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AN  
E S S A Y  
ON THE  
T R A D E  
OF THE  
NORTHERN COLONIES  
OF  
G R E A T B R I T A I N  
I N  
N O R T H A M E R I C A .

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE Subject of this Essay has engaged the attention of the whole British Nation for many years, both at home and abroad, and is now under the consideration of the Legislature; for which reason it is presumed, that a republication of this very seasonable account, which has been universally esteemed and approved of, may be as acceptable as it is interesting to the Public.

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AN  
ESSAY  
ON THE  
TRADE  
OF THE  
NORTHERN COLONIES, &c.

**I**N things which concern the interest of our native country in general, every person seems to have a right to give his sentiments; or at least may be permitted, modestly to examine the subject, and propose his advice; and although the question in debate, may, in general, be much better managed by abler hands, yet some hints, that are new, some thoughts which are useful,

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will be brought to light by several attempts, which had escaped the notice of the most sagacious writer. This is not only designed as an apology for the present attempt, but also to encourage others to endeavour to serve their country in the best manner they can, though they may not be able to do it with the same strength or delicacy as others; it being a poor excuse for not serving the public at all, because we are not able to do it so effectually as we may desire.

The Commerce of the British Northern Colonies in America, is so peculiarly circumstanced, and from permanent causes, so perplexed and embarrassed, that it is a business of great difficulty to investigate it, and put it in any tolerable point of light, so that it may be understood; this perhaps may be the cause why so little hath been attempted, and still less effected, in this intricate though very interesting inquiry.

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That which most particularly and unhappily distinguishes most of these Northern British Colonies, from all others, either British, or any other nation, is, that the soil and climate of them, is incapable of producing almost any thing which will serve to send directly home to the Mother Country.

Yet notwithstanding this fatal disadvantage, their situation and circumstances are such, as to be obliged to take off, and consume greater quantities of British Manufactures, than any other Colonies; their long cold winters, call for much cloathing, but their deep and lasting snows, make it impossible to keep sheep, and thereby procure wool to supply that demand. Again, the same long winters, prevent the labour of slaves being of any advantage in these Colonies; this, together with the almost endless countries lying back, yet to be settled and filled with

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inhabitants, makes hands so scarce, and labour so dear, that no kind of manufactories can be set up and supported in these Colonies: And thus it appears on one hand, that the inhabitants are obliged by necessity to take great quantities of goods from the Mother Country; so on the other, it is no less evident, that nature hath denied them the means of returning any thing directly thither to pay for those goods.

When these singular circumstances are fully known, and duly considered, it will easily be found what the cause is, that a much greater number of ships and smaller vessels are employed by the people of these Colonies, than of any others in the world: Unable to make remittances in a direct way, they are obliged to do it by a circuit of commerce unpractised by and unnecessary in any other Colony. The commodities shipped

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ped off by them are generally of such a nature, that they must be consumed in the country where first sold, and will not bear to be reshipped from thence to any other; from hence it happens that no one market will take off any great quantity; this obliges these people to look out for markets in every part of the world within their reach, where they can sell their goods for any tolerable price, and procure such things in return, as may serve immediately, or by several commercial exchanges, to make a remittance home.

Perhaps it may not be disagreeable to examine some branches of this commerce a little more minutely. We will begin with those Colonies most to the Northward, whose neighbouring seas being stored with fish, the inhabitants turn their industry to catching and curing of them; and when they are

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are become fit to ship, all that are called merchantable are sent directly to Spain, Portugal, and Italy, and there sold for money or bills of exchange, which are sent directly to England, except a very small part returned in the ships to America, in Salt, Raisins, Lemons, Pickles, &c. A considerable part of the fish yet remaining, which is unfit for the European markets, serves for feeding the slaves in the West-Indies; as much of this is sold in the English islands as they will purchase, and the residue sold in the French and Dutch Colonies, and in the end is turned into a remittance home.

