AN ESSAY ON WOOL,
AND
WOOLEN MANUFACTURE,
FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TRADE,
TO THE BENEFIT OF LANDLORDS, FEEDERS OF SHEEP,
CLOTHIERS, AND MERCHANTS.

In a Letter to a Member of Parliament.

IMPRIMATUR,
Decemb. 31. 1692.

Edmond Bache.

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AN ESSAY ON WOOL, AND Woollen MANUFACTURE.

Of as much as Wool and Woollen Manufacture, is of very great Concern to every Landed Man, and that your Honour is no less desirous to join in such Measures, as may conduce to the Benefit of the Nation in general, and that place for which you serve in particular, as of your own Estate, I hope with all humility, that you will entertain this Paper with the same Candour, where-with you have always accepted my Labours for the Publick; and the rather, because your Honour will easily believe, that I have no Private Interest to serve, in relation to this Subject.

B
It hath been observed by Men of the greatest Experience, that the Undervaluation of English Commodities abroad, hath been the first and most considerable detriment we have suffered in our Forreign Dealings.

And although at first the Dutch and the Gasserlings did all they could to raise the price of our Woollen Manufacture, to the end, that they might the better sell their own, yet having now established their own to a great and dangerous degree, they begin to run down our Cloth, as fast as before they hoisted it up, and care not how cheap we sell, provided they can assign for the Cause of that Cheapness, the making of our Cloth of late, and the exacter sort of Forreign Manufacturers take, for the Accrual now is not, that our Cloth is dear, but false made.

And it appears, not only by the Confession, but by the Complaint of our Clothiers in general, that this Suggesting of Forreign Dealers hath but too much ground; they complain very justly, That Dutch Chapmen, and private Merchants, who have of late Years exported our Cloth, having not been able to give the full Price, have had great Quantities of Cloth made to that Price that they can afford to give, and tho' the honest Clothier cloth make such bad Ware with great regret, yet he is forced to make such as he can vend, since the Societies of Merchants, who always gave a good Price (for which they had such Ware as Forreign Manufacturers cannot imitate) do now buy very little, being under-fold abroad by petty Chap-men, who, of late Years, have forced a Trade.

This
This sudden and unnatural Trade hath for divers times been experimented, to make the Price of Wool for a while rise; for that low Price, at which Foreign Merchants have let this self-made Cloth, hath caused many Buyers abroad, to take advantage of that cheap Opportunity of flocking themselves with English Drapery; and such a Trade hath lasted for Three or Four years, whereby much Wool hath been here manufactured, and the Price of Wool accordingly raised; but at length, when the Bank of this Manufacture hath been discovered, and the Markets abroad clogged, as sudden a Fall of Wool must in all likelihood be expected to have ensued, and by this Opportunity the Value of Foreign made Cloth hath been raised, our Cloth discredited, Merchants of Societies discouraged, Clothiers had little to do, Growers to pay, and Landlords to receive. So that with Submission it seems absolutely necessary to the Good of this Kingdom,

1. That our Woollen Manufacture be raised to its former Credit and Esteem abroad.

2. That the Balance of Trade be more even, and that neither too much nor too little be every year exported.

3. That it may be put not only into a flourishing, but into a lasting State.

For, first, if the Price of our Cloth be low abroad, 'tis impossible that Wool should continue to bear a good Price at home: if Cloth falls, the Mat
rial 'tis made of must fall with it, and consequently the Labours of the Card-makers, Breakers, Combers, Carders, Spinners, Weavers, Fullers, Shearmen, Clothiers, Dyers, Cloth workers, Packers, &c. must be beat down, if these be discourag'd, we must more and more lose our Manufacture, for who will breed up their Children to a discourag'd Trade? And in the end we shall as effectually lose it as the Dutch have already gained it.

Secondly, If the Ballance of Trade be not kept even, not only in reference to Goods exported and imported, which the Foreigner never observ'd, but in reference likewise to Foreign Markets, that one be not over-clogg'd with that Commodity which another wants, and that Times and Seasons be duly observ'd, we shall put the Chapmen abroad, that are to take off our Cloth to such Uncertainties, that there will be no dealing with us, for they will find in many places, that private Merchants have supply'd those Retailers, whom they used to furnish, they'll find Cloth cheap where they expect it to be dear; so that they cannot sell, and Cloth dear where they expect it to be cheap, so that they cannot buy; so when they buy, it shall be Dutch Cloth, and when they sell ours, it shall be for what they can get.

