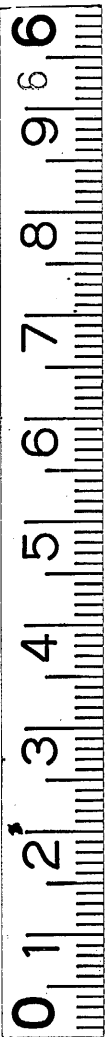


54-27



0400

THE
Woollen Labourer's
ADVOCATE.

M

BEING A

Just and compassionate Defence of their tragical Case, against their Masters cruel and detestable Practices of Oppression: Wherein the Author gives a dismal and deplorable Remonstrance of their intolerable and unparallel'd Grievance of Oppression, by their so much reducing the usual Value of their Labour, by Abatements and Truck, in Opposition to an Act of Parliament, made in the Reign of King *George* the First, that many of them have perished for Want in such publick Calamities as Dearth and Extremity of Cold; and many have been kill'd in attempting to relieve themselves by Violence; and Multitudes spend away their Lives in perpetual Drudgery and Want.

The intolerable Reduction of the Labouring Part of the Trade has not only been of very ruinous and fatal Consequence to the Labourer, but very destructive to the Trade it self, which has prodigiously declin'd, since the Masters have converted it into an Engine of Oppression, and made such cruel Havock of the Labourer, which may be justly deem'd to have provok'd the Heavenly Powers to commission our neighbouring Nations to invade it, who have been indefatigable, and very successful in their Attempts to deprive us of it, which has alarm'd the Nation with the Fears that its invaluable Trade will fall a Sacrifice to Foreigners: Therefore nothing is more certain than that 'tis the important Interest of *England* to exert it self to the utmost, for the Recovery of our very lamentable lost Trade.

By Charles Peard, of Barnestable in Devon.

London: Printed for the Author, and sold by *J. Dormer*, at the Printing-Office, the Green Door, in *Black and White Court* in the *Old Baily*. 1733. (Price Two-pence.)

J



THE
 Woollen Labourer's
ADVOCATE.

*Oppressors bent in wronging Innocence,
 When Will and Power conspire, ne'er want Pretence;
 No Argument from Reason draw,
 Their Will's their Reason, and their Pow'r their Law.*

I Could no longer stand a silent Spectator of that dismal Tragedy, acted especially by the Masters of the Woollen Manufactory of the Western Parts of this Kingdom, without offering Violence to the Dictates of my own Conscience, not only by reducing their Labourers poor diminutive Wages by Abatements, but in compelling them by their Necessities, to accept

[4]

of their Woollen Manufactories as Money for their Labour; that, when sold, they receive but half their Charges for them; and not only Woollen, but Linnen, &c. and some Masters impose upon their Servants all manner of Hucstery Wares, which they esteem as Cash; others obtrude Malt of a very bad Quality upon their Labourers at the Price of the best, and yet accounted as ready Money.

There are others of these Masters who purchase Houses, when the Overtures of a cheap Bargain presents, and lets them to their Servants at a hard Rent. Others again empower their Labourers with Tickets of Credit, their Value to be receiv'd in Liquor, from such Publick-Houses as they supply with Malt; and what Payments they make with Cash, is generally in Gold, which their Servants exchange for Silver at such Publick-Houses which is deposited in the Hands of one of the Number, and each of them are obliged to spend the Value of a Pint of Liquor for drawing the Money, which is often a Snare to further Expences: And in the Season of the Year, some Masters oblige their Servants to make their Hay, without a Recompence; and some sell their cast-off Cloaths to their Servants at very exorbitant Prices.

This trucking Affair is thus managed, that Hucstery Wares, Ale-Tickets, and Malt, are esteemed

[5]

esteemed as ready Money, and are weekly deducted out of the Value of their Servants Labour; but for Woollen, Linnen, cast-off Cloaths, &c. the Value of the Quantities which are not equally imposed, are subtracted out of their Weekly Earnings, and entered on a Book which their Servants keep for that Purpose. Some Masters enter but One Shilling, and they are but few, and others Eighteen-pence, Two Shillings, Two Shillings and Six-pence, and others Three, and Four Shillings, and some enter the whole Value of Labour, and these Entrances are continued till they amount to such a Sum as will answer their Occasions, and then they receive and sell them; and when some of these Labourers have receiv'd their Woollen Truck from their Masters, their Mistresses have bought it, and truck'd it again to many other of their Servants; and after they have purchased it with Cash for half its Charge, some of the Combing Artificers receive not their Ballance of Cash till the Period of a Year. Now 'tis to be remark'd, that these Masters in the mean while deal upon their Servants Deficiencies: The white Wooll-Combers in the West comb considerably above the Standard Weight, and yet are paid for no more than just Weight; and the miserable poor Spinner spins the like in Quantity, which their Masters carry on under the Pretence, that they impose so much Weight, that it may equal the Quantity of
Oil

[6]

Oil which they mix and comb with the Wooll; but their Masters ridiculously betray their Design in doing it, that it was only to satisfy their Avarice, by selling only sixteen Ounces for a Pound to the Buyer.