The Colonies next to the Southward of those we have been speaking of, export lumber, horses, pork, beef, and tobacco (of a poor and unmerchantable kind which is raised in them;) of these commodities as  
much

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much is sold in all the English West-Indies as they will purchase, the remainder is sold to the French and Dutch, for molasses; this molasses is brought into these Colonies, and there distilled into rum, which is sent to the coast of Africa, and there sold for gold, ivory, and slaves; the two first of these are sent directly home; the slaves are carried to the English West-Indies, and sold for money or bills of exchange, which are also remitted to England.

As we still proceed further Southward into the next Colonies, we shall find their principal produce is wheat; which being made in flour, is exported, and brought into all the English ports in America: Yet after all these markets are supplied, a large overplus remains, which is sold to the Spaniards, French and Dutch, as much as is possible  
8 for

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for silver and gold, which is all remitted to Great Britain.

The most Southern Colonies on the continent, whose produce is chiefly tobacco, naval stores, and rice, find a market for their goods in the Mother Country, and thereby make their remittances in a more direct way, and consequently are less concerned in that tedious round of commerce to which the others are compelled to effect the same end.

Having given a brief and impartial view of the principal branches carried on by the Northern British Colonies, we will next endeavour to enquire, whether this commerce, taken together, or any branch of it, be detrimental to the true interests of Great Britain, or in any degree injurious to the  
British

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British Sugar Colonies, and shall then proceed to consider the consequences that must follow the restriction, limitation, or absolute prohibition of this commerce, or at least such parts of it as is carried on with foreign nations.

And first we shall acknowledge, that whatever business or commerce in any of the Northern Colonies interferes with, or is any way detrimental to the true interest, manufactures, trade or commerce of Great Britain, we reasonably expect will be totally prohibited. A certain illicit commerce, (not before spoken of) practised by some of the Colonies directly with Holland and Hamburg, we confess to be of this kind; a like confession is due, with respect to those ships that carry on the Fish trade to Spain, Italy, and Portugal, so far as they are concerned in importing any of the manufac-

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tories of these countries directly into the Colonies ; though this is supposed to be very little, if at all practised ; but in bringing Raisins, Lemons, and other perishable fruits directly from those countries into the Colonies, they cannot surely be liable to the same censure. For the inhabitants of the Colonies must be wholly deprived of these refreshments, if they are not received in this way, their perishable nature not admitting of the round-about transportation, first to Great Britain, and from thence to the Colonies ; although these are articles of little consequence in themselves, yet, as considerable profit is made by them, from a very small stock, this greatly encourages, and consequently increases the whole fish trade, which is a business of the utmost importance to all parts of the nation.

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By some it may be supposed, that the trade from the Colonies to the coast of Africa, is in some degree detrimental to the interest of Great Britain, as it interferes with the English trade directly thither, which is carried on principally with her own manufactures ; although this at first view appears to have some weight, yet, when it is considered that in this trade from the Colonies, not only the cargo sent out, but the ship's freight, Mariners wages, and all the profits of the voyage, is wholly converted into a remittance, or in other terms, into British manufactures, for the consumption in these Colonies, it will be found that it is not injurious, but proves in the end beneficial to the Mother Country.

Again, it may be said the tobacco shipped off from some of the Colonies defrauds the King's revenue, and militates with the Bri-

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tish commerce: The force of this objection will be removed, by considering that the coldness of the climate, and the barrenness of the lands in the Colonies where this tobacco is planted, is such, that it is impossible to produce any that will do to ship to Great Britain; for neither the quality of it will bear the inspection of that market, nor the value come near paying the duty: Yet, this tobacco, bad as it is, finds a tolerable market among the poor slaves in the West-Indies, who are not able to purchase better; from hence it appears, the revenue could not be bettered by this tobacco being sent home; and also, that the demand for merchantable tobacco is not lessened in any degree by this being used by the Negroes, who could by no means come up to the price of the other.

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We now come to view the commerce of the Northern Colonies, as it relates to, or is any way connected with the British Sugar Colonies. And here we shall by no means make the same concessions, which our duty to, and dependance on the Mother Country, obliged us to make in discussing the former part of this question; but shall here take it for granted, that every branch of business and commerce in the Northern Colonies, which is beneficial to them, although it may in a less degree be injurious to the Sugar Colonies, ought, notwithstanding that, to be countenanced and encouraged.

