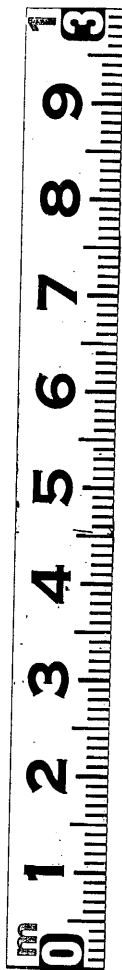


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A
DISCOURSE

Consisting of MOTIVES
FOR

The Enlargement and Freedom
OF
TRADE.

Especially

That of CLOTH, and other Woollen
MANUFACTURES,

Engrossed at present

Contrary to { the Law of Nature,
the Law of Nations,
and the Lawes of this Kingdome.

By a Company of private men who stile themselves
Merchant-Adventurers.

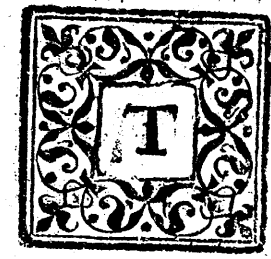
The First Part.

April. 11. 1645 Imprimatur,
NA. BRENT.

LONDON,
Printed by Richard Bishop for Stephen Bowtell, and are to be sold
at his shop at the signe of the Bible in Popes-Head Alley. 1645.

To the Right Honourable the
LORDS and COMMONS in
PARLIAMENT assembled.

Right Honourable,



THE scope and substance of this following Discourse, is to demonstrate by clear and unanswerable Arguments, the illegality of the Incorporation of those who scribe unto themselves the names of Merchants Adventurers, though they Trade but unto two Townes only, and those hard by: and to shew further how their Patent trencheth upon the native Rights of the freeborn subject: which Patent hath been often complained of and clamored against from time to time, as an universal greivance to Town and Countrey, tending to the diminution of Trade, and of all sorts of Manufactures at home, and to the dis-repute of the Policy of this Nation abroad, the sayd Patent being accounted no lesse amongst all people, then a Monopoly,

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a word odious all the world over. This Incorporation hath bin like an Ulcer upon the Body politique of this Kingdome a long time, which hath beene often rub'd and lanc'd, yet it clos'd againe and gatherd more corruption then formerly, and now requires a greater cure then ever.

Therefore in all humblenesse it is prayed, that this Honourable Court and highest Councill of the Kingdom, who have already done so many glorious things for the publike Liberty, Rights and Immunities of the free borne Subject, would be pleased to peruse the ensuing Discourse, and poise the weight of the Reasons, Arguments, and proofes therein produced, which are derived from true fountaines, and so to doe therein what in their high wisdom and justice they shall think expedient for the redresse of such a Nationall grievance.

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A DISCOURSE

Consisting of MOTIVES

FOR

The Enlargement and Freedome of Trade,

Especially

That of CLOTH and other Woollen Manufactures,

Engrossed at present

Contrary to { the Law of Nature,
the Law of Nations,
and the Lawes of this Kingdome,

By a Company of private men who stile themselves
Merchant-Adventurers.



The Terrestriall Globe is cut out into Islands and Continents, both which are created to be a Mansion for men; and although they be severd by the work of Nature, yet they may be said to be joynd together by Commerce, which is that great link of humane Society, that golden chaine which unites all Nations; And though the Earth and Sea be of themselves,

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elves, as differing Elements as any of the rest, yet the Divine Providence by a speciall foresight hath so indented as it were, and embosomd them one in the other, that they make but one perfect Globe, to render them thereby more apt for the mutuall Commerce and Negotiation of Mankinde.

Of all parts of the Earth, *Islands* (which by the violence of the Sea are torne off from the rest of the world) stand most in need of *Commerce*, as well for the encrease of shipping, whereon their security and strength doth principally depend, as for divers other advantages conducing to wealth, to the expence of the superfluities of their owne native Commodities, and the importation of forreigne, to intelligence, and prevention of dangers, and lastly to the improvement of civility and knowledge.