All these Measures are readily comply'd with, as if they were absolute Sovereigns, which are introduced by the irresistible Authority of their Employment, which these Labourers cannot obtain without an absolute Submission to their Masters Terms of reducing their Wages, for an obstinate Refusal would entirely debar them of Bread, whereby some of these Artificers are wholly debar'd of Money to purchase their Family Necessaries in the Market, every way to their Advantage. These cruel Measures are like to entail on them and their Posterity an intolerable Yoke, except some unexpected Occurrence intervene for their Relief.

What dismal Objects here I beheld among these Mechanicks, in whose Countenances were legible Characters of Want of human Sustenance, and all other Marks of Poverty visibly display'd to common Observation, their Children being in Rags, with thin Jaws and hungry Looks, crying for Bread, and their Parents in Tears, having none to give them, and some lie groaning under incurable Disorders, produced by extreme Abstinence, and Severity of Cold, which has put a Period to many of their miserable Lives. Many have

[7]

have left their Families to the Care of their respective Parishes, else they must have perished with them.

There was never such a Scene of Misery appear'd upon the Stage of the World since its Creation amongst the Industrious, as there is among these laborious Artificers in the West: What a horrid Inversion is this of the very Order of GOD and Nature, which has allow'd to the Diligent a comfortable Subsistence for the Encouragement of Industry, with an Overplus to provide for the Calamities of this Life, as Sicknes and Old Age, and to help such as are incapacitated for Labour, as the Scripture intimates, *Prov. x. 4, 5. But the Hand of the Diligent maketh rich. He that gathers in the Summer is a wise Son. Prov. vi. 8. Provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathers her Food in the Harvest. He that steals, let him steal no more, but let him labour with Hands, that he may give to him that needeth.*

No other Effect could be expected from the Idle and Unactive, had they a Capacity of Wages, according to the Words of Solomon, *The idle Soul shall suffer Hunger, and the Sluggard shall be cloathed with Rags.* But for the Diligent to reap no other Fruit of his Labour than what appertains to an Idler, is an intolerable Pervertion, and the greatest Discouragement of Industry.

This

This is the deplorable Case of these Labourers who have Families, they are enslaved to the worst of Tyranny, excessive Labour, and extream Want, which is consummate Misery. These Masters inherit a large Portion of the Spirit of *Caligula*, that impious Emperor of *Rome*, who declar'd, that he did not care, as long as Things went well in his Days, if the whole World were in Flames after his Decease, which has brought the lamentable Dying Trade under a popular Odium, which, when justly managed, honourably flourish'd, to the entire Satisfaction of the Nation, especially now being not only become a Nuisance to the Commonwealth, by the Multiplication of Poor, as the Parish-Books are an ample Testimony thereof, to their Masters eternal Shame, that Gentlemen and others should contribute to the Relief of such Poor, which their cruel Avarice have made so.

Being thus oppress'd by the Masters cruel Usage, it has drove divers of their Servants to pillage their Neighbours, as a Weaver in the West freely confess'd he was guilty of the last long hard Winter, when his Master insulted him, in this his witty and smart Reply, *Master, I cannot live by your Employ, for I have begg'd my Bread, and stole my Wood, to keep my Family from starving.* 'Tis usual with these poor miserable People to cut their Fuel out of the Hedges, and likewise
by

by exciting many Tumults that have issued in the Destruction of many valuable Goods, and the spilling much human Blood, the Resentments of starving being so terrible, it has precipitated them into such desperate Undertakings, that they have chose rather to run the Hazzard of dying any other Death than that of Hunger, agreeable to the Words of the wise Man, *Oppression will make a wise Man mad.*