Thirdly, 'Tis of no advantage to the Nation to have a Fit of good Trading, if it cannot continue; nay, in this Instance of Woolen Manufacture it is injurious; for if a Purchaser buys Land, or a Tenant takes a Lease, or a Grower increaseth his Stock, upon the consideration of Wool bearing such a Price, each one of these
there is a Lofer when it falls. And so if the Clothier encrease his Number of Apprentices, Looms, Stock, and the like, upon a fallè Supposition, he is like to be ruined. The Condition things are in at present is not only to be minded, but that which they must necessarily be in hereafter.

Wherefore tis humbly propos'd, in the first place,

I. That Care be taken, that our Cloth be made so good, that it shall bear a considerable Price abroad, and yet be cheaper to the Buyer than foreign-made Cloth; for if at the same time it be not cheaper in proportion to the Goodness than Dutch-made Cloth, 'tis impossible that we can keep the Trade from them. 'Tis natural for every Man to make the most of his Penny, and since our Growers and Clothiers cannot live upon their Profession, at the price of Cloth which the Dutch do now afford it at, we must make our Cloth truer and better than they do to outfell them. For though the Wool be of our own growth, and Fuller's Earth peculiar to us, yet they have so many ways of getting the former, and so much Store have they got from us of the latter, that they can continue the Manufacture many years without us. And if inferior Workmen with them are to be had so much cheaper than with us, the Advantages of our Native Commodities do but little more than compensate for the Disanns of our Workmen.

But something they do, and something we surpass them when we please in Workmanship, to which if a little good Policy and State Encouragement were added, we may still retrieve a Languishing Trade, by sufferin no Cloth to go out of England, but of such a Standard Goodness, according to such and such Marks. II. Se-
II. Secondly, That our Cloth-Trade may be divided all over the World, into particular Cantons proportioned and ballainted, as may seem best upon due Information, to the Wisdom of Parliament, who may perhaps think fit to conspire of their own Members an Annual Committee, with fixed Allowances and Pensions out of a publick Bank, who may alter and rectifie the Proportions of each English Corporation of Merchants, and place of foreign Sale, according as Times and Occasions alter.

III. Thirdly, That such a certain and definite number of Cloths be every year exported necessarily, without any abatement for any pretended Contingencies, as may keep the Price of Wool, and the Manufacture of it to such a height, as that the Clothier shall know it his Interest to make so many more Cloths than now he doth; the Grower to increase his Stock of Sheep, and the Landlord to raise his Rent and Value of Land.

Concerning the first of these three Proposals, divers Acts of Parliament are still in force, which may be revived and amended as may seem good to the Legislative Powers; the other two are liable, so far as I can see, to no Difficulties and Objections, but what may be obviated by this Method, viz.

There being so many Societies of English Merchants exporting our Woollen Manufacture to foreign parts, they may be obliged, coming under such Regulations as the Parliament shall think fit, to export every Year each Company such a proportion of Cloth


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Cloth as altogether may leave us but bare enough for our own use, and that at a round price. Thus supposing the Cloth-trading Merchants to be the Merchant-Adventurers, the Turk Company, the East-India Company, the Eastland Company, the Hudson’s-Bay Company, the Russia Company, the African Company.

And suppose there be, in all England and Wales, (according to the ingenious and accurate Mr. Houghton) 399,785 acres of Land, and one Third part of it unfit for feeding Sheep, as Woods, Parks, Fens, Mine-pits, &c. or otherwise employ’d; and that one Sixth-part of the Remainder be good Meadow, and such Land as will maintain two Sheep on an Acre; and that all the rest be plow’d Land, barren Downs, Waifs, Commons, Orchards, and the like; which may, one with another, maintain one Sheep on an Acre, this will amount to 3,106,357 Sheep in the whole Nation: Allow then 75 Pieces to a Pack of Wool, there will be 41,4176 Packs.

One Pack weighing 240 l. all Detriments, Want and Tare rebated, will make Three Pieces of Broad-Cloth, Thirty Yards to a Piece; and if we make yearly in all England 15,0000 Broad-Cloths, they are supposed to take up 50000 Packs of our Wool, and of the Spanish Wool imported, we may, at the most, reckon Ten thousand Cloths more; in all 60000.

