The National Intelligencer,

AND

WASHINGTON ADVERTISER.

Vol. I. WASHINGTON CITY, PRINTED BY SAMUEL HARRISON SMITH, NEW-JERSEY AVENUE, NEAR THE CAPITOL. *No. XXXVI.*

Five Dolls. per ann. FRIDAY, JANUARY 23d, 1801. *Paid In Advance.*

FIRST REPORT

From the committee appointed to conside of the present high price of provisions, by the British House of Commons.

The committee appointed to confider of the prefent high price of provifions, and to whom fo much of his majefty's gracious fpeech from the throne to both houfes of parliament, as relates thereto; & alfo the feveral petitions prefented to the houfe, complaining of the high price of provifions; were referred:

Have, in proceeding to the confideration of the important and extenfive fubject referred to them, thought it their duty to direct their attention, in the firft inftance, to fuch meafures as might be propofed for alleviating, as fpeedily as poffible, the prefent preffure, without entering, at this moment, into a detailed enquiry refpecting the various caufes which may have concurred in procuring it. Your committee conceive, that by fo doing, they fhall beft execute the intentions of the houfe, which has already fhewn, by its proceeding, that it confiders the deficiency of the ftock of grain at the commencement of the late harveft, and the high price which now prevails, as fuffici nt inducements for adopting, without lofs of time, the moft obvious remedies. With this view, laws have already been brought forward for encouraging the importation of grain; for empowering his majefty to prohibit the exportation of every article of provifion; for permitting the importation thereof free of duty; for prohibiting all diftillation from grain, and the ufe of wheat in ftarch; for permitting the barley which was damaged by wet, to be made into malt, without being fteeped during the time now required by law; for allowing fugar to be ufed inftead of malt in the brewery; and for lowering the duty upon the importation of hops.

Your committee were confirmed in their opinion of the propriety of this order of proceeding, by confidering that no minute enquiry into the ftate of the crop or the ftock now in hand, could be made without great delay: even fuppofing that any mode had been fuggefted for conducting fuch an enquiry, which afforded a reafonable profpect of fufficient accuracy in the refult, and which would not be attended with great, if not infurmountable objections in the execution. Your committee alfo fee no ground for believing that any refult, attainable by the moft detailed enquiry, could lead to any practical conclufion, applicable to the prefent emergency. At the fame time, having many documents before them, which could be examined without much delay, and which, checked by the very extenfive information of members from different parts of the country, appeared likely to enable them to form a general eftimate of the crop, your committee have thought it right to avail themfelves of thofe materials for that purpofe,

Thefe documents confift of very numerous returns to thofe enquiries, which different departments of government have directed to be made by the receivers of the land tax: by the various officers employed under the boards of taxes, ftamps and excife; and by thofe amongft the clergy, to whom circular letters for that purpofe had been addreffed by the bifhops in each diocefe. Though the returns are not complete from every county, yet the omiffions upon the whole are neither numerous nor important.

Your committee are fenfible, that upon the accuracy of accounts of this nature, taken feparately, no pofitive reliance can be placed; or at leaft, that the weight to be given to them, muft vary in each inftance, according to the opinion entertained of the diligence and information of the perfons by whom they are made. Your committee obferve, however, that the general refult of the returns made by each defcription of perfons is nearly the fame; that refult is ftrongly confirmed upon the whole, by information of members from almoft every part of England, founded upon their local enquiries, obfervation, and correfpondence. Whether the average is ftruck from the ftatements of the crop in the feveral counties, without regard to their fize, population, or productivenefs, or by throwing them into different claffes with a view to thofe important points, ftill the general conclufion is not materially affected. Your committee have not had the means of enquiry refpecting the produce of Scotland; but their information as far as it reaches, is by no means lefs favorable. Your committee, therefore, think themfelves juftified in taking this general refult, as a fufficient ground for thofe opinions and meafures which they propofe to fubmit, without delay to the judgement of the houfe.