And this our Island (for ought any one knoweth) might have remained to this day in her first simplicity and rudenesse, had she not refined and civilized her selfe by *Commerce* with those of the next *Continent*, and they of the next *Continent*, had they not crossed the *Alps* to *Italy*; and the *Italians* themselves, had they not had practise with the *Levantine*s, and other Eagle-eyed Nations who dwell nearer the Sun rising.

Amongst the *Islands* of the old world, *Great Britain* hath beene cried up for the biggest, and best replenished with those Commodities that are most materiall

A Discourse for free Trade.

materiall and usefull for the life of man, whereof she hath not only a competency for her selfe, but enough to spare her neighbours, which by way of surplusage she useth to disperse to most Countreys, whereby she beates a generall Trade, and makes rich returns with her owne home-growne goods: which Trade may be termed *the prime sinew*, and *chiefest support both of her strength and riches*.

Now there is nothing so advantagious and commendable in a Trade, as *Community* and *Freedom*; for in this particular (as in most things else) the *topique* Axiome holdeth, *Bonum quod communius, est melius*; the more common and diffusive a good thing is, the better it is.

The most substantiall and staple Commodity that our Countrey affords for the maintenance of Trade is *Cloth*, with divers Manufactures besides arising from *Wooll*, which makes other Nations call *Wooll*, *Englands Golden Fleece*: and (questionlesse) the principall reason why in time of Parliament our Judges (who are the Oracles of the Law) do sit in the House of Peeres upon *Wooll-Sacks*, was to put them in minde of preserving and advancing the Trade and Manufactory of *Wooll*: Therefore to barre any freeborn subject from the exercise of his Invention and Industry, to convert this universall native Commodity to his best advantage at home, or abroad, is to deprive him of part of his birth-right,

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birth-right, and of that which God and Nature ordaind for his subsistence ; and not only so, but it is to set a mark of strangeness, or rather, of a kinde of slavery upon him in his own Countrey.

Hence it may well be inferrd, that for one Company, or Incorporation to arrogate to it selfe, and to engrosse the manning, expence, and vending of this necessary intimated Commodity, is an injury to publike right, and no lesse then a meere *Monopoly*: And it is held an undoubted principle of State, that there is nothing more pernicious and destructive to any Kingdome or Common-wealth, then *Monopolies*, which like *Incubusses* doe suck the very vitall spirits, and drive into one veine that masse of blood which should cherish the whole body: Nor doth this word *Monopoly* (according to its true Etimology) referre only to one individuall person, but also to any one Town, where many men are incorporated or aggregated into one body, who have hooked to themselves the sole exercise and emolument of such and such a trade, whereby they only enrich themselves, and admit no others to enter into their Society without some exaction.

The fellowship and Charter of them that terme themselves *Merchant-Adventurers* (under favour) is a *Monopoly* of this kinde, and is repugnant both

1. To the Law of Nature,
2. To the Law of Nations,
3. To the positive Law of the Land.

First,

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First, it is repugnant to the Law of Nature, in regard that Wooll, and the draping and merchandizing thereof, being the Cape Commodity where-with Nature, *the handmaid of God Almighty*, hath furnished this Island, and wherein she hath given every freeborn Inhabitant equall interest, as matter for his industry to work upon; Surely she never intended that a thin handfull of men, a small contemptible number in comparison of the whole (being but a few trading members, though their Company consists of a greater number) should appropriate to themselves the disposing and venting of the two thirds of this generall grand Commodity, as by diligent computation the *Merchant-Adventurers* are observed to doe.

Secondly, it is against the Law of Nations; in regard that no Monarchy or Kingdom, whether elective or successive, nor any other Commonwealth or State throughout *Europe* hath the like example. What a hubbub would there bee in *France*, if the vent of Wines were passed over to some peculiar men to furnish *England* withall? or in *Spaine*, or *Naples*, were the fruits and oyles of the one, and the silks of the other (being their prime Commodities) engrossed by a few hands? But admit there were some extraordinary restraints in trading to remote Countreys, and that there were joynt stocks, it maketh nothing to justify the Company of *Merchant-*

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Adventurers. We know our East-India Company* here, and in *Holland*, have limitations, and have a Bank of their owne, because the Purfes of private men cannot extend to fet forth Ships for making of such long, adventurous, costly, voyages. But the Trade which is beaten by our Merchant-Adventurers to *Hamburgh* and *Rotterdam*, is of another nature, for it is hard by home, and as it were at our doores, and may be performed by Ships of any seize, the transfrication being short; so that though they seeme to arrogate soly to themselves the names of Merchant-Adventurers, there are none that deserve it lesse, their hazard being so small, and their voyage so short.