What is chiefly complained of, is a trade carried on by the Northern Colonies, with the French and Dutch Sugar Colonies, and this, it is said, is injurious to the British ones; this supposed injury must happen, either by raising the price of Northern produce

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duce in our West-India markets, or by lessening the demand for, and consequently the price of their own: As to the first, it is universally known that every kind of Northern produce, which finds any demand at all in our West-India markets, is continually carried thither in such quantities, as to keep the market always glutted; and, on a medium, every article is constantly sold as cheap there as the same article can be purchased at in the Colony where it is produced. And if all intercourse with the French and Dutch was intirely stopped, yet no greater quantities of Northern produce would be sent to the British Sugar islands than is now; for no body can suppose the Northern people so immoderately fond of trade as to send more goods to any market than can be sold there for the prime cost.

Nor is there more weight in the other part of this complaint, that the sale of their  
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own produce is hurt by this commerce; for the whole that is proposed and aimed at by the Northern Colonies, in this trade with the French and Dutch, is to put off their own produce for money or molasses, neither of which the British Sugar Colonies have to spare; except some molasses at Jamaica, the whole of which is constantly sold to the Northern people by the planters, at their own extravagant price.

But it is further said, that the French Colonies are enriched, and the English ones impoverished by this commerce: This objection comes with a bad grace from our brethren of the West-Indies, who are constantly supplied with every sort of Northern produce at fifty per Cent. less than the same kinds of goods are sold for to the French and Dutch, when at the same time, every  
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thing purchased in these English markets, costs fifty per Cent. more than the same articles are bought for amongst the French and Dutch; therefore, if one grows rich, and the other poor, it doth not arise from this commerce, but must come from other causes, which indeed could easily be pointed out, were not the task invidious.

Let us pursue this reasoning a little further, and inquire, whether if all intercourse with the French and Dutch was at an end, the British Sugar Colonies are capable of purchasing and making use of all the Northern produce now vended in the whole West-Indies? This question, the most sanguine planters, notwithstanding their good opinion of their own importance, must answer in the negative: What then is to be done with this overplus? Must the quantity  
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of fish, flour, lumber, horses, &c. produced in the Northern Colonies, be lessened much more than one half, until they be made to dwindle down into the diminutive size of these markets? Or can any succedaneum be pointed out, that will be more salutary upon the whole than the present practice? Again, upon a supposition that the whole of the Northern produce could be disposed of in the British West-Indies, are they able to furnish the Northern people with money, or any thing else that will enable them to make the same remittances to the Mother Country they now do? And which is the great and almost sole end that all their commerce aims at: Or, will not this be found vastly to exceed their ability, and that the British manufactures consumed in these Colonies, and the remittances made from thence annually, greatly exceed every  
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thing produced in the Sugar Colonies, excepting so much of their Sugar and Rum as will serve for their own remittances.

Upon the whole, how very unkind and ungenerous must it be, in the rich, proud, and overbearing planters of the West-Indies, to make use of all their weight and influence to limit and distress the trade, and thereby to cramp and impoverish the poorer Northern Colonies; when yet this conduct brings no real advantage to themselves, but only serves to shew forth a wanton display of the opulence and influence of a very few overgrown West-India estates.

From such a conduct, we might almost draw this untoward conclusion, that as these people are used to an arbitrary and cruel government

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vernment over slaves, and have so long tasted the *sweets* of oppressing their fellow creatures, they can hardly forbear esteeming two millions of free and loyal British subjects, inhabitants of the Northern Colonies, in the same light; and persuading themselves, that they are only to be considered as placed there for their own use, advantage, and emolument.