There appears upon the whole of this information, reafon to believe, that the general defitiency in the crops of wheat in England and Wales, below an average crop, does not amount to quite fo much as one fourth; and that the crops of barley and oats (though by no means uniformly good) have been very productive in many of thofe counties from which the principal fupply is ordinarily furnifhed; and therefore that the produce of the kingdom, in thofe articles, cannot, upon the whole, be confidered as materially inferior to an average crop. It is alfo probable, that in forming an average under fuch circumftances as the prefent, where the harveft has been fo uncommonly various in different diftricts, and even in different parts of the fame diftrict, greater weight may have been given to inftances of deficiency than to thofe of abundance, and that the produce is more likely to be ftated below than above the truth. It is alfo very material to obferve, that by all the accounts, there is reafon to think that the quality of every defcription of grain is upon the whole greatly fuperior to that of the laft year; and that therefore the increafed quantity and fuperior quality of flour to be derived from a given quantity of grain, may be expected to compenfate, in fome degree, for the deficiency of the produce below the average eftimated by the acres. The accounts of the ftock in hand furnifhed by thefe returns, are neceffarily more uncertain; they are in fome degree various; but they do not upon the whole furnifh any ground for doubting the prevailing opinion, confirmed by the general information of the members who have attended your committee, that the ftock of Britifh corn at the harveft was reduced far below the ufual amount, and was in moft places nearly, in many abfolutely exhaufted.

In addition to what has been heard refpecting the produce of the crop and the ftock in hand, it is to be obferved, with a view to the ftate of the markets in the time which has elapfed fince the harveft, that the farmers during that period have had a double demand to fupply out of the new crop, for confumption and for feed, and thus at a feafon when moft of their hands were employed in the ordinary labors of the field. The quantity of grain for feed corn is generally eftimated at about fix weeks confumption; and the increafe of this quantity in the prefent year, from much more land being fown with wheat than ufual during a feafon particularly favorable (though it gives an encouraging profpect of future plenty) muft have added, for the time, to the difficulty of furnifhing fufficient fupplies for the market, and thereby have contributed to increafe the temporary diftrefs. This unufual demand for wheat, and other circumftances alfo peculiar to the feafon, have contributed in many places to delay the thrafhing out Barley and Oats, and may have had a fimilar temporary effect on the price of thefe articles.

It appears to your committee, that thefe circumftances might be expected to have produced a very high price at this feafon, even if the late harveft had been abundant: that the degree in which it has been deficient, muft naturally have added to fuch price, whether with or without the concurrence of any other caufes, the exiftence and effects of which, your committee propofe to inveftigate in a further ftage of their proceedings. Your committee, therefore, think it may reafonably be expected, that the price produced in fome degree by temporary circumftances, will, when thofe circumftances have ceafed to operate, experience a reduction; efpecially when it is generally known, that on the refult of all information that has been collected from every part of the kingdom, there is no ground to fuppofe that the deficiency in the crop below the ufual average is greater than what your committee have already ftated; and when it is alfo feen to how confiderable an extent we may confidently expect that deficiency to be remedied, by the double operation of importation and œconomy.

With refpect to the former of thefe objects, your committee obferve, that within twelve months, from September 20, 1799, to September 27, 1800, there have been imported into Great Britain no lefs than

1,261,932	Quarters of wheat and flour,	
67,988		Barley,
479,320		Oats,
300,693 cwt.		Rice.

This happened under the unfavorable circumftances of a harveft abroad uncommonly deficient in quality, and not abundant in quantity, and of the late period of the feafon, when the bounty was granted by parliament.

It has been ftated to your committee, by feveral of the principal importers of corn, that the wheat of the prefent year, in the North of Europe, is by all accounts far fuperior in quality to that of laft year; in Germany it is reprefented as abundant; and though fome lefs favorable accounts of later dates have been received from other parts, yet it is ftated, that little reliance is to be placed upon them; as they have only become lefs favorable fince the deficiency of the crop in this country has been a fubject of fpeculation abroad; all other grain (except Rye) has been uncommonly abundant in moft parts of the continent of Europe. The harveft in America, both of wheat and rice, has been unufually plentiful. The indemnifying building, now propofed to be given, is confidered by thofe importers whom your committee have examined as much more fatisfactory than that which was granted in the laft feffion, and as likely to afford ftill more effectual encouragement.