One Pack of Wool will make likewise six Pieces of lesser Drapery, as Kerleys, Bays, Flannel, Serges, Perpetuano’s, Says, Frié, and the like, one with another of thirty Yards a Piece; and, I reckon, that we make 1600000 of these lesser Draperies, (I may call ’em altogether) yearly, which will spend 266666 Packs, their’s 316666 Packs disposed of; and suppose such
such Uses as shall be hereafter mention'd, to take up
the remaining 97510 Packs, here's the whole Pro-
duct of Wool in the Land, which by the former
Computation of Acres, amounts to 99402240
Pound.

Grant then, that in England there be 7000000 of
Men, Women, and Children, of which 1000000 to
be Infants, and their Wear nor reckon'd, Two Milli-
on's more to wear old and patch'd Cloaths, Lindley-
woollie, and the like, and but One in Seven to wear
Broad-Cloth, and no more each than three Yards a
piece for a whole Year, this amounts to 100000
Cloths: And that Three more in the Seven wear only
lesser Drapery, and but 5 Yards each to a Year's Wear,
(which in Norwich, and such-like Stuffs, will not go
far) this comes to 500000 Pieces; then to every
Piece of Cloth, allow one Piece of Stuffs in Linings,
Waflecoats, Breeches, &c. and we have but 1000000
of lesser Drapery, and Sixty thousand Cloths yearly to
Export.

Then for 97510 Packs of Wool remaining, allow
to every one of the Six Millions, One pair of Stockins
a Year, and Four pair to a pound of Wool, and a
quarter as many exported, amount to 25000 Packs;
then for Hats, that of Three Millions, each wears
one Hat in two Years, and four Hats to one
Pound of Wool, amounts to Five thousand Packs
more.

Upholders's Ware, as Blankets, Curtains, Hang-
ings, Skreenes, Linings of Coaches, Chairs, and the
like, to be a quarter-part of the Stuffs that are made,
spends Fifty thousand Packs; and if one thirtieth part
of our Wool be put to such Uses as are here omitted,
and otherwise wast of dressing and working it, what’s left will be too little for burying Shrouds, and other Funeral Occasions.

And now we have none left but what is to be Exported, viz. Sixty thousand Cloths, and One Million of lefter Drapery.

First then, The Merchant Adventurers being restored by Queen Elizabeth, upon the Petitions of the Growers and Clothiers, to all those Priviledges, which in the Twenty-ninth Year of Her Reign they had been deprived of, flourished so, that about the Year 1600, they Exported Sixty thousand White Cloths, besides all manner of Stuffes every Year, the White Cloths alone valued at 600000 l. Forty Years after they Exported about 50000 Broad Cloths, 1000 Bays, and 20000 Stuffes a Year: And the Reason they give, why of late they have not Exported a quarter so many Broad-Cloths, and little more than half so many Stuffes, is, that Forreigers who understand not the Trade, have brought Quantities of False made Cloth here, and Exported it, and not only glutted and mislimed Forreign Markets, but brought the Commodity into disfavour. Now if the Wisdom of the Parliament shall think fit to put a stop to that private Trade, and restore the Merchants to their former State, they cannot think themselves ill used, if it be upon Condition, That they every Year Export Fifteen thousand Broad-Cloths; and leeting the Stuffe-Trade, and especially of new Draperies, is quicker of the two, 250000 of them.
The Turkey-Company may likewise be obliged to
Export yearly Twenty eight thousand Broad-Cloaths, and Five thousand Stuffs. The East-India Company
Five thousand Broad-Cloths, and 45 thousand Stuffs. The East-land Company Three thousand Cloths, and Ten thousand Stuffs. The Hudson-Bay Company
So that now we have but Four thousand five hundred Broad-Cloths, and Five hundred forty six thousand Stuffs remaining.

And the Portuguese, who would take off at least Three hundred thousand Pound a Year in our Woolen Manufactures, if we would deal with 'em for Wine, do nevertheless take off about 180 thousand Stuffs a Year. Spain, about Two thousand Cloths, and Three hundred thousand Stuffs. Italy, Five hundred Cloths, and Forty thousand Stuffs. Barbary Six thousand Stuffs. The Western Plantations, Ten thousand Stuffs. Sweden, and Norway, Two thousand Cloths, and Ten thousand Stuffs: without any Obligation, but the Necessity of their Trade. These Proportions I insist not upon, the Wisdom of Parliament will find out better.

