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SOME  
HINTS  
INTENDED TO  
Promote the CULTURE  
OF  
SILKWORMS  
IN  
IRELAND.

Addressed to the DUBLIN SOCIETY,  
By the Rev. SAMUEL PULLEIN, A. M.

---

*Quid mirum, si jam totum diffusa per orbem  
Saturni et Veneris pascunt pecora aurea gentes,  
Mollia nec soli noverunt stamina Seres?*  
*What Wonder then, that ev'ry Land shou'd rear  
The Flocks of Saturn and the Cyprian Fair,  
Nor Srean Climes possess the sole Renown  
Of Distaffs swelling soft with golden Down?*  
VIDA's Silkworm, Book 2.

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S O M E

## H I N T S

Intended to

Promote the Culture of SILK W O R M S  
in *Ireland*.

**I**T is the Fate of new Schemes, like new Fashions, often to appear somewhat whimsical; to be run into with Eagerness by volatile People, but shunned and sometimes \* ridiculed by persons of a graver cast. But if a new Fashion has the Appearance of a public Good; if it is attended with no great Expence, as it pleased some in the Beginning by its Novelty, so it doth others afterwards by its Usefulness; and what at first appeared odd in it, becomes at last by Custom agreeable and familiar. I hope the Advantages that may possibly arise from the following Thoughts, or at least their good Intention, will be some Apology for any Thing that may at first sight appear strange and uncommon in them: All well-bred Nations make Allowances for the Behaviour of a Foreigner, not thoroughly modelled to their Customs, and rather encourage him to Freedom and Familiarity, than check and restrain him. The Production of Silk is a Foreigner in this Country; and tho' the proposing of it should make its first Appearance with some

\* When *Henry II.* undertook to establish Silk Manufactures at *Lyons* and *Tours*, the People seemed amazed, and said with one common Voice, What will all these fruitless and chimerical Projects come to?

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Awkwardness, yet it ought to be favoured with that Indulgence and Protection which is due to a Stranger, whose Intentions, at least, are fair and honest.

The Benefit that might arise to the Kingdoms both of *England* and *Ireland*, from producing within themselves, a Commodity which costs them annually very considerable Sums of Money, is what at present prompts me to offer the following Hints to the Public, on a Subject which has at least this Advantage, that it is attended with little or no Expence, and consequently no Damage to the Experimentor, in case it should not succeed; and with considerable Profit both to the Nation and private Persons if it should be found practicable. But tho' this is a forcible Motive to my publishing what follows, yet I own it was chiefly Curiosity which at first led me to rear some of the Silkworms; for I was formerly under the Influence of the same common Prejudice that prevails among us, "That they could not be managed in our Country, try to any national Advantage."——But after having minutely observed the Nature and Procedure of their Works from Beginning to End, and also gained what other Insight I was able from Books, and from Persons who had seen them bred in other Countries, I felt a much greater Satisfaction than I at first proposed to myself; being convinced that Silkworms will thrive, and spin as large Quantities, and as good Silk in *England* or *Ireland*, as they do in *France* where they have been so long cultivated. What I therefore propose in this Paper is only to remove these general Prejudices which have heretofore hindered the promoting of this Manufacture in both Kingdoms.

And first, it has been generally thought, that the Climates of *England* and *Ireland* were too cold for the Production and rearing of Silkworms, in such Plenty and Vigour as to make them a Branch of Trade. This Opinion took its Rise partly from their being originally the Natives of a much warmer Climate, from whence they were first introduced into *Europe*;