Thirdly, this Incorporation is repugnant to the positive Lawes of this Land, as manifestly appears by *Magna Charta*, *Petition of Right*, *Statutes of Monopolies*, and severall others; but for brevity sake let it suffice to insert here that famous Statute which was enacted by one of our wisest Kings, *Henry* the seventh, which continueth yet in full force unrepealed, and runnes thus.

22. H. 7.
c. 6.

To the discreet Commons in this present Parliament assembled, sheweth unto your discreet wisdomes the Merchant-Adventurers inhabiting and dwelling in divers parts of this Realm of England out of the City of London,

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London, that where they have their passage, resort, course and recourse with their goods, wares, and merchandize, in divers coasts and parts beyond the Sea, as well into Spain, Portugall, Britain, Ireland, Normandy, France, Civill, Venice, Dansk, Eastland, Freezland, and other divers and many places, regions, and countreys, being in league and amity with the King our Sovereign Lord, there to buy and sell, and make their Exchanges, with their said goods, wares, and merchandizes, according to the Law and Custome used in every of the said Regions and places; and there every person freely to use himselfe to his most advantage, without exaction, fine, imposition, or contribution, to bee had or taken of them, or of any of them, to, for, or by any English person, or persons. And in semblable wise they before this time have had, used, and of right owen to have, and use their free passage, resort, and recourse into the coasts of Flanders, Holland, Zealand, Brabant, and other places thereto nigh adjoyning under the obedience of the Arch-Duke of Burgoyne: In which places the univiersall Marts be commonly kept and holden foure times in the year, to the which Marts all English men, and divers other Nations in time past have

used to resort, there to sell and utter the commodities of their Countreys, and freely to buy again such things as seemed them most necessary and expedient for their profit, and weale of their Countreys, and parts that they be come fro, till now of late, that by the Fellowship of the Mercers and other Merchants and Adventurers dwelling and being free within the City of London, by confederacy made among themselves, of their uncharitable and inordinate covetousnesse, for their singular profit and lucre, contrary to every English mans Liberty, and to the Liberty of the said Part there, which is, that every person of what Nation that he be of, should have their free liberty there to buy and sell, and make the commutations with the wares, Goods, and Merchandizes at their pleasure, have contrary to all Law, Reason, Charity, Right, and Conscience, amongst themselves, to the prejudice of all English men, made an Ordinance and Constitution, that is to say, That no English man resorting to the said Part, shall neither buy nor sell any goods, wares, or merchandizes there, except he first compound and make fine with the said Fellowship, Merchants of London, and their said Confederates, at their pleasure, upon

upon paine of forfeiture to the said Fellowship, Merchants of London, and to their Confederates, of such merchandizes, goods, or wares, so by him bought, or sold there: Which fine, Imposition, and Exacion, at the beginning when it was first taken, was demanded by colour of Fraternity of Thomas Becket Bishop of Canterbury, at which time the said fine was but the value of an old Noble sterling, and so by colour of such feigned holinesse, it hath beene suffered to be taken for a few yeares passed, and afterwards it was encreased to an hundred shillings Flemish, and now it is so, that the said Fellowship and Merchants of London take of every English man, or yong Merchant, being there at his first comming, forty pound sterling for a fine, to suffer him to buy and sell his owne proper Goods, wares, and Merchandizes that he hath there: By occasion whereof, all Merchants, not being of the said Fellowship and Confederacy, withdraw themselves from the said Parts, whereby the Woollen Cloth of the Realm, which is one of the greatest Commodities of the same, by making whereof the Kings true Subjects be put in occupation, and the poore people have most their living, and also other divers Commodities

