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A

LETTER
TO A
Member of Parliament,
 Concerning the
Imploying and Providing
FOR THE
P O O R.



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A
LETTER
TO A
Member of Parliament, &c.

S I R,



YOU did me a very great Honour when you asked my Opinion upon the great Subject that you have before you of employing of the Poor, and desired me to give you in a Letter, such Observations as I had made about it: And tho' I am sensible, that it is a point of greater Difficulty than is usually imagined, and therefore may well be afraid of venturing to say much about it, yet as it is our Interest that you shou'd hear all Mens Opinions that you may chuse the best, I have taken the Liberty to offer my Notions with great Freedom upon many Cases, for it is not one Thing nor Two, but a right Management of all Things concerning that Subject, which must bring us to the happy State we aim at, and preserve us therein, when we have it.

THE Questions to be considered are, What Poor, and by what Employment, and if Employment alone will not fully answer all Wants, what other Ways and Means may be added either by new Laws, or by the private Endeavours of Public-spirited Men in their several Stations. Of

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Of Employments.

AND to speak of Employment before I consider the Persons of the Poor, that must arise from the Improvement of our Grounds, Fishing and Navigating the Sea, and from our Manufactures.

THE Improving the Ground must be carried on by private Industry, and Experiments of ingenious Men, more than by publick Laws; But two things I took notice of when I was in *England*. One is the keeping open the Course of their Rivers; the other is the Draining of their Fens.

THE keeping open the Rivers is necessary in all rich Lands, because the Floods bring so much Soil from the Mountains and soft Grounds which they run thorow, that they dam up their own Way, and stagnate, and become Bog or Fen: And then the Springs under Ground being choked they swell into Fens and Bogs, and the higher they grow, the wider of Necessity they must spread.

TO prevent this growing Evil, in the Twenty-third of *Henry* the Eighth, they made a Law, which is executed in all the soft Countries that I have known in *England*, that of the Commissioners of Sewers or Shores. By that the Gentlemen of the Country can take out a Power under the Broad-Seal, to view all Rivers, and Water-Courses, and fine all Persons who did not keep their Passages open, and bottomfy their Rivers in their several Grounds.

THE Preamble to the Statute runs thus: "Our Sovereign Lord the King, like a vertuous and most gracious Prince, nothing earthly so highly weighing as the advancing of the common Profit

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“ Profit Wealth and Commodity of this his
 “ Realm, and considering the daily great Damages
 “ and Losses which have happened in many
 “ Parts, as well by reason of the Outragious
 “ flowing of the Sea, in and upon the Marsh-
 “ Grounds and other low Places; as also by oc-
 “ casion of Land-Waters, and other Outragious
 “ Springs in and upon Meadows, Pastures, and
 “ other low Grounds adjoining to Rivers, Floods
 “ and other Water-Courses, and over that by
 “ and thro’ Mills, Mill-Dams, Weirs, Fish-Gaths,
 “ Kedles, Gores, Gotes, Flood-Gates, Locks,
 “ and other impediments in and upon the same
 “ Rivers, and other Water-Courses, to the in-
 “ estimable Damage of the Common-Wealth of
 “ this Realm, which daily is likely more and
 “ more to increase unless speedy Redress and
 “ Remedy be in this behalf speedily provided”
 And therefore the Act proceeds to empower the
 Lord Chancellor to appoint Commissioners, to
 “ Survey the said Walls, Streams, Ditches,
 “ Banks, Fences, Gutters, Sewers, Gotes, Cal-
 “ cics, Bridges, Trenches, Mills, Mill-Dams,
 “ Flood-Gates, Ponds, Locks, Hebbing-Weirs,
 “ and other Impediments, Letts and Annoy-
 “ ances, &c. and enquire by whose Fault those
 Annoyances have happened. Then notice was
 to be given to the Parties, and Fines follow if
 their Orders were not observed.

F O R want of such a wise Law, I read in
 Captain Perry’s account of *Russia*, that a third part
 of the Land near *Petersbourg*, is Moss and Mo-
 rafs, and Fenn; and for want of the same, tho’ the
 Vallies in *England* are their rich Meadows, here
 in *Ireland* they are our Bogs and Fenns. I will
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add no more upon that head, but go on to the
Draining of Fenns.