The Blood of these famishing Labourers will one Day be required at their Masters Hands, as sure as there is a GOD in Heaven, who will not hold them guiltless, it being owing to their rigorous Encroachments on their Livelihood. How evidently deplorable soever the Case be of these innumerable Company of Artificers, who have made the Heavens ring with the Crys of their intolerable Oppressions, yet their Masters have been so far from being deterr'd from their pernicious and destructive Practices, altho' they have been of such ruinous and fatal Consequence, that instead thereof they have enlarged them, in an audacious Opposition to an Act of Parliament, made in the Reign of King *George I.* for the Prevention of such formidable Evils; 'tis to be remark'd, with the uttermost Abhorrence and Detestation, that these Masters ever introduc'd their Abatements and Truck in such publick Calamities as Dearth, and Extremity of Cold, and when the Demands for their Pieces
B were

[10]

were relaxed, it being then the most advantageous Opportunity for practising their tyrannical Cruelty; and 'tis very lamentable to hear how these Masters insult their Servants, when labouring under the greatest Calamities, as if it were not sufficient to starve them. And when they bring their finish'd Work, like Ghosts more than Men, after they have waited the greatest Part of a Day for Admission into their Master's Presence, in order to their surveying it, 'tis with such a profound Submission, as if what Money they earn'd by extream Drudgery, were no other than a charitable Distribution.

'Tis easily demonstrated, that these Labourers are under greater Servitude than the *Israelites* were under that Arch Oppressor *Pharoah*, who stands on Sacred Record, who only exercised them with hard Labour, and which was daily perform'd within the Space of twelve Hours, and they wanted not human Sustainance to the full, to enable them to discharge it, as their Complaint clearly demonstrates, when they were pinched with Hunger in the Wilderness; *Would to GOD we were back to the Flesh-Pots of Egypt, where we had Bread to the full.* 'Tis true, *Pharoah* was charged by the inspir'd Writer with the Cruelty of compelling the *Israelites* to make Brick without Straw, and it was only when *Moses* appeared for their Deliverance from *Egyptian* Bondage, but he was not charged with that monstrous Barbarity of forcing them

[11]

them to make it without Bread, I mean without a Sufficiency to enable them to perform their Task without pining Hunger, or pinching Want, which these poor Artificers suffer in the midst of their daily Hours of Labour, altho' usually protracted to sixteen Hours, and often more; and sometimes it continues all Night, and some work till Nine or Ten o'Clock on *Saturday* Nights.

These poor Artificers have no more allow'd them to support a Family of five or six in Number, than will but barely suffice a single Person; were *Pharoah* now living, he would blush to hear of such unparallel'd Cruelty committed in a Christian Country, it being such a monstrous Reverse of Humanity itself, whereby they are far from being upon a Level with the *Negro* Slaves, whose daily Hours of Labour are not exceeding twelve, and are allow'd sufficient Diet, when dear as well as cheap, to enable them to perform it, and they desist from their Labour on *Saturdays* at Noon.

I dare affirm that their Case is harder than the chained Galley-Slaves, who sometimes toil hard when they are at Sea, but when they return, they have Respite from their Slavery, and they want not a sufficient Allowance of Food to sustain them under their Hardships: But an Objection arises, that they are chained Slaves, and their Slavery continues till the Term of their Lives expires.

[12]

In this Respect there is but little Difference between them and these poor Slaves of the Woollen Manufactory, who are chained by their extream Necessities so fast to their Labour, that if at any time they take the Liberty of slipping from it, they are corrected with greater Want, from which severe Servitude they are not discharged till the Term of their Lives expire.

I further assert, that they are in a worse Condition than the Brutal Rank, whose Owners furnish them with Provender agreeable to their Toil; but these poor Mechanics, when their Bodies are reduc'd to a Skeleton, through extream Labour, and much Want, have no Relief afforded them, till Death closes their Eyes; so that they linger away their Lives in perpetual Drudgery and Want.

I knew a Wooll-Comber drop in his Labour, thro' Want, the last hard Winter, in a Town near fourteen Miles from *Exon*, a Town that is very infamous for that diabolical Art of Oppression, and a pestilential Example to others: It is arriv'd to such a Proficiency in that black Art, that 'tis a Wonder the Earth doth not open, and avenge the Wrongs of the Oppressed, or that Fire from *Heaven* doth not espouse their Cause, and quickly consume it. I am struck with Astonishment, when I seriously reflect on the Conduct of these Masters, how they can
imagine

[13]

imagine to rise their sinking Trade, by committing the worst Rapine, in plundering their poor famishing Labourers, it being the readiest way to sink it irrecoverably, for the righteous GOD will bless no Undertaking but what is consonant to his sacred Will, and I am sure their Proceedings are infinitely remote from it, and calls aloud for further Vengeance to be poured down upon them and their Trade.