dities of divers and severall parts of this same Realm is not sold ne uttered as it was in times past, but for lack of utterance of the same in divers parts, Where such Clothes be made, they be conveyed to London, Where they be sold farre under the price that they be worth, and that they cost to the makers of the same, and at sometime they be lent to long dayes, and the money thereof at divers times never paid; And over that, the Commodities and Merchandizes of those parts, which the said Fellowship, Merchants of London, and others their Confederates bring into this Land, is so sold to your said Complainants and other the Kings true Subjects, at so deare and high exceeding price, that the buyer of the same cannot live thereupon, by reason whereof, all the Cities, Towns, and Burroughs of this Realme in effect be fallen into great poverty, ruine, and decay, and as now in manner they without hope of comfort, or reliefe, and the Kings Customes and Subsidies, and the Navy of the Land greatly decreased and diminished, and daily they be like more to decay, if due reformation be not had in this behalfe. Be it therefore enacted by the King our Sovereigne Lord, by the advise and assent of the Lords

Lords spirituall and temporall, and the Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by authority of the same, that every English man, being the Kings true Leigeman, from henceforth have free passage, resort, course and recourse into the said coasts of Flanders, Holland, Zealand, Brabant, and other places thereto nigh adjoyning, under the obeysance of the said Archduke, to the Parts there hereafter to be holden, with his or their Merchandizes, Goods, and wares, there to buy and sell, and make their exchange freely at his or their pleasure, without exaction, fine, imposition, extortion, or contribution to be had, levied, taken, or perceived of them, or of any of them, to, for, or by any English person or persons to his or their own use, or to the use of the said Fraternity or Fellowship, or of any other like, except only of ten Mark sterling. And that no person English, as is afore rehearsed, hereafter take to his own use, or to the use of the said Fraternity or Fellowship thereof, any other English person of what estate degree, or condition that he be of, so alway that he be the King our Sovereigne Lords true Leigeman, any fine, exaction, imposition, or contribution for his liberty or freedome to buy and

and sell Goods, wares, or Merchandizes in or at any of the said Parts, more or above the said summe of ten Mark sterling only, upon paine of forfeiture to our Sovereigne Lord for every time that he doth the contrary of this Act 20.1. and also to forfeit to the parties so grieved in this behalfe tenne times so much as he contrary to this present Act, taketh of him: And that the parties so aggrieved shall have in this behalfe an Action of debt for the said forfeiture of tenne times, in any of the Kings Courts within this Realm by writ, Bill, Plaint, or Information, and such processe to be made in the same, as is or ought to be made in or upon an Action of debt at the Common Law, and the triall thereof to be had in such Shire, City, or Place, where the said Action is commenced or sued; and that the Defendant in any Action bee not admitted to wage his Law, nor none Essoine or Protection be for such Defendant admitted or allowed in that behalfe.

This Act of Parliament is in full force and validity to this day; for there is none can deny, that the vertue of an Act of Parliament is such, that no Power can repeale or abrogate it, but the same Legislative Power that made it. Now that a private Charter procured by gratuities,

gratuities, favour, and other clandestine wayes (as shall be proved) should have power to suspend and stop the execution of an Act of Parliament, we believe no Iudge in the Land will affirme, especially considering that this Charter doth authorize a few men to exercise both at home and abroad an extra-judiciall sway both over the consciences, the bodies, and estates of his Majesties leige people, by oathes, imprisonments, amercements, and taxes.

Touching the Oath they use to impose, it runs thus, being couched in this odde forme.

You swear by Almighty God, to be good and true to our Sovereign Lord the King that now is, and to his Heires, and Successours, Kings of this Realme. You shall be obedient and assistant to Mr Governour or his Deputy, and Assistants of Merchant Adventurers in the parts of Holland, Zealand, Brabant, Fländers, and within the Townes and Marches of Calais, as also in East Freezland, or any other Countrey or place on this or that side the seas, where the said Company are or shall be priviledged. All Statutes and Ordinances not repealed, which have beene made, or shall be made by the said Governour, or his Deputy and Fellowship, you shall to your best knowledge truly hold, and keep no singular regard to your selfe in hurt or prejudice of the Common wealth of the said Fellowship, or else being condemned, and orderly demanded, shall truly from time to time content
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and pay unto the Treasurer for the time being, all and every such mulcts and penalties which have and shall be limited and set for the transgressors and offenders of the same. The secrets and privities of the aforesaid Fellowship you shall keepe, and not bewray: and if you shall know any person or persons that intend any hurt, harme, or prejudice to our So- veraigne Lord the King, or unto his Lands, or to the Fellow- ship aforesaid, or the priviledges of the same, you shall give knowledge thereof, and doe it to be knowne to the said Go- vernour or his Deputy. And you shall not colour or free any Forreigners goods, which are not free of this Fellowship of Merchant-Adventurers of England. So help you God.