F O R the doing this in *England* they cut new
 Water-Courses, set up Sluces, and thereby the
 richest Part of *Lincoln-shire* called *Holland*, hath
 been recovered from such Marshes and the Sea
 together, and in one place called the *Bedford-
 Level* they recovered Seventy Thousand Acres,
 which now enlarge the Counties of *Bedford*, *Cam-
 bridge*, *Norfolk*, and *Suffolk*: But that was done,
 not by the Owners of the Ground, but under an
 Act of Parliament in King *Charles* the First’s
 time, which incorporated Adventurers, who by
 the help of a regular Society overcame that
 great Work, but were many years about it, and
 still are at considerable Charge to preserve it,
 tho’ with very great profit. Many other large
 Fenns have been drained in most Counties, and
 few left that I know of.

I M P R O V E M E N T S of this Kind would
 employ many hands, and greatly enrich the
 land, and even mend the Air that is made too
 Moist by these numerous Lakes, and Stagnations
 of Water.

O T H E R Kinds of improving Land are by
 Marls, Lime, Bog-Earth, Shells, Ashes, Burn-
 ing, Overflowing, &c. and then finding out
 proper Grains or kinds of Hay and Grass. But
 as this must rest upon the Experience of Gentle-
 men, and wealthy Farmers, I will only add, that
 that such Experiments are very Pleasant, and
 usually very Profitable. *Virgil* speaking of
 these kinds of Improvements calls the Ground
Iustissima Tellus, because it is very punctual in
 repaying all Charges that are prudently laid out

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upon it. In short, a good Natural History of the Country; would be of great Use to the Improvements of this Kind, and I question, whether any Kingdom in *Europe* would afford more curious matter to a wise Observer. The Mildness of its Air; The Richness of its Soil; Its Change, by Time from Woods into Bogs; Its Subterraneous Timber, and large Bones of Deer, and Shells and other Fossils; Its Plenty of Marls under the Bogs; and Lastly, Its Freedom from Moles, Toads, Snakes, Adders, and all Venomous Creatures. These and others, with the Observations of his Grace the Lord Arch-Bishop of *Dublin*, Lord Bishop of *Offory*, Lord Bishop of *Clonfert*; The late Improvements of the Lord *Molesworth*, Mr. *Ward*, Mr. *Maxwell*, Mr. *Dawson*, Mr. *Edwards*, would make a Noble and an Useful History.

Of Mines.

FINDING out of Mines is of wonderful Use to any Nation. When they are discovered and wrought, one barren Mountain affords more Riches than five fruitful Valleys; and they employ great Numbers of People to work them. It may not be improper to be considered, whether it would not be useful to make a Law, to give a general Power to all Adventurers to dig and search for Mines in all Places, paying reasonable Consideration for Damage, and the Adventurer to have Liberty to work such Mines for a convenient Number of Years, and the clear Profit to be divided between him and the Owner of the Land.

The Sea.

AFTER the Improvement of the Land, is
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to be considered the Uses and Advantages that are made of the Sea: But as I do but touch upon Things, I shall only say, That Navigation and the Fishery are the two great Branches of that Profit. The Profit of Navigation is unknown and inestimable, especially when carried on in our own Bottoms. And all that is got by Fish, is so much clear Gains added to the Riches and Produce of the Land. We pay the Sea nothing for her Goods, and yet *She* affords a great part of the Provision that Islands live upon: And the more the People feed upon that, the more we shall have of the Produce of our Ground for Exportation.

Manufactures.

THE next Way of Employing the Poor is by Manufactures, and of those we ought to have as many as we can get; all that serve either for Necessity, Conveniency, Ornament or Innocent Pleasure. The Advantage of the Linen Manufacture, every Man perceives, and of all others, the Effects would be the same in Proportion to the Hands that they employed, and the Money they returned.

ALL kinds of Iron-Work, Paper, Books, Lace, Straw-Hats, Buttons, Glass, and Stockings. In *Tournay*, Geographers observe, that there are Seventy Two several kinds of Trades.

