



THE CHESHIRE FARMER'S POLICY, OR **Pitt** OUTWITTED.

Tax on Horses shall be void
For on my Cush I mean to ride

Let each like me strive to outwitt
And drown all Taxes in a **PITT**.

In 1794 the population of Stockport was 15,000, exclusive of the hamlets of Heaton Norris and Portwood, the population of which was about 3,000, and the police of the town was conducted by one resident Justice of the Peace, two Constables, four Churchwardens, and three Overseers of the Poor.

The transformation of cotton-spinning into a factory industry, which may be said to have taken place round about the year 1780, was equally accompanied by the growth of Trade Unionism. "The so-called benefit clubs of the Oldham operatives, which we know to have existed from 1792," says Mr and Mrs Webb, in their "History of Trade Unions," "and those of Stockport, of which we hear in 1796, were the forerunners of that network of spinners' societies throughout the northern counties and Scotland which rose into notoriety in the great strikes of the next thirty years." There is reason to believe that in spite of Combination Acts, the association of cotton workers under the guise of friendly societies existed right through the period when combinations were punishable by law. According to Mr and Mrs Hammond, it was the combination of weavers in 1799 which led to the passing of the first Combination Act in 1799. In the early part of that year a meeting of weavers' representatives at Bolton, to which Stockport sent two delegates, issued an address to the public, in which they speak of the need of a union amongst weavers, complain bitterly of the decrease in the price of labour, and ask for Parliamentary aid in their effort to improve their position. The passing of the Combination Act did not deter the weavers from pressing Parliament in