There feems therefore no reafon to doubt, as far as depends upon the ftate of the harveft abroad, and the probable exertions of foreign and Britifh importers, that the fupply may be fully equal to that of laft year in wheat and flour, and in oats and rice will confiderably exceed it; and that in other articles, to which encouragement may now be extended, particularly in barley and Indian corn, a large additional fupply may be expected. Among thefe your committee wifh particularly to direct the attention of the houfe and the country to the article of rice. The quantities of rice and of wheat, is in a very great proportion in favor of the former: the quality of this fpecies of grain is undoubtedly excellent; and wherever it has been introduced, it appears to have been highly acceptable; the encouragement now held out to the importation of it, will probably bring into Great Britain all that can be fpared from every prrt of America; and confiderable fupplies may be expected from our Eaft Indian poffeffions, in confequence of orders fent over land in Auguft and September, and of the liberal terms which parliament, with the concurrence of the Eaft India company, appears difpofed to grant to adventurers now fitting out fhips from hence.

Of the remaining ftock of the preceding harveft of rice in America, fome will arrive before Chriftmas, in confequence of orders already given, and the produce of the laft crop may begin to reach this country in January and the fucceeding months. The fupply from the Eaft Indies will undoubtedly be later, but may be expected in part at a period of the fummer, when it muft be eminently ufeful, and the remainder previous to the time, when the harveft of 1801, accordingly to the ordinary courfe of things, can be brought into general ufe.

There are alfo other articles of wholefome food to which the attention of your committee has been directed, and they entertain confiderable hopes, that arrangements may be made, by which large quantities of fifh, and other falted provifions, may be added to the fupply of the market, at fuch reafonable rates as may afford a material fource of relief. Your committee mean to proceed immediately in this part of their enquiry, and will as early as poffible ftate the refult to the houfe.

The ftoppage of the diftilleries in England, at this early feafon, will prove equivalent to the importation of at leaft 250,000 quarters of barley. In Scotland, it is ftated as likely to be productive of a faving of the fame article to a ftill greater amount: and the prohibition of the ufe of wheat in ftarch, may fave about 40,000 quarters. By thefe meafures, large quantities of grain are left applicable to the food of man, which have not in other years been fo employed; and your committee have therefore thought proper to clafs them under the fame head with importation.

Your committee themfelves are authorifed to place a confiderable reliance upon the effect of the various meafures above referred to, in increafing the general fupply.—Of thefe, the encouragement as offered by parliament for the importation of foreign grain, is undoubtedly the moft important; but, whatever expectations may be reafonably formed, of the great extent to which that encouragement, combined with the high price in this country, may carry it, your committee think it their duty to ftate their decided opinion, and endeavor to imprefs that opinion in the ftrongeft manner, upon the houfe, that it would be unwife and unfafe to place their fole reliance upon refources of this defcription. Allowing the probability, that the accounts before ftated refpecting the produce of the laft harveft, may be rather below than above the truth; yet, the exhaufted ftate of the old ftock, and the unufually early period at which the late crop came into confumption, make it not only highly advifeable, but indifpenfably neceffary, as the moft effectual means of fecuring an adequate fupply at a reafonable rate, to have recourfe to the greateft economy, in every part of the country, in the ufe of thofe articles of grain, upon which the fubfiftence of each refpective diftrict principally depends.

Your committee entertain the ftrongeft expectation that a recommendation, from the higheft authority, pointing out the advantages which would be derived, under the prefent circumftances, from the general practice of economy and frugality in thofe articles, could not fail to produce extenfive and beneficial eff ets. In order to give the greateft weight and folemnity to fuch a recommendation, your committee fubmit to the houfe, whether it may not be proper to defire the concurrence of the other houfe of parliament, in an humble addrefs to his majefty, requefting that his majefty would be gracioufly pleafed to iffue a proclamation for this purpofe? The effect of fuch a proclamation might, undoubtedly, be extended by the univerfal circulation which might be given to it, through the magiftrates and clergy, in every diftrict and parifh; and affociations might be entered into by every defcription of perfons to whom it might be addreffed, for carrying it into execution in their refpective neighborhoods. The general adoption of fuch a meafure, by diminifhing the confumption of grain, and particularly of wheat, amongft thofe who are able to procure other articles of food, would leave for the ufe of thofe who are unable to procure them, a large portion of what is neceffary for their fupport; by decreafing the demand, the price would probably be reduced; and it may well be expected, from the paft conduct of the more opulent claffes that much of what might be faved by the reduction of their own confumption, would be applied to the relief of their indigent neighbors.

Your committee having thus fuggefted the means by which they conceive that a great reduction in the confumption of corn, and particularly of wheat, may be produced by the practice of economy among