BUT I will not enlarge upon Particulars, but only add, That no People can flourish without a good Number of *These*. They are *These* that pay the King his Taxes and the Landlord his Rent; For *they* make the Consumption, and the Consumption raises the Price, and the Price goes into the Landlord's Pocket. The Farmers are
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but a-kind of Stewards to the Landlords, that Sell their Goods and bring *Them* the Money; and what would they be able to Sell if there were not *Those* that could Buy and Pay for what they Eat and Wore? And they who do that are the honest Traders and Labourers in a Nation. The Begger does not do it; he eats your Meal, and drinks your Milk, and pays you nothing for it. The Vagrant does not do it; he both eats and steals, and spoils your inclosures, and fills you with Children, but adds nothing to your Rents, no more than the Wasp that devours the Honey that your Bees gather. He that really pays your Rent, is the honest Trader that gives Money for what he hath, and employs great Numbers under him, that pay as well as he: And the more there are of these, the greater Consumption there is, the higher Price for Things, and more Rent to the Landlord.

PUT the Case into a Syllogism.

THEY who buy the Landlord's Goods and pay for them, they in reality pay his Rent.

BUT the Trader, Labourer and Artificers buy his Goods and pay for them; therefore Traders, Labourers and Artificers pay his Rent.

AGAIN; The higher the Price is of Goods, the higher the Rents.

BUT the more People and Buyers in a Place, the higher Prices. Therefore the more People the higher the Rent.

WHEN *Spain* lost its People, it grew Poor, tho' it had the Riches of the *Indies* in return for them.

AFTER the Plague in *London*, Things were cheap, and Prices low, and Rent ill paid, as I have heard ancient Men observe in *England*.

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BEFORE I leave this Article of Trade, I will add, That you must nourish and cherish, and defend your Traders, as a careful Farmer does his best Breeders. You must make it easy for them to recover their Debts, and let no *Harpies* prey upon them, and rob them of what they gain by their honest Labours.

THO' they are useful, they are weak and not able to contest with wealthy Oppressors, or Servants under Priviledge; nor can they often even so much as leave their Labours to make Complaint of those that hurt them. Let your Eyes be their Watch, and your Power be their Defence. Shorten the Time of your own Priviledge as they have done in *England*. As you have made some severe Examples, make more; and Scorn to keep even a Servant that will stop the course of Justice, or refuse to pay his Debts, because he lives in the Family of a Lord or Commoner. Let all honest Gentlemen when in Grand-Juries they are enquiring into the Abuses of the Country, present all Extortions either of Pettifoggers, or Proctors, or Monopolizers, or Fore-stallers of Markets, or any that hurt your People in their Labours. And all Duties and Impositions for the publick Service, as much as may be, should be laid upon the Vices and Vanities of the Rich, not upon the Meat of the Poor; for if their Food be costly, their Wages must be high, and then their Manufactures must be dear, and the consequence of that will be, that foreign Merchants will under-sell you in foreign Markets, and your Poor be maintained by Rates or Starve.

THESE are the chief Points which at present

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sent have come into my Mind with respect to the *Persons* of the Poor and their Employment; but I *intimated* that there were other circumstantial Things that had considerable Effect upon the state of a Nation in this respect.

THERE is Vertue and Vice, the Notions of Religion, the way and humour of Living, and the kinds of Benefactions that good People incline to.

Vertue.

FIRST Vertue and Vice have great Effects in this Matter. Temperance and Sobriety and Diligence make poor Men Rich; and Luxury and Drunkenness and Idleness make rich Men Poor, and poor Men Beggars.

Religion.

THEN the notions of Religion have great Influence, and the Protestant Religion is much better suited to a trading Nation than the Popish. Popery hath too many Holy-Days, and Monks and Nuns, and expensive Vanities and idle Errands to take them off from their Business; whereas the Protestant Religion, insted of making New Gowns for the *Virgin Mary*, teaches us to clothe and feed our poor Brethren. It teaches us that Diligence in a lawful Calling, is a better way of serving God than travelling to Holy-Wells, or lighting up of Wax-Candles. In *France* therefore the Protestants were the chief Traders. In the *Swiss-Cantons*, the *Hans Towns* of *Germany* and *Holland*, the same Spirit appears visibly; and if our Country of *Ireland* was a Protestant Nation, I doubt not but it would help forward all Endeavours for these Improvements. Every thing

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thing therefore that shall be done towards the Conversion of the Natives, will be a step taken towards this good work.