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and because the Parts of *Europe* where they are now bred are hotter than ours; and partly because many imagine that in *France*, *Italy*, &c. they breed abroad on the Trees, and spin their Silk in the open Air. It is true indeed they are the Natives of *India*, a Climate much warmer than either *France* or *Italy*, but yet they have born the Transportation from one to the other without any Inconvenience, and further from these into the milder Climates both of *England* and *Ireland*. And indeed a great Degree of Heat is by no Means necessary to their Health, but only a dry, open and moderately warm Air, in which our own Country is sufficiently provided, at the Time of their feeding, which I would chuse to make from the Middle of *May* to the Middle of *July*, and that is the whole Time that they require any Attendance; for then they begin to spin their Balls, after which they never eat, and by the End of *August* those which are reserved for Breed have laid their Eggs, which being preserved in a temperate Place, need not be exposed to the Sun to be hatched till the Middle of the ensuing *May*, and then there will be both sufficient Heat to cherish, and sufficient Food to rear them. Not but that there is Warmth enough for this in the Beginning of *May*; but, as the Mulberry is a Tree that buds late, the Eggs should never be hatched till its Leaves are a little spread, and the Weather settled; for it would make too much Waste if you were obliged to pull them when they were just unfolded: And therefore, because the natural Warmth of the Weather, even in *April*, might chance to make the Eggs hatch that should be hindered, by removing them at that Time into a cooler Place. But I have gone further into this than I now intended, my Design at present being only to shew, that the Climates of *England* and *Ireland* are as well adapted to rearing Silkworms, as some others where they have been long bred. But since the King of *Prussia* is now said to be promoting it in a Country no way comparable to ours in Temperature,

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perature, and the *European* Countries which now produce Silk seem resolved to manufacture it themselves, or to have what Price they please for it, even this might be sufficient to encourage us; but, because Experiment is of greater Weight than any other Kind of Reasoning, I must mention what I can affirm upon my own Knowledge: for this very Year, in which the Silkworms have failed so much abroad, I bred some which thrived extremely well, and spun their Balls equal in Weight to those of *France*, and the Threads full as strong, as I found by suspending Weights to each till they broke. The Worms began to spin about the Middle of *July*, and had come out of their Balls and laid their Eggs before the End of *August*; and I am acquainted with several others who this same Year bred them with equal Success. I should scarce repeat what I before mentioned, of the Opinion, "That in other Countries they live abroad in the open Air," if I had not found it very prevalent among many; but it is well known to every one who has enquired into this, that in all Parts of *Europe* they are kept in Houses, and indeed I believe every where, when they are cultivated as a Manufacture, otherwise the Accidents from the Weather, Birds, &c. would make them of small Account.

I come now to a more material Objection, the Scarcity of Mulberry trees, the Leaves of which are the only Food upon which they can live, at least so as to make Silk of any Value. This Objection is at present so strong, that it is seemingly sufficient to overturn the whole Scheme, and our Climate is commonly thought to be as unfit for this Tree as for the Worms themselves. But the present Scarcity of these Trees is a very weak Objection. That they will not indeed here shoot up spontaneously, is a Thing well known; but it is equally certain that they will thrive prodigiously, and there are many Trees of great Age now standing, which weathered our late severe Frosts even that of the Year Thirty-nine, as well as any others.

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others. It is therefore a Shame for us to say that there is not plenty of them, since that could not now be said, had not a Disregard for Posterity been too prevalent among us, and cannot even now be of any force, seeing that in four or five Years many thousand Trees may be raised by Layers, Slips, &c. and by sowing the Seed of the ripe Berries, which last Way is preferable to Layers, both because of the Numbers that may be suddenly raised, and because it makes a more durable and hardy Tree. To demur therefore on account of the Scarcity of Food for the Silkworms, seems reducible to the following Kind of Argument: "I will never engage in this Work, because I cannot do it now; and I cannot do it now, because I have omitted something necessary, which should have been done Yesterday." But had not some national Affairs diverted People from the Culture of Mulberry Trees, which King *James* the First had resolutely intended to promote, there had been now no Obstacle to the Silken Manufacture from this Cause: Nay, in all Likelihood we should, by this Time, have made as great Advances in it as *France*, where it had then been but lately introduced, if at least the People of *England* and *Ireland* could bring themselves to be as expert in the Management of such Things as the *French* are. And to shew what was the Opinion at that Time concerning the Success of this Branch of Trade in *England*, I shall here insert the Letter which King *James* the First then wrote to the Governors of the several Shires.

JAMES, REX.