The last point to be considered, is the consequences that must follow upon the limitation, restriction, or absolute prohibition of this Northern commerce. And here, if we consult experience, the surest guide to right reasoning on such subjects, we shall find, that the act of the 6th of George the Second, commonly called the Sugar Act, laying so high a duty on all foreign Sugar, Molasses, and Rum, imported into the British

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tish plantations, amounts, in effect, to a prohibition, hath never in any degree increased the Royal Revenue, or brought any other real advantage to the Mother Country: Neither hath it been at all more beneficial to the British Sugar Colonies, at whose instance it was procured. But although no salutary consequences have any where followed this act, yet, many and great mischiefs and disadvantages, as well as corrupt and scandalous practices have flowed from it in all the English Colonies: The merchants, unwilling to quit a trade, which was in a great measure the foundation of their whole circle of commerce, have gone into many illicit methods to cover them in still carrying it on; while the Custom-House Officers have made a very lucrative job of shutting their eyes, or at least of opening them no farther than their own private interest required.

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It may perhaps be thought all this may be remedied, by appointing better methods, and creating other officers, that will effectually carry this act into execution; but this will, on trial, be found a mistake: This trade may be wholly stopt; but duties as high as are laid by this act, cannot by any means whatsoever be collected, being vastly greater than the trade itself can possibly bear; therefore, any method effectual for collecting this duty, will also be effectual for putting an intire end to the whole trade.

And if the design of the British legislature was, by this act, to increase the King's revenue, and not prohibit the trade, it might have answered that end much better, if, instead of six-pence, for every gallon of molasses, the duty had only been a half-penny upon

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upon each gallon, and in the same proportion for the other articles mentioned in the act; as the trade might have borne such a duty, it would have been cheerfully paid by the merchants, and would even at this rate, produce a far greater revenue yearly to the crown, than has ever yet been paid by all the Continent, in America; and perhaps greater than any higher duty will ever produce; for the higher the duty is, the less the trade will be, and therefore it is not unreasonable to suppose a small duty will yield more than a large one can do. And indeed, the whole exportation from these Colonies, consists in articles of so great bulk in proportion to the value, that when a ship is loaded with them, and makes a voyage, the hire of the ship, mariners wages and provisions, insurance, and other necessary charges, take so great a part of the returns,

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that very small profits only can be made in any branch of this trade; and therefore it is impossible it should bear any high duties.

If this matter should be pushed further, and an act of parliament obtained for putting a total stop to all trade between the Northern Colonies and the Spanish, French, Dutch, and Danish settlements, in America, such an act must be absolutely ruinous to these Colonies; at least for a great while, until time and necessity shall teach the people to make a thorough alteration in their whole domestic œconomy. And, if to this be added, a rigorous execution of those acts passed long ago, (though hitherto wisely winked at) by which the fish ships are prohibited to bring any thing but salt from Spain, Portugal, and Italy; both these measures

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tures taken together, must put an effectual end to the fishery: Being prevented by one from importing the small articles before mentioned, in their ships from Europe, all the clear profits of these voyages will be lost; and by the other, one sixth part of their whole fish, which used to be sold in the foreign markets in America, must now perish in their hands for want of buyers: These things will fall so heavy, that all those concerned in the fish trade, must sink under their weight; and consequently the whole fishing business be lost, and in it the principal resource of remittances in several of the most considerable Colonies.

The case of the other Colonies will not be much better, upon the measures taking place, for more than one half of their lumber, flour, horses, &c. usually exported, must

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must now be on hand for want of markets, and their ability to make remittances will be decreased in a much greater proportion; as it hath been by this foreign trade, and its consequent branches, they have hitherto been enabled to make the principal part of their returns to the Mother Country; receiving very little in their trade with the English islands, that ever can be made to serve that great purpose.

Another great mischief fatal to many, may with certainty be pointed out: The merchants throughout the Continent, who have been chiefly concerned in importing British manufactures into America, and who generally receive their goods on credit, when almost every means of making returns are taken from them, must fail in payment; and greater deficiencies must soon appear in the

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Colonies, than we have lately heard of in Holland and Hamburgh, and the loss, in the end, fall on the manufacturers and merchants of the Mother Country.