Sumptuary Laws.

SUMPTUARY Laws have been tried in most Nations, and they chiefly respect, Habit, Building and Furnishing of Houses, and House-keeping. I believe those Laws seldom have much Effect, because hard to be Executed. But I have heard wise Men say, that tho' most are fond of the old English House-keeping, which was a little like our *Irish* Coshering, yet they thought it better for a Nation, that the People should spend their spare Money in Politeness, and Building, and neat Furniture of their Houses. Much eating feeds Diseases, wastes Time, and perishes in the Using; the other is more ornamental to a Nation, and more lasting, and employs more hands, and makes the Money circulate as briskly, and is a Stock in Hand for Children, or a time of Sickness.

BY these Improvements, and Manufactures well managed, I doubt not but the People may be so well provided, that we may not have many Complaints, much less any necessity for a Law to bind all Parishes by Rates, and to Impower Vestrys to Impose upon the People such Sessments, as are, in some Places in a neighbouring Nation, little less than a Land-Tax.

We have heard of the Abuses of select Vestries. We know what Encouragement it must give to idle People, when they shall be once secured that the Parishes must provide for them, and therefore I am not for such a Law being made.

BUT what other Method can be proposed,
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for something must be done? Orphans must be taken care of. Some old People are not able even to beg, and they must not Starve. What remedy can be proposed?

AND in answer to this, I think the Remedies must be different, according to the different Occasions.

Of Orphans and Foundlings.

THE Case of these is so sudden and pressing, that I take leave to propose it as an Expedient, that till a Vestry can be called, the Church-Wardens may be obliged to take care of them, and may have Power of adding the Charge to those necessary Expences of the Church, which the Law allows of.

AND when a Vestry hath met, and hath been able to find out no other means for their Maintenance, but have left them enter'd into their Parish Books, I propose that the Church-Wardens may have the same remedy for their after Disbursements, till the occasion ceases, or a Vestry make a contrary Order.

Of Town-Houses for Widows, &c.

FOR aged Widows, and decay'd Tradesmen, and other honest Poor, that are over-burden'd with Children, Town-Houses that belong to the Parish, and are disposed of by the Parish Officers are found of great Use. For the first Thing that pinches the Poor, especially in Market-Towns, is their Rent to their Landlords, and a poor Man is long in gathering that out of his Labours, when he grows Old, or hath a Wife and many Children.

IT is one of the best sort of Benefactions there-

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therefore, when charitable People either give or build such Houses, and many Parishes have built such to keep their Poor from wanting Weekly Allowance, by living Rent-free.

FOR the Encouragement either of Benefactors, or Parishes in the building of these, it seems reasonable, that they should have a Power of Erecting them upon waste Land by the Roads, or in Towns, and near Churches, where the Lives of the poor People that live in them may be under Inspection, but not in private Corners, where they may harbour Thieves, or bring home stoln Goods, and no-body see them.

WHERE any such House is built of Brick or Stone, large enough for a convenient Number of People, some one of the aged sober Tradesmen, may have, besides his Lodging a Room big enough for a Store-House for Wool, or Flax, or Hemp, or any other Material to be wrought by those that either do, or pretend to want Work. That may be the Towns Stock, and be under Government of the Vestry.

HE may have Wheels and Looms, and the Old may teach the Young, and Boys as well as Girls must Spin, as they do in *England*, till they are either fit for Servants or Apprentices, and they may be taught to Read and Write in them.

THE chief Manufacturers in a Town or Country cannot refuse to take off their Thread or Yarn, at the best Prices.

THE aged Widows that are in them may Nurse their Orphans, and as soon as they shall be able to do it, there will be work ready at hand for them.

THE same Widows can dress Meat for the whole

whole House, if the Rules of it shall be for their living in common, and by having common Fires, less Fuel will serve them.

SUCH publick Work-Houses, or Hospitals, as well as single Parish-Houses, are found to be of great Use in many places of *England*; and they have this Convenience besides, that tho' they want nothing in them, yet being under Government and Rules, people will make hard Shift, and keep from begging, for fear of being put into them.