The Country is sometimes alarm'd with the Crys of Robbers infesting the Roads, but these Masters are not worthy to be compar'd to them; they may, thro' the Straitness of their Circumstances, rob some Gentlemen and able Tradesmen of their Money, which can little affect them, and perhaps drop a Piece in their Rounds to some poor Object that craves it from them, and, peradventure, in some short time after they have been constrained to recompence the Plaintiff's Losses by suffering a shameful Death. But their Masters rob great Numbers of indigent People, whom they have made Objects of Charity, in open Defiance of both divine and human Laws, being empowered by their Labourers utter Incapacity for the prosecuting the Act of Parliament, made in the Reign of King *George I.* for the entire redressing of all their Grievances, by their having an absolute Dependance upon their Masters for their Employment to subsist themselves and Family; for should the Labourers enforce the Act of
Parliament,

[14]

Parliament, the Masters would immediately dismiss them from their Services; whereby they would be forced to quit the Place of their Nativity, and live in Exile, for they would all be treated as Traytors to their Commonwealth of Oppression, so that the Act of Parliament is, as it were, invalided.

Just as the Act of Parliament pass'd, these Masters used this Artifice to avoid its Penalty, viz. To lend their Servants Money to make a Purchase of their Trucking Wares, which they quickly perceiv'd to be needless, and then left that Practice, having Room enough without it: And when these Masters declar'd their Sentiments of the Act, 'twas with a kind of Triumph, having baffled the Legislative Power, which has had no other Effects, than the exasperating their avaricious Inclinations, and emboldening them to extend their oppressive Measures further, which the poor Labourers most sensibly feel, their Masters being assur'd that they are, as yet, out of the Reach of human Laws to obstruct their arbitrary Proceedings; and as for Divine Laws, they do not regard them, but act as if they had no Superior to themselves to be accountable to hereafter.

All Ages since the Creation of the World, have abounded with such human Monsters, which DAVID accurately describes to be the worst of Men-Eaters, *Psal. xiv. 4. They eat up my People as they eat up Bread, gradually, whilst living.* This is worse than barbarous,
for

[15]

for Cannibals will not devour one another, neither will Beasts, Birds, or Fish of Prey, for they first kill them; but these Masters eat up their poor Labourers alive, by their repeated Acts of Oppression, and it will be found to be so, when GOD makes Inquisition for Blood, as 'tis express'd in Scripture Language: And not a few, but Multitudes, have made their Exit, and fell a Sacrifice to their Masters insatiable Avarice, especially in such publick Calamities as Dearth and Extremity of Cold; and such as were of infirm Constitutions, must of Consequence be the principal Sufferers under the shocking Trials, who have made a quick Retreat to the silent Grave, *where Oppression ceaseth, and the Weary are at Rest,* as the Scriptures mention.

Least any should think I have been too harsh in my Animadversions on those bold and daring Sinners, I shall produce some more Texts of Scripture, to demonstrate the Nature of these cruel, human Monsters, one is, *Prov. xxx. 14.* " There is a Generation
" whose Teeth are as Swords, and their Jaw-
" Teeth as Knives to devour the Poor from
" off the Earth, and the Needy from among
" Men." Another is; " They pluck the
" Skin from off them, and their Flesh from
" their Bones; who also eat the Flesh of my
" People, and see their Skin from off them,
" and they break their Bones, and cut them
" in Pieces, as for the Pot, and as Flesh for
" the

[16]

"the Caldron." This is the monstrous Production of Avarice, which the Apostle PAUL justly stiles the *Root of all Evil*. Here is the highest and most astonishing Instance of its malignant Nature, in extending its Venom to the very Death of our LORD and SAVIOUR.