It requires no great share of sagacity to perceive that all the affairs of these Colonies must put on a very gloomy appearance, when twenty thousand seamen and fishermen are turned out of employ; when the shipping they used to navigate and improve, are all hauled up, and laid by as useless; when more than one half the hands, whose business it hath been to make lumber, flour, beef, pork, &c. must forsake their callings, and find out others, or starve; that these are not the wanton exaggerations of fancy, but sober and stubborn facts, with their train of melancholy consequences, that must as necessarily follow, as effects do their causes.

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Moreover, as the ability of these Colonies to pay for British manufactures, will be two thirds taken away, the people must content themselves, and make the best they can of the one third part they are still able to purchase; and those who are taken from the sea, the fishery, and the other branches of business before-mentioned, with multitudes besides, who will not be able by any means to procure such European goods as they want, must be compelled, by mere necessity, to employ themselves in such coarse and homely manufactories, as their ability and skill will enable them; supplying their necessities in the best manner they can by their labour; having this encouragement always before them, that practice will make them more expert in their several businesses: And as all kinds of cloathing must become extremely scarce and dear, this will encourage

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rage the husbandmen, in spite of all obstacles, to keep more sheep, in order to supply this demand; so that it is very possible, the inhabitants of these Colonies, in the next age, may find they are much bettered by the measures which have undone us who lived in this.

Before we leave this point, we may be permitted modestly to enquire, if any intelligent Briton, who is fully informed of all the circumstances attending this whole question, can possibly desire such limitations, restrictions, and prohibitions as have been before spoken of, should take place in these Colonies? Doth not Great Britain export to the Colonies on this Continent, in her own manufactures, nearly to the amount of two millions a year? Doth Great Britain pay more than half a million a year for all the

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unwrought materials she purchases abroad, and which go into these manufactures she sends to America? If these premises are true, doth there not rest in her hands the immense balance of one million and an half annually by her exportations to these Colonies? And is not this a greater profit than any other kingdom on earth draws from its Colonies? Although, for want of just information, some inaccuracies be found in these calculations; yet, when those are all removed, the balance in favour of Great Britain, by this commerce with her Colonies, will be found so vastly large, that it is not rational to believe any of her well-informed sons can ever desire that this trade, or any other which enables the Colonies to support and carry this on, should be any way obstructed, embarrassed, or prohibited, by any acts or laws of her own making; which, though

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though they may seem on the first view, to be calculated for other and better purposes; yet on a full and clear examination, will be found to have a direct tendency to weaken, and in the end, destroy this very beneficial intercourse between the Mother Country and her Colonies.

No advantages that can possibly accrue to the Sugar Colonies, and through them to Great Britain by these measures being pursued, can with justice be put in the balance, by any reasonable and considerate man, against the real and destructive mischiefs that must fall on the Northern Colonies by it; and, through them, on the Mother Country: Nor can any supposed increase of the Royal Revenue, arising from burdens and duties being laid on all, or any part of the commerce in question, be any adequate compensation to Great Britain, for the loss  
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she must thereby sustain in the exportation of her own manufactures. For it may be depended on as an axiom, That nothing limits the consumption of British manufactures in the Northern Colonies, but the people's ability to pay for them; and that whatever lessens that ability, will, in the same proportion, lessen the consumption.

An observation or two, borrowed from a modern Historian, writing about the Colonies of another nation, shall conclude these remarks. “ The maxim of the Spanish  
“ Court has always been to make their posses-  
“ sions in the Indies, beneficial to the  
“ Crown, rather than to the nation; and  
“ this is the true cause that they have been  
“ much less serviceable than they might  
“ have been to both. The want of a free  
“ commerce has checked their navigation,  
“ hindered

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“ hindered their increase of shipping; and  
 “ kept them poor and weak in the midst of  
 “ riches.—The only maxim, there-  
 “ fore, that can encourage trade, is making  
 “ every thing easy to those who are disposed  
 “ to engage in it, and let the profits of the  
 “ government be the last thing to be con-  
 “ sidered; for which they will not be less;  
 “ since the monarch of a rich people can  
 “ never be poor; and the crown, where  
 “ the people is poor, can never be long  
 “ rich.”