*Right Trusty and Beloved, We greet you well.*

"IT is a principal Part of that Christian Care which  
 "I appertaineth to Sovereignty, to endeavour, by  
 "all Means possible, as well to beget as to encrease  
 "among their People the Knowledge and Practice of  
 "all

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“ all Arts and Trades, whereby they may be both  
 “ weaned from Idleness and the Enormities thereof,  
 “ which are infinite, and exercised in such Industries  
 “ and Labours as are accompanied with evident  
 “ Hopes, not only of preserving People from the  
 “ Shame and Grief of Penury, but also raising and  
 “ increasing them in Wealth and Abundance, the  
 “ Scope which every free-born Spirit aimeth at, not  
 “ in regard of Himself only, and the Ease which  
 “ a plentiful Estate bringeth to every one in his  
 “ Particular; but also in regard of the Honour to  
 “ their native Country, whose Commendations is no  
 “ way more set forth than in the Peoples Activeness  
 “ and Industry. The Consideration whereof having  
 “ of late exercised our Mind, who always esteem  
 “ our Peoples Good our necessary Contemplations;  
 “ we have received, as well by the Discourse of our  
 “ own Reason, as by Information gathered from  
 “ others, that the making of Silk might as well be  
 “ effected here as it is in the Kingdom of *France*,  
 “ where the same hath of late Years been put in  
 “ Practice; for neither is the Climate of this Isle so  
 “ far distinct or different in Condition from that  
 “ Country, especially from the hither Parts thereof,  
 “ but that it is to be hoped that those Things, which  
 “ by Industry prosper there, may by like Industry used  
 “ here have like Success; and many private Persons,  
 “ who for their Pleasure have bred of those Worms,  
 “ have found no Experience to the contrary, but  
 “ that they may be nourished and maintained here,  
 “ if Provision were made for planting Mulberry-  
 “ Trees, whose Leaves are the Food of the Worms.  
 “ And therefore, we have thought good hereby to  
 “ let you understand, that altho’ in suffering this Inven-  
 “ tion to take place, we do shew ourselves somewhat  
 “ an Adversary to our Profit, which is the Matter  
 “ of our Customs; for Silk brought from beyond  
 “ the Seas, will receive some Diminution: Never-  
 “ theless, when there is a Question of so great and  
 “ publick

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“ publick Utility to come to our Kingdom and Sub-  
 “ jects in general, and whereby (besides Multitudes  
 “ of People of both Sexes and all Ages) such as in  
 “ regard of Impotency are unfit for other Labour,  
 “ may be set on work, comforted and relieved: we  
 “ are content that our private Benefit shall give way  
 “ to the publick. And therefore, being persua-  
 “ ded that no well affected Subject shall refuse to  
 “ put his helping Hand to such a Work, as can  
 “ have no other private End in us, but the Desire of  
 “ the Welfare of our People; we have thought  
 “ good, in this Form only, to require you, as a Per-  
 “ son of greatest Authority in that County, and from  
 “ whom the Generality may receive Notice of our  
 “ Pleasure, with more Conveniency than otherwise,  
 “ to take Occasion, either at the Quarter-sessions, or  
 “ at some other publick Place of meeting, to per-  
 “ suade and require such as are of Ability (without  
 “ descending to trouble the Poor for whom we seek  
 “ to provide) to buy and distribute in that County  
 “ the Number of Ten Thousand Mulberry-plants,  
 “ which shall be delivered to them at our City of,  
 “ &c. at the Rate of Three Farthings a Plant, or at  
 “ Six Shillings the Hundred, containing Five-score  
 “ Plants. And because the buying of the said Plants  
 “ at this Rate, may at the first seem chargeable to  
 “ our said Subjects, (whom we would be loth to  
 “ burden) we have taken Order, that in *March* or  
 “ *April* next, there shall be delivered at the said  
 “ Place a good Quantity of Mulberry-seeds, there  
 “ to be sold to such as will buy them, by means  
 “ whereof the said Plants will be delivered at a smal-  
 “ ler Rate than they can be afforded being carried  
 “ from hence. Having resolved also, in the mean  
 “ time, that there shall be published in Print a plain  
 “ Instruction and Direction, both for the increasing  
 “ the said Mulberry-trees, the breeding of the Silk-  
 “ worms, and all other Things needful to be under-  
 “ stood for the perfecting a Work every way so  
 “ com-