By the words of this extravagant Oath, one may see what high, illegall and transcendent power they assume to themselves to make Statutes, which is proper and peculiar only to Parliaments: Moreover, they stile themselves a Commonwealth, in so much that though they cannot be termed *Regnum in Regno*, they may be well termed *Dominium in Dominio*. Besides this Oath there is another called the purging Oath, whereby one is bound to confesse whether he hath offended in such and such particulars, and to accuse himselfe, which is point blank against Law, being a thing abhorring to nature; and for which kinde of Oath some of our Courts were lately put downe by this present Parliament; and touching their Imposi-
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tions and Fines, they lay them *ad libitum*, which they convert afterwards to their owne benefit, whereas the King *de jure* partakes of all Fines: but they pas- sed an Order, by which (to use their owne words) they were pleased to allow him the one moiety; The true copy of which Order shall be inserted here with others, by which one may guesse at the rest.

At a Court holden March 4. 1603.

THe Brethren of this Company assembled together, doe hold it very requisite, for the better carriage of their Trade, that suite should be made unto the Kings Majesty, by the meanes of my Lord Chancellor to be preferred, that in the confirmation of the Companies Charters of Priviledges, this also might be added and inserted, that the Company, in their Courts as well in England as beyond the Seas to bee holden, may impose reasonable fines and penalties upon such Subiects of this Realme, not free of this Company, that shall ship Woollen Commodities into the Countreys and Places where they are priviledged, thereby to cause such intruding subiects to desist from that trade, which properly appertains to the Company of Adventurers. In consideration whereof, and in hope of the more favour in some other suites they meane to move hereafter, they are pleased that the Kings Maiesty may have and receive the one moiety of all such fines and penalties as shall be imposed upon such intruders; and
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Further they agreed to yeeld to his Maiessty, in respect aforesaid, an annuall Rent of 50. l. or 100 Marks per annum.

As before by the recited Act, so likewise by this order it appears that Merchants would not submit nor come into their Companie (as they had just cause so to doe) therefore suit must be made to suppress them, but the illegall power which the Companie used, begat a Petition for free Trade in Parliament against the Companie, in Anno 1606, which was judged in that Supreme Court so just and right, that there passed a Bill for a generall libertie of trade, with great applause of the House, scarce fortie dissenting from it. But the Companie finding that the said Bill would have dissolved their Patent, they made a crosse presumptuous Order, which for that they have dared to doe, they may be truly termed *Adventurous Merchants.*

At a Court holden April 5. 1606.

THe Bill of generall liberty of Trade was now read, and this Court hath consented that learned Councell shall be entertained, and the enormities of the Bill laid open, with a manifestation of the necessity of a government in Trade. It is also further agreed, that all reasonable charges expended about the crossing of that Bill shall be defrayed by the Treasurer here.

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The transcript of this oath and orders were truly extracted out of their owne Register, and is concordant with the originall. Touching the first, which is a kinde of oath of allegiance unto them, and hath touched the consciences of some, it is worth the observing how they mention a power they have to make Statutes, and it is proper for them so to doe, if they be a *Commonwealth*, as they terme themselves in the same Oath. And for the orders by these and the following, one may finde upon what a tottering foundation their Charter stands, and by what indirect meanes they support it, being borne by strength of Purse and Court Donatives, which in true English are but *complementall bribes*, which dare not appeare among their publique accompts, as is obvious by the following order.

At a Court holden Decemb. 23. 1622.