But if the Merchant-Adventurers, or any other Fraternity, shall, after the Proportion is set out, think themselves hardly dealt with, by being obliged so to increase their Dealings, they have a Remedy at hand, and can ease themselves, by enlarging their Company, and making more Members of it Free upon equal Terms. In King James the First's time, they had Three thousand
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and five hundred Freemen of that Company; and since that, they have had Six thousand Free at a time. Now suppose they admit but Four thousand Freemen, and that but one quarter of these are Dealers, and that one with another, they Export each for himself; but Fifteen Cloths, and Two hundred and fifty Stuff's a Year, which is no great Merchandizing, it will do; and accordingly the other Companies, if they think fit, may take the like Measures.

I proceed therefore to the Advantages that we may expect to reap by such a Method.

1. First, This will keep the Cloth Trade altogether in the hands of the English; I mean, the Profits of Trade in English Manufacture, in which foreigners at present have too great a share, as English Merchants and Clothiers well know to their sorrow.

II. There will be less Danger and Loss upon the Seas. Societies of Merchants trading in strong and well mann'd Vessels, and not adventuring, as petty Merchants do, without convoy, to the enriching the Enemy, and impoverishing our selves.

III. This will encourage the building of great and able Ships, which may be of Service to the Publick in Times of Necessity: for Societies will not hazard so valuable a Commodity as Cloth, and in such great Parcels, as doublef they will send out at a time, in ordinary Vessels; for one of the Mysteries of Merchandize, being the right timeing of Markets, they will not send over in Driblets, as independent Traders do, but
but send sufficient Quantities at a time, according to the Occasions and Fashions of the Places they deal with; besides, their By-Laws oblige 'em to Export only in English Bottoms.

IV. The Nation's Credit abroad will by this means improve, and thole Societies yearly bring to such and such Places, so great a quantity of our Manufacture, as will be a Security to any Town or State we deal with, and each Society will be more able upon any great Exigence, as by taking up Money, or engaging Themselves, and their Effects, for the Service of their Country, to do the Nation, especially in time of War, some signal Offices; as the Merchant-Adventurers did, about the time of the Spanish Invasion.

V. Exportation of Manufactured Wool will be never attempted: for when the Manufacture is to much encourag'd, Wool will bear a better Price at home, than now it doth abroad; here will be Ready Money without danger, and variety of Markets; whereas the Exporters run great Risques, are forced to sell where they first Land, and sometimes, to take Words instead of Money. For,

VI. The Price of Wool must necessarily rise and keep up, if every Year so much is Exported, as not to leave enough for our home use.

VII. Our Cloth will bear a plentiful good Price abroad, when no body can much undervel another, because all Wares of such and such Marks, will be of like goodness, the Price at the first Penny will not be much
much different, the Charges and Hazards almost equal to every one, and no Merchant will be over or understock'd, to the unpeakeable undervaluation of our Ware.

VIII. 'Twill prevent our Clothiers, and other Manufacturers, transporting themselves into Holland, to the irreparable damage of this Nation, as 1,000 Families did out of Norfolk and Suffolk, in the Years 1635, 1636, and when Two or Three thousand of our English Clothiers settled themselves in the Palatinate.

IX. The Orders for Oversewing and Sealing Cloth will be more strictly looked after, by publick Officers; and indeed every Member of those Societies: Whereas the Foreigner looks no farther than to get so many Yards overplus, in consideration of the want of Bread and Goodness, provided he hath it at his own Terms, beating down by that means the Price of Cloth here, and underselling it abroad: So that the Retailers abroad, that buy it of us, do only look upon the Muller and Outsider, and finding themselves afterwards cheated, they change their Chapmen, and deal with the Honester Dutch; which might be prevented by Publick Officers, and a Publick Seal.

X. This will make the Commodity more staple, and more considerable all over the World, whereas now the proffer'd Sale of it makes it contemptible, and they that accept the Bargain make good the Merchant's Proverb, That there is Twenty per
per Cent. difference between, Will you Buy, and Will you Sell.

X I. Greater quantities of Cloth will be here made than now is, when the Clothiers are morally sure of a certain Market, and Ready-Mony before the Year goes about, and that make as much as they will, it shall be all taken off their Hands.

These Benefits I have enumerated regard the Good of the Nation in general, and those belonging to the Merchant and Clothier in particular, are likewise worth consideration. For,

1. Wealthy Merchants will not be able to engross so much the Trade to themselves as now they do, but every Member will have a Share in the Circulation proportionable to his Abilities. The Great Ones shall not have too much upon their Hands at a time, nor the lesser Merchants too little, but every one shall have so many Lots as his Trade requires, which may be known and attested by Certificates from an English Publick Notary abroad, which will make every one Factor industrious to drive as good and as speedy a Trade as he can. Nor will this be any Wrong to great Merchants, or exposing their Effects or Abilities, since every one hath Liberty to be of more than one Society, as we see divers Merchants belong at the same time both to the East-India and African Company, and so others.