And, a short address to the Colonies  
 principally concerned, shall put an end to the  
 whole. First, let them all be persuaded  
 not to make any dependance on eluding the  
 force of such laws, as are already, or may  
 hereafter be made for limiting and restrain-  
 ing their commerce: Or rest their hope on  
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the indulgence of the Custom-House Of-  
 ficers, whose duty it is to see these laws ex-  
 ecuted; such methods are equally unjust  
 and ineffectual, expensive and odious; and  
 render the Colonies in which they are prac-  
 tised, obnoxious to the resentment of the  
 administration at home; and tend to justify  
 an extraordinary exertion of power, em-  
 ployed for carrying these laws into execu-  
 tion, which otherwise must have been highly  
 blame worthy.

Rather, let their whole expectations of  
 relief, depend altogether on a proper appli-  
 cation to the British Legislature: In order to  
 this, all the Colonies concerned ought to  
 unite, and appoint proper persons, who  
 may prepare a true state of the commerce

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of

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of these Colonies, noting the branches which are peculiar to each; let this be sent to their several agents, and by them jointly be laid before the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, in order to be examined and corrected, as need may require; and from thence, and with their recommendation, let it be brought before the Parliament, where doubtless it will be farther examined, and duly considered, and every branch of our commerce that coincides with the general interest of the nation, be countenanced and established; and if we practise any, which are found to have a contrary tendency, they must be given up and forsaken.

This,

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This, or something very like it, surely is the duty, as well as the interest of all these Colonies; and if their cause be good, as most certainly it is, what have they to fear from such a procedure? Or rather, what have they not to hope, from such an application and appeal to a King who delights in doing good to all his subjects; to a peerage, wise, and accurate, guided by the principles of honour and beneficence; and to a representative body, penetrating and prudent, who consider the good of the whole, and make that the measure of their public resolves.

N. B. Since the foregoing Essay came to the Printer's hands, the Writer has obtained accounts of the exports to North-America,

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and the West-India islands, by which it appears, that there has been some increase of trade to those islands as well as to North America, though in a much less degree.

The following extract from these accounts will show the reader, at one view, the amount of the exports to each, in two different terms of five years; the terms taken at ten years distance from each other, to show the increase, viz.

First Term, from 1744 to 1748, inclusive.

Northern Colonies. West India Islands.

1744—	£. 640,114	12	4	—	£. 796,112	17	9
1745—	534,316	2	5	—	503,669	19	9
1746—	754,945	4	3	—	472,994	19	7
1747—	726,648	46	5	—	856,463	18	6
1748—	830,243	16	9	—	734,095	15	3

Total, £3,486,268 2 2 £3,363,337 10 10

Difference, 122,930 10 4

£. 3,486,268 1 2  
Second

Second term, from 1754, to 1758, inclusive.

Northern Colonies. West-India Islands.

1754—	£. 1,246,615	1	11	—	£. 685,675	3	0
1755—	1,177,848	6	10	—	694,667	13	3
1756—	1,428,720	18	10	—	733,458	16	3
1757—	1,727,924	2	10	—	776,488	0	6
1758—	1,832,948	13	10	—	877,571	19	11

Total, £. 7,414,057 4 3 £3,767,841 12 11

Difference, 3,646,215 11 4

£. 7,414,057 4 3

In the first term, total for

the West-India Islands. 3,363,337 10 10

In the second term, ditto. 3,767,841 12 11

Increase only £. 0,404,504 2 1

In the first term, total for

the Northern Colonies. 3,486,268 1 2

In the second term, ditto: 7,414,057 4 3

Increase, £. 3,927,789 3 1

By

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By these accounts it appears, that the exports to the West-India Islands, and to the Northern Colonies, were in the first term nearly equal; the difference being only 122,936l. 10s. 4d. and in the second term, the exports of those Islands had only increased 404,504l. 2s. 1d. Whereas the increase to the Northern Colonies is 3,927,789l. 3s. 1d. almost FOUR MILLIONS.

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