Before I conclude this melancholy Subject, 'tis requisite to inform such who are unacquainted with the Weekly Value of these Artificers Labour, that a Weaver in the West, singly consider'd, receives Three Shillings and Six-Pence *per Week*, free from all Deductions; a Wooll-Comber Five Shillings, and a Spinner Eighteen-Pence: From hence, I say, 'tis impossible that foreign Labourers of the Woollen Manufactory should work for lesser Prices than those of our own Nation, tho' their Masters industriously suggest so, as a Subterfuge to evade the heinous Charge of Guilt of Oppression justly brought against them, which they cannot defend without running themselves into a Labarynth of Absurdities, and the more expose the Invalidity of their Assertion; were they in the like State of cruel Servitude, they would very warmly oppose such an Affirmation, and bitterly exclaim against those that have subjected them to the worst of Slavery: But what will not some Men say to support their darling Interest? It must be confess'd, that all these Measures are not equally impos'd throughout the Kingdom, neither is there
any

[17]

any Part, in one Respect or other, entirely free from its Contagion; but the Western Parts (which are the Principal for Trade) exceeds any other Part, which have been attended with Blood and ruinous Confusion; not only destructive to the Labourers, but to the Trade itself, which has prodigiously declin'd since the Introduction of these cruel Measures; and it may be justly said, That it has provok'd the Heavenly Powers to commission our neighbouring Nations to invade it, who have been indefatigable, and very successful in their Attempts to deprive us of it, by their obtaining many of our Labourers, who have been driven, by the Violence of Oppression, into their Territories, on Search for Bread, who, to relieve themselves, have led their foreign Masters into the Secrets of our Trade, which has likewise encouraged them to use all the Artifice imaginable to procure as much as possible of our *British* and *Irish* Wooll; so that now, by the great Quantities they have already engross'd, they are enabled to furnish our foreign Dealers with such Woollen Manufactories as our own Nation always us'd to supply them with; their Wooll alone being very unfit to manufacture such Peices, which ours is incomparably adapted to, so that our Rivals are now in as good a Capacity of carrying on the Trade as ourselves, which has justly alarm'd the Nation with the Fears that our invaluable Trade will fall a Sacrifice to
C Foreigners,

Foreigners, it being indisputably the chief Support of the Nation.

The vigorous Invaders of it want no Arguments to persuade our own oppress'd Labourers to instruct them in our Trade, and are ever ready to bribe such as are disposed to betray it into their Hands, by the Exportation of our Wooll into their Provinces. Then again, the foreign Dealers receive Intelligence from their Factors here of the Value of the Sink of Wages, and have speedily return'd their Factors Orders to deduct the Value out of their Masters Prices, as indisputable Terms of dealing with them. In Concurrence with the great Diminution of the Trade, by a foreign Invasion of it, has not only been a very shocking Loss to the Nation, but a very grievous Charge, by the Multiplication of Poor.

'Tis worthy of Note, That there are no such Measures to be found in any other Trade as in the Woollen Manufactory, for should all others Masters substitute such Measures into their Trades, the Nation could not long subsist, except the Value of Provisions were reduced answerable to the Value of Labour; then Farmers must unavoidably become insolvent Tenants, and would quickly drop their Leases, without their Landlords sink proportionably the Value of their Estates, and then *England* wou'd be incapacitated, and not able to defend herself against contending Powers. 'Tis certain, that allowing the

the Labourer a competent Subsistence is the readiest Course to enrich and aggrandise the Nation, and make it formidable to its Enemies; for it must be consider'd, that Servitures are the Body of the Nation, and are very considerably the greatest Consumers of its Product.

Before I conclude, I can't but smile to remark how some of these Master's have been chequ'd in their full Career of Oppression, by being reduc'd and forc'd to labour for their Bread with their own Yoke upon their Neck, with a mortify'd Countenance, having the Badge of their Trade, that is, thin Jaws, and hungry Looks, and durst not exclaim against it, how galling soever.

Countrymen, all that I can do for your Relief is, to plead your Cause, and condole your Calamities; in the mean time, I exhort you to forbear attempting any further to relieve yourselves by Violence, having often proved fatal, and always in vain, it being impracticable for you to redress yourselves by Force, therefore endeavour to be patient under your cruel Bondage, for 'tis the higher Powers only can deliver you from it; and altho' your Oppressors have sadly gall'd your Neck with their heavy Yoke, labour to pity them, for they are but entailing a Curse upon themselves and their Posterity; consider the Saying of St. GREGORY, *That if Dives was sent to Hell for not giving Bread to the Poor, where shall he go that takes it from them?*

Lastly,

[20]

Laſtly, I exhort you all to maintain a loyal Senſe towards your Royal Sovereign King GEORGE II. and ever pray that the Crown may long fit eaſy on his royal Head, and that he may never want a Royal Off-ſpring to wear it as long as Sun and Moon endures ; and petition him for your Redreſs, and peradventure the Meaſures of your Oppreſſors will be ſtopt, and you and your Poſterity may enjoy Bread to the full, which is the earneſt Deſire of him who is aſſuredly your Well-wiſher.

FINIS.