2. Again,
2. Again, Young Traders would hereby have Affi-
ance and Direction in their Dealings, and not be
latter'd to Ruine themselves, as they do, by wading
out of their Depths. They would not find a way
easily of Trading without a Stock, whereby they of-
ten ruine themselves and dishonour the Nation, it
being a Reflection upon us abroad, that our Young
Merchants engage themselves too deep, and when
not governed by a Society too extravagantly.

Young Merchants, and those that cry out so
much for free Exportation, do often take up Goods
upon Credit or Exchange to Ten or Twelve
per Cent. Lot, and afterwards upon some sudden
Pinch being forced to Sell, they underfell others
to keep up their Credit, to the disparagement of
our Commodities and ruin of themselves, as well
by losing in the Cloth they sell, as buying For-
reign Ware at too dear a rate, enhauncing the
Price of our Neighbor's Commodities, and lessen-
ing, that of our own, to make quick Return. So the
Merchants of York, Hull, and Newcastle lend young
men over with their Cloth (too young indeed to
deal with Hollanders, Hanstowns, and Jews) who
having engaged themselves to relade their Ships at
a certain day with Foreign Ware, before they
can sell their Cloth they buy of Foreigners upon
Credit, and having a Day of Payment set, are for-
ced, be the Market how it will, to sell their Cloth at
any rate, to keep up their Credit; which wild way
of Traffick makes the Price of Cloth so uncertain to
Foreigners, that the Retailer knows not when and
how to buy, and so grows weary of the Trade.

3. This
3. This will be a Means to hinder the raising of Tolls and Imports abroad, each Company having Influence and Authority where they reside; especially in such a Town as Hamburgh, where the Trade hath maintain'd 20,000 Persons at a time; and be able likewise to contravene all fraudulent Dealings and Combinations against the Trade.

4. This will not only keep up, but encrease the number of Publick Places of Sale abroad, where our Cloth is expos'd in an open Market, and all the Sellers are obliged to attend with great plenty and Variety; which Method is known by long Experience to forward the Sale of any Ware: And such publick Places and Markets can no more be settled abroad by Private Dealers, than it could be practis'd here at home by Foreigners, who though they had upon mis-information of Queen Elizabeth's Council, the George in King-Street, Westminster, assigned them for a publick place of Trade, yet could never bring one Waggon-load of Clothes to be unloaded there: And if under the notion of Buyers, People in a foreign Country cannot without being incorporated make a Publick Place of Trade, much less can they under the Notion of Sellers.

Befide that, publick Places of Sale are more for the Honour of the Commodity, and of the Merchant, than private bartering and pedling up and down, as those straggling Merchants did in the year 1565, who went up and down at Narve in Livland, with
with English Cloth under their Arms, and a Measure in their Hands, bringing the noblest Commodity of England into the greatest Contempt.

But most Advantage of all will by this means accrue to the Clothier, and by consequence to the Grouser; for there will be to current a Price, and such certain Dealings for this Staple Commodity, that Brokers, Wood-jobbers, and the like, will not henceforth eat out the Clothiers Profit, (a great cause of the dearness of Manufacture in England) but the Merchant and Draper will be forced to employ factors to go about the Country, and buy Cloth at the Clothiers home, paying ready Money: At least the Clothiers bringing their Cloths to Market every week, will find Customers enough: So the poorest Clothiers, which have but a little Stock, may Trade for themselves, which now they cannot do.

I could enumerate many more Conveniencies both National and Particular; As, That it would be a means to prevent the King’s being defrauded in his Customs.

That Taxes upon Stock and Effects may hereby be more easily laid.

That Trade will be judiciously varied according to Emergencies and Alterations abroad.

There will be less quarrelling with our Merchants about Tare and Rebate.

This will raise the Price of Corn throughout the Nation; for wool keeping hereby certainly to a round price, Stock will be increased, and a great deal of Land laid down in Pasture, so that there will be less Corn-Land, and less Corn sowed.

D But
But what I have said may perhaps suffice to satisfy your Honour. That however I succeed, I think it my Duty to study the good of my Country.

I will not now trouble your Honour with an Account of the great Damages this Nation sustains; by the Exportation of that which is not fully Manufactured. I leave that to another Hand.

I am, &c.