Of Vagrants and Beggers.

AS they are the Nufance of all Countries, and abound in this, the Laws in being for confining the honest Poor to their own Parishes, and punishing Vagrants, ought carefully to be put in Execution. There is an excellent Abridgment of them, Printed by Order of the Justices of the Peace of *Antrim*, at their general Quarter Sessions at *Carrick-Fergus* in the Year 1707; and tho' some of them may be thought severe by imprudent Persons, I take them to be of absolute Necessity. Whipping young People for Begging, or Pilfering, or Idleness, stops their Vice in the beginning, and may keep them from the Gallows.

BESIDES such execution of Law will discourage young People from Marrying till they have a House to live in, and some probable way for an honest livelihood. Mankind naturally Multiplies so fast, that no Country can be able to bear up under the Burden of their Poor, if all great Boys and Girls should be suffered to Marry as soon as they have a mind, and have their several Parishes obliged by Law to maintain them; but the Laws against Begging and Stealing duly executed, will be a necessary and only just Restraint.

AND having said this on one side, I must in Justice add on the other. That all those Justices, who according to their bounden Duty, do execute the Laws, for the Satisfaction of their own Minds ought to take as that

much Pleasure in finding out Work that may be in readiness for those that are Honest and Industrious, and have fallen into Poverty by their Misfortunes. Make use of all those Ways of Improvement, and Provision that I have named, and find out more for them and they shall do it. For I take much more Pleasure in being their Advocate than their Accuser. They shall pave your Streets, drain your Bogs, make your Rivers Navigable, mend your Roads, build your Bridges, adorn your Churches, watch you while you Sleep, fight your Battles, and carry *You on their Backs*; but let them live, and have a little of the good of Life with us. When they have Spun fine Linen for Foreign Markets, let them not go Naked themselves; when they have plowed our Land, let them not be like the muzzled Ox that may not taste the Corn, and when they have lost their Limbs, or shed their Blood in Defence of our Country, let us not leave their Widows and Children uncared for to die in Ditches.

AND for the Manufacturers, I will add, that if in some Towns of great Trade, they should occasion more Poor than can be provided for by those means that I have named, it may be considered as a farther expedient, whether in such Towns the Manufacturers of any particular kind, may not be cast into such Companies, and subjected to such Rules, as may make them maintain their own Poor. For I have heard it complained of in *England*, I am afraid not without cause, that many Traders, for sake of the Money take more Apprentices than they want, and then drive them away by ill Usage: Many hire Servants and turn them away too lightly upon the Parish: And many pinch them in Wages and allow less than they can live upon, and the Parish Rates are forced to make up what is wanting for a Livelihood. By these means the Merchants themselves live high, and yet grow Rich of a sudden, get an Estate, and then leave the Place and Poor to be maintained by Rates at five or six Shillings in the Pound, which is more than the highest Land-Tax. But as Time and Care ripens all Things, it may

may be consider'd, whether casting them into compa-
nies in which Rich and Poor of the same Trade are of
the same Body, and bound to maintain their own
Workmen, may not make them Guards upon one a-
nother, and prevent that Inconvenience.

ALTHO' for Substance the course of Things
doth this of it self; for in such trading Towns, where
the Rates are highest, it is the Trader or Tenant him-
self, not the Landlord that pays them. The Land-
lord hath his Rent in full, and Rent perhaps for a
good House, where there was nothing but a Barren
Rock, or a Nettle Bush before. The Land both in
the Town, and several Miles round it, is set at double
Price. The Trader himself that pays the high Rate
is not hurt; for he pays it only for his House, and
perhaps Ground enough for a Horse and Garden;
but his stock pays nothing; insomuch, that where in
some few Places he may pay Three or sometimes Five
Shillings for his House, he does not pay Six-pence of
the clear Profit of his Trade; and therefore, not-
withstanding such high Rates, the Town is in Prospe-
rity, and when I have been in such Places, I have
observed their Houses well repair'd, their new Houses
rising up better than their old ones, their People well
Clad, and eating and drinking so well, that they
are generally envied even by the Country Gentry.

TRADE is Witchcraft and works Wonders; and
I should be glad to see our own People a little fonder
of it.

F I N I S.