According to the Order of the generall Court, this day they tooke into consideration the businesse of the Accompt required by the Commissioners, which this Court conceiving to be a matter that may concerne divers great personages whom the Company have upon divers occasions presented with gratuities: It is not thought meet to give any such accompt as may any way touch the said great Personages, but rather to avoid the accompt by some good courses, to which end it is agreed that Master Governour and Master

Master Deputy, or one of them, doe take some such course as they shall thinke convenient.

At a Court holden Novemb. 16. 1623.

The Court had consideration according to the season of the yeare, of their yearly presents to such Honourable Personages as they have received favours from; and first forasmuch as they have bene extraordinarily bound to the favours of the Lord Treasurer, the remembrance is now to be enlarged at Newyeares tide, and that they shall present his Lordship with 200. peeces of 22.^s. in gold, and a peece of Plate, as an acknowledgement of his Lordships speciall favours.

Moreover, to the Lord Duke of Buckingham.

To the Archbishop of Canterbury.

To the Lord Treasurer.

To the Lord Keeper.

To the Lord President.

To Mr. Secretary Calvert.

To Mr. Comptroller, &c.

Having made it apparent by the premisses how this fraternity of Ingrossers is repugnant to all Laws both of Nature, of Nations, and of those of this Kingdome, as not being able to produce any municipall right thereunto; it remaines now to prove further, that this selfe-enriching society derogates from the repute and honours of the English Nation abroad,

for

for they are esteemed (as indeed they are) no other then a Monopoly, which being odious every where makes them lose both love and respect as well in Germany as the Netherlands, for though they enjoy some immunities where they come for their diet and lodging, it is not for any love unto them, but for the encrease of Customs and other advantages they bring along with them to that particular place. And it is observed, that they settled themselves no where yet, but there hath bene jarring betwixt them and the Towne at last, which hath made them remove their Tents so oft, and shift from place to place: besides there is commonly ill blood bred, and matter of contestation and envie betwixt that Town where they seat themselves, and other circumjacent Towns, as happened of late yeares betwixt Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Out of the precedent discourse and the circumstances thereof, this Inference doth necessarily follow, That the Company of those who stile themselves Merchants Adventurers (in statu quo nunc) take them in the condition they are now in, is not only against the hereditary priviledges, but also a presure and a grievance of a high nature to the freeborne Subjects of this Realme of England. But in regard it is a common saying, that one tale is good till the other be told, let us examine and answer the arguments they produce for their owne vindication and defence.

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The Arguments which the Merchants Adventurers alledge for their justification, may be all reduced to these three heads.

First, they cry up the *Antiquity* of their Company.

Secondly, the *Ability* of it.

Thirdly, the *Necessity* of it.

1. Touching the Antiquity thereof, they affirme their Charter to have beene granted them above 250. yeares past.

2. Touching their Ability, they alledge that they are of sufficient wealth to take up and buy all the White Clothes yearly made in this Realme for ready money; therefore there is no need to have a greater number added to them.

3. Touching the necessitie of their Company, they declare how by meanes of the same, and by their discreet government, the commodities issuing from Wooll have beene highly advanced, alledging that Clothes in the time of King *H. 7.* being worth but 3. ^{1.} are now sold for twice as much. Moreover they say, that if libertie should be granted every man to trade as he pleaseth, the unskillfulnesse of the traders meeting with the subtiltie of the people with whom they are to deale, great losse would ensue thereby to the Subjects of this Kingdome, besides the confusion that would inevitably follow.

To

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To the first of these concerning their Antiquitie it is answered, that

As it is a rule in Divinitie, that *Prescription cannot priviledge an error*, no more can it doe in civill government. It is true, when *Edw. 3.* by his extraordinarie wisdom had procured Cloth to be made so plentifully within this Realme, he incited and stirred up his subjects to the venting of those Clothes by transportation of them to forraine parts, whereby he granted them many favours: and *Henry* the fourth erected them to a Company that went by the name of a Brotherhood of *Tho: Becket, Bp. of Cant.* yet with this proviso, that any man paying the Haunce of an old Noble might freely consort and trade with them. But in the reigne of *Henry* the seventh the said Companie out of self-love and desire of lucre sought to appropriate the said priviledges so granted to all soly unto themselves, and attempted to exclude their Neighbours and Countrimen from the benefit of that trade, contrarie to the freedome and orders of all Mart Townes, which being complained of in Parliament, that famous Statute before inserted was made by that wise Legislator *Henry* the seventh; whence if one looke backward, he will finde that they cannot plead above 100. yeares antiquitie.