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“ commendable and profitable, as well to the Plan-  
 “ ter as to those that shall use the Trade. Having  
 “ now made known unto you the Motives as they  
 “ stand with the publick Good, wherein every Man  
 “ is interested, because we know how much the Ex-  
 “ ample of our own Deputy-lieutenant and Justices  
 “ will further this Cause, if you and other your  
 “ Neighbours will be content to take some good  
 “ Quantities hereof to distribute upon your own  
 “ Lands, we are content to acknowledge thus much  
 “ more in this Direction of ours, that all Things of  
 “ this Nature, tending to Plantations, Increase of  
 “ Science, and Works of Industry, are Things so  
 “ naturally pleasing to our own Disposition, as we  
 “ shall take it for an Argument of extraordinary Af-  
 “ fection towards our Person; besides the Judgment  
 “ we shall make of the good Dispositions in all those  
 “ that shall express in any kind their ready Minds  
 “ to further the same; and shall esteem, that in fur-  
 “ thering the same, they seek to further our Ho-  
 “ nour and Contentment, (having seen in a few  
 “ Years past that our Brother the *French* King hath,  
 “ since his coming to the Crown, both began and  
 “ brought to Perfection the making of Silks in his  
 “ Country, where he hath won to himself Honour,  
 “ and to his Subjects a marvellous Increase of Wealth)  
 “ would account it no little Happiness to us, if the  
 “ same Work which we began among our People,  
 “ with no less Zeal to their Good than any Prince  
 “ have to theirs, might in our Time produce the  
 “ Fruits which there it hath done. Wherefore we  
 “ nothing doubt but ours will be found as tractable  
 “ and apt to further their own Good, now the way is  
 “ shewed them by us their Sovereign, as those of  
 “ *France* have been to conform themselves to the Di-  
 “ rection of their King.”

*Given under our Signet at our Palace of Westminster,*  
*Nov. 16. in the Sixth Year of England, France*  
*and Ireland, and of Scotland the Two and Fortieth.*

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From the foregoing Letter it appears, that the  
 only Obstacle then supposed was the Scarcity of Mul-  
 berry Trees, and that the Climate was not the Thing  
 found fault with; and yet I believe I might venture  
 to say, that the Climate both of *England* and *Ireland*  
 have improved since that Time, and that the latter  
 especially, by the draining of its Lands, and clearing  
 the Ground, begins to make its Inhabitants sensible,  
 that it is not now a Country of Fens and Fogs.

But it may still be said, that even supposing the  
 Obstacles of Climate and Food to be removed, yet  
 where are there Persons that understand the Manage-  
 ment of the Worms, and the Method of feeding  
 and ordering such Numbers of them as are necessary  
 to make them a national Advantage; where are there  
 Places proper to keep them in; and who will be wil-  
 ling to undertake a Work attended with a good deal  
 of Nicety? In Answer to these Difficulties, it is pro-  
 per to take Notice, that in *France* and *Italy* these  
 Things are the Business of the Peasants, and the  
 great Quantities of Silk which are sent to us and  
 other Places, are, for the most Part, only the Col-  
 lection of small Quantities made by each particular  
 Farmer, who generally allot some small Part in their  
 Houses or Barns, where, with little Trouble, the  
 Silkworms are fed, the Balls spun and carried to  
 Market, where they are bought up by the Manufac-  
 turers: And thus, perhaps, from a dozen Mulber-  
 ry-trees which stand in his Garden, and with very  
 little Trouble, as much Money is raised in two  
 Months time as pays the Rent of a small Farm.  
 And this is done without being a Hindrance to any  
 other Business; for if the Person have a Wife or  
 Daughters, these being generally at home, are al-  
 ways in Readiness to attend the Worms, which ta-  
 king up but a very short time, is rather a Relaxa-  
 tion from any sedentary Employment, than an Em-  
 ployment in itself; and a Woman while she sits at

