening of the ports. I propose that there should be a great reduction in the amount, and that amount so reduced should continue for a limited period, and afterwards be changed into a merely nominal duty. My colleagues and myself have addressed ourselves to the subject with the greatest diligence and impartiality, and the result of that has been the law which we now propose to meet the present exigencies and great wants of the country.

According to the present law, the rate of duty upon other descriptions of grain has been regulated by the rate of duty upon wheat. Now, with regard to barley, oats, peas, and other inferior grains, we propose that there shall be a reduction in the same ratio—a reduction of a corresponding amount with the principle now stated. I propose, from the passing of this act that all colonial wheat shall be admitted at a merely nominal duty. I also propose that the duties on meal, the produce of the colonies, shall be removed. I can see no reason why they should be any longer retained. Thus, I offer to those who insist on the immediate and unconditional repeal of these laws—I offer the immediate admission, free of duty, of all kinds of colonial grain. I propose to admit, as I said before, maize from the United States, duty free. Well, then, we now propose the following duties up to the 1st of February, 1849. That from the colonial possessions all corn shall be imported duty free. That from all foreign countries, when corn shall be under 48s. there shall be a duty of 10s.; above 48s. it shall be 9s.; and when 50s., 7s.; and when it shall exceed 51s. and at 53s., 5s.; and when it shall exceed 54s. it shall be at an invariable duty of 4s. With respect to wheat there shall be a duty of 4s. I think that after having laid before the house the general rates of duty, it will be better that I should not go more into the details, as they will all appear in the morning in the printed papers. As I said before, there shall be a duty of 4s. on foreign wheat from the present date. Thus, then, is our proposition. We propose to accompany that arrangement with our provisions, calculated—I will not say to give compensation—but calculated, in my humble belief, materially to advance the interests of that portion of the community which, after the lapse of three years, will be called upon to relinquish that protection which has up to this time been extended to them. I believe that this is a just arrangement, and that whilst it will promote the interests of other portions of the country it will also lead to their own advantage. I thank them for the way in which they have borne their burdens, and to the example which they have thus set to other portions of the community. I am obliged to them for the forbearance which they have exercised. I will now state what are the measures with which we propose to accompany this present reduction and ultimately an extension of the measures which I believe will be of great advantage to that portion of the public, with whose welfare the interests of the whole country are bound up—the farmer. I am perfectly aware that there are burdens which press heavily upon them, some of which are, in my opinion, capable of alleviation—not by putting them on other articles, but by introducing a reform in the administration of the local measures of which they have reason to complain. But first let me take the existing arrangement with respect to one great source of expenditure, the one great burden which is constantly and justly complained of by those engaged in agricultural pursuits—I mean the amount of rates levied in connection with highways. Well now is it not possible, without subjecting other parties to the expense of supporting the highways, to introduce an useful reform into that expenditure, by which they would experience a great relief. I believe it to be possible. Why, what is the practice with respect to the highways of this country? There are 16,000 different local authorities, each of which have the charge of roads. Now, each of these highways becoming of great importance, as railways advanced, turnpike roads and highways, now of little importance, will become of considerable value and importance. But what can be more defective than the system that places a highway, which is a continuous channel of communication, and which passes through different parishes, under the control of different parishes and

different local trustees. The result is, as I have said, that the total number of persons who have the management of the highway in this country is not less than 16,000. It is the practice of these trustees to appoint a surveyor in each parish, who knows nothing whatever about the matter. Even if this officer did his duty, still it is an officer that is quite unnecessary. Indeed, the present entire position of the system for regulating the highways is such as required to be materially altered, for it is one which has led to a very bad and defective system of management. One of the modes of management is that which is regulated by an Act of Parliament by which several parishes may enter into voluntary union for the purpose of remedying those grievances; but as it is voluntary that is the very reason why there is hardly an instance of this act being carried into effect. Now, in order to remedy this, what I propose will not only have the effect of affording relief to the agriculturists from the burden which this system imposes on them but I also propose to alter this power from a voluntary to a compulsory one, in order that the parish authorities may be compelled to practice this superintendence which is now but voluntary; and if you agree to that you will then have only 600 authorities instead of 16,000. I would propose to make the guardians of the unions the parties upon whom it would be compulsory to appoint a competent surveyor to discharge the duties to which I have alluded.

With regard to the system of the voluntary union of parishes, I will first read a statement I hold in my hand of the results of a different mode of management adopted in a district of the North of about 70 miles in extent. The Right Hon. Baronet then read the document, in which it was stated that by a different mode of management the expenses had been reduced very materially. In one instance where the charge upon the parish for the maintenance of highways was from 60s. to 90s. in the pound, while many was completely thrown away, they now had better roads, and the tax was reduced to from 1s. 3d. to 3d. in the pound, and in other districts the reduction was from 3d. to 4d. in the pound. I now come to deal with a law which has for a long time been very justly complained of by the agriculturist. I mean the law of settlement—There is one law, of which the agriculturist complains, and very justly, and that is the poor-law settlement. In the time of prosperity many of the people are employed in manufacturing towns, and a great portion of a man's life is often consumed as a manufacturing labourer. The whole of his character for good conduct and industry is derived from the town in which he works. A revulsion in trade takes place, and then what is the course adopted? The man and his family are sent back to the rural district from which they came. The man who has spent his life as a manufacturer returns to the rural districts, his usual occupations are interrupted, and he is quite unfitted for his new occupation. He is transferred to a new home, and separated from his connexions, and of course his moral feeling is destroyed. I will therefore propose, for the purpose of relieving the land from such a burden, and in order to do justice to the labouring man, that an industrial residence in any parish for five years without the commission of any offence, shall give to the individual a settlement, and the power of removing him shall be taken away. In the case of such a man after having devoted five years to labour, his claim for support shall not be on the place of his original settlement, but shall be on the place where the price of his labour and industry has been bestowed. In 1843, when great distress prevailed in the manufacturing districts, the practice was that manufacturers who had settlements in the agricultural districts, were at once returned to their original settlement. What I now propose will be a great improvement, and, therefore, after the passing of this law, no person who has resided for more than five years in any parish shall be removed from that parish. No residence in prison—in any lunatic asylum—in hospital—or in any poor-house, or receiving relief, to be counted as part of the time, and neither shall it be reckoned as an interruption to the time. Not only shall this extend to the man, but to his children, and to the children of his wife—legitimate or illegitimate, under the age of 16 years, and such children shall not be removed where the removal of the person himself is forbidden, that there shall not be the power of separating the children from their parents, and that every man shall have the power, the right of requiring support, not from his place of settlement, but birth. At present, immediately upon the death of a labouring man in the manufacturing districts the widow of that man is removed. Now, we shall propose that no widow residing with her husband at the time of his death shall be removable for twelve months from the parish in which her husband resided. At present when a man's health is wasted by extreme labour he has