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her Wheel may, at the same time, employ many thousand Spinsters of a more curious Nature, without the Expence of Wages. It is true, indeed, that those, who out of Curiosity have reared Silkworms in *Ireland*, have, for want of a proper Method, made it a Business of great Attendance and Trouble; for they neither distributed them properly, so as to take up little room, and to be fed and cleaned with Ease, nor had they a proper Method of feeding them: And when the Worms were ready to spin their Silk, their manner of making Cones of Paper, and putting each Worm one by one into them, and afterwards pinning them to the Sides of the Room; this, I say, made it an almost endless and troublesome Business. Whereas, in a proper manner, ten thousand full-grown Worms would not take up above four Foot in a Room ten Foot high, and so in Proportion, and might be all fed in less than ten Minutes time; nay, would not require to be cleaned above once or twice in a Week, the doing of which would not take up a Quarter of an Hour; and, when they were ready to spin, a proper Accommodation may be made for the whole Number in less than that time. without any future Care being necessary. All this, I say, can be done by a proper Method, the original Expence to do it in the most convenient manner, amounting to little more than that of making a few Hurdles, which every Countryman is acquainted with, and the Materials serving many Years: But as it is observable that most written Precepts have been defective, by being delivered too generally, and not descending enough into Particulars, even the minutest, I cannot in this Paper enter into this Subject; but I may hereafter, if there should be any Attempts made to encourage this Manufacture, communicate to the Publick whatever Hints either Experience, Enquiry or Consideration have afforded me. I have, in the mean time, made a Model of the most convenient Method

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Method of keeping the Silkworms, which may be seen at the Parliament-house; and will soon publish a translation of Vida's two poetical Books on that Subject, whose Precepts, beside the beautiful manner in which they are delivered by him, are the most accurate that have been wrote.

And now having, I hope, in some Degree, weakened the most material Objections, I shall mention what at present occurs to me as a likely Method to set this Manufacture on foot. I mentioned before, that Mulberry-trees might be raised in great plenty from Layers, &c. and by sowing the Seeds of the ripe Berries; these, after four Years Growth, would be proper to feed the Silkworms, and tho' the Trees would then be but small, yet that Defect might be in a great measure recompensed by their Numbers; for as each Seed might produce a Plant, and there are many in one Berry, several thousand might be raised in a Seed-bed of seven or eight Yards square. The *Dublin Society*, and their generous Benefactor the Reverend Doctor *Madden*, have by large Premiums encouraged many useful Improvements, and many Plantations both of Fruit and Forest-trees have sprung from these Encouragements: But if the Silken Manufacture should be found to thrive in *Ireland*, as I doubt not but it will, what Tree would be equal in Value to the Mulberry. It may be hoped therefore that so useful a Society will not overlook a Thing which may hereafter be of so great Advantage to the Nation. I imagine, that if a Sum, of not more than Thirty Pounds, were appropriated to encourage Plantations of Mulberry-trees, a few Years would produce a sufficient Plenty to carry on the Silken Manufacture; and tho' I will not take upon me to prescribe a Method, yet perhaps somewhat like the following would be no inconvenient one of laying it out. To the Person who shall, after the — Day of *May*, in the Year — bring proper Affidavits of his having then the greatest Number of

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Mulberry-trees, either black or white, and of two			
Years Growth	————	————	10 0 0
To the second greatest Number	————	————	8 0 0
To the third	————	————	6 0 0
To the fourth	————	————	4 0 0
To the fifth	————	————	2 0 0
		————	Total 30 0 0

Something of this Sort would, in all Likelihood, among the several Competitors, at the End of two Years, raise many thousand Plants, and continued for a few Years would be sufficient to furnish the whole Kingdom. There is here no Preference given to either the black or white Mulberry, because either will rear the Silkworm very well; tho' the white grows quicker and seems fittest for them when they are young, and the black as having a firmer Leaf when they are grown stronger. The *French* and *Italians* feed them altogether with the white, but the *Persians* with the black. As a large Number of Trees would be raised by the foregoing Encouragement, it would, perhaps, not be improper to preserve and continue them, by smaller Premiums, to those who had the greatest Number standing of four Year-old Trees, as also to engage those who had them to retail them at a low Price, that they might spread over the Kingdom in small Parcels; because, as I hinted before, this Manufacture is carried on chiefly by moderate Quantities of Silk made by particular Persons, which are afterwards bought up by the Manufacturers.

Beside, as there are at present dispersed through several Parts of the Kingdom many well-grown Trees, in order to promote the Knowledge of feeding and managing the Worms, there might be, in the mean time, small Premiums proposed to the Persons who produced the largest and best Balls of Silk, not fewer than ———, that by these Means they might

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might grow acquainted with the Method of feeding larger Numbers, and of making the Silk strong and good. Many Ladies, who do it only now for Amusement, would, I am persuaded, be then emulous of shewing their Skill in an Employment which might one Day be of publick Good to their Country: the Gardeners of Gentlemen who have Trees would be induced to gain Experience; and from these the Knowledge would naturally derive to the lower Classes of the People: And by the time that sufficient Quantities of Trees were grown up, there would be scarce any County in which there would not be many well experienced in the Business, whose Instructions and Example would sufficiently encourage others. And as to the Accommodation of Houses, a Mud-wall Tenement is as good as any, nay, on account of its Dryness, preferable to any other; and every Farmer who has a Barn, which at the time of feeding Silkworms will not be in Use, may with little Trouble, only by two or three Windows of Glass, oil'd Paper, or some transparent Membranes which the Country People sometimes use, make a Place fit to keep great Numbers; a Place where a Fire or Stove could be occasionally lighted on any extraordinary sharp Day would be of Advantage; but then Care must be taken that the Chimney doth not smoke, which would hurt the Worms. And the Necessity of a small Fire, on a very cold or moist Day, must not be thought to arise from any thing peculiar to our Climate, for it is what they never fail to do in *France* and *Italy*: And I really believe we should not have Occasion to do it near so often as they, since our Weather from the middle of *May* to the End of *July*, nay, the middle of *August*, is not attended with such Sharpness as frequently happens amidst their great Heats. And I must take Notice, on this Occasion, that however it may be thought that *Virginia* might suddenly have a Silken Manufacture established



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blished in it,\* yet on this very Account of the sudden Changes of its Weather, from extreme Heat to most piercing Cold, both *England* and *Ireland* have the Advantage of it; as also on account of the Hands we can employ, in which the other is so deficient as to be always obliged to *Africk* for them, and yet always in want of a sufficient Number; so that if we wait till they supply us with Silk, we may wait to a Period much later than that in which we might have supplied ourselves. The *English*, to whom, without Restraint, Manufactures of all Sorts lie open, would nevertheless have Hands sufficient to spare for such a Business as this, which takes up so small a Portion of the Year, and so small a Part of that Portion as perhaps an Hour in the Day. But to the *Irish*, who have but few Manufactures to employ the Numbers of useless Hands with which they are over-stocked, what a prodigious Advantage must accrue if, beside saving Money in the Kingdom, many Persons now absolutely idle could be furnished with Employment, and many, even down to the lowest Cottager, find a comfortable Maintenance; and I don't think it would be an unpleasing Consideration, even to Persons of Fortune, to see a Daughter wearing a Silk of her own Manufacture.

And now I have mentioned whatever occurred, and seemed material to this Subject, tho' rather with the Intention of not neglecting any thing than of methodizing every Part. I do not pretend to any extraordinary Knowledge in the several Maxims and Measures by which the Interest of a Nation may be promoted; but as there is one Maxim which is generally allowed, "That whatever gives Employment and Support to the lower Classes of any Nation (of which the Bulk of the People is made up) this  
" must

\* Another Advantage which we have both over it and *France*, is our not being so subject to Thunder and Lightning; which is so fatal to the Worms, that in *France* that they are never sure of their Silk-harvest till it is actually spun.

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" must promote the Interest and Welfare of that Nation:"—And since this is true when taken in the most general Sense, the following Suppositions will still shew the Maxim in a stronger Light.

If what employs and supports the lower Part of a People, even when their Labour turns only to the Advantage of private Persons, be of Service to a Nation, then, by a stronger Reason, when that Labour saves Money to, or brings it into a Country, it is of greater Use.

But if it not only saves Money to a Country, and also barely supports the Labourers, but does beside that enrich them, it is then a higher Advantage.

And, lastly, when that Labour is such that it may be done by that Sort of People who cannot be employed in laborious Works, and requires no Fund to begin it; in these Lights, I say, such Labour seems to deserve all the Encouragement that Patriotism can bestow on it.

I have now mentioned what at the present seems sufficient for the Subject; not, indeed, with the overweening Fondness of a Parent for a Child of his own begetting, but rather with the Feeling of one who had met with a Foundling, whose Form and Aspect promised a useful Member to his Country, I have wrapped it up in such Swaddling-cloaths as were readiest at Hand, and in these deliver it to those who can educate it to Manhood.

F I N I S.

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