The *Staplers* were far more ancient, yet we know to what a reformation they submitted themselves; besides, in the carriage of all mundane affaires, the quality

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increase of people. And lastly the chiefe reason is, because there hath beene such vent for our Cloth abroad, and that is the maine cause why our Cloth and other woollen Commodities are so much risen; but grant the Company beare up the prices of commodities abroad, may they not by the same power and policy keep up the prices of forreign commodities at home, by which meanes the Kingdome suffers both wayes?

Secondly they say, that if Trade were free, all would suddenly fall to decay, both Merchant and Clothier would be beaten out of trade by the Dutch; for if our Merchants who transport Cloth were not ordered by the Company, they would send such abundance into all parts, as they would not be able to gaine thereby: and so the Merchant would be discouraged to send any more, or if he doe send he will be sure to give the Clothier every time lesse for his Cloth, so that the Clothier nor Merchant will be able to live by it; and by this overclogging of the market, our Cloth will be brought into disesteeme and not so regarded, as it is now by this Government.

This Objection at first sight carrieth a specious shew, but if it be cast into the ballance of truth, it will beare no weight at all, it is rather a conceit then an Argument, for they cannot prove it by any act

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of experience, only they imagine such a thing. It is confessed that regularity and government is commendable in all things, otherwise disorders and a promiscuous kinde of confusion will follow. The French and Spanish Companies sang the same note before *Tertio Iacobi* when they were dissolved. There bee generall Lawes to regulate trade, and to preserve it from confusion; we desire still a government, but not a Monopoly, that so few should engrosse the whole masse and bulke of the prime trade of England to two Townes only. Trade (though the comparison be homely) is like Dung, which being close kept in a heap or two stinks, but being spread abroad, it doth fertilize the earth and make it fructifie; nor need we any forraign hands to spread it, wee have enough of our owne were they permitted. Touching the over-glutting of the market, it might well fall out, that if free Traders were confined to two Towns only, they would peradventure surcharge them, but having the choice of so many Ports, and such a variety of places, there is no such feare of a glut. As touching the esteeme and rates of our Cloth, which they pretend would be prejudiced, let them know, that it is not the high price but plenty that propagates Trade; and for the high rates of our Cloth, we may impute that not so much to their Government, as the policy of the Dutch themselves, who to make Dutch Cloth more vendible, hoise up the price of ours, and that

our

our Cloth and other woollen Commodities are endeared by the Company here, shall be proved afterwards.

There are two main things that conduce to make a trade flourish, plenty of Merchandize and multitude of Merchants. Now it can be proved that in the yeare 1633, before that strict Proclamation for restraint came out, there were neere upon 600 Traders in those commodities: and in the yeare 1639 not above 180; and in *Holland* before that Proclamation when they made most, they made not above two thousand Clothes yearly, but since they have made some yeares twentie thousand, and they fell also to the making of *Perpetuanoes*, which they had never done before; so that trade is insensibly stolen away from us, our workmen by hundreds going over to set up their manufactures in other Countries, because they were discouraged to exercise their ingenuitie at home, and have freedome to make away to their best advantage any new-fashioned stufte, by reason of the said Proclamation of restraint, whereat there was much discontentment abroad, as wel as at home, for *Amsterdam* and other Townes did stomach extremely, that his *Majestie of Great Britaine* should exclude them, and that *Rotterdam* should be only privileged to be Mistris of the Trade.

But they seeme to object further, that such a generall freedome of trade might give libertie to become
Merchants

Merchants without an apprenticeship, which is an injurie to them that have served, and may hurt them who have not served, who adventuring unskilfully shall be sure of losse.

It is answered, that the losse of the new Merchant may be conceived to be more the hopes then the feares of this Companie. They that have served have the advantage of knowledge and skill for their time and moneys. And touching capacity and skill it might be urged, that by the same reason young Gentlemen should be kept from their lands for want of experience to manure them. But touching apprentices, it is not the least abuse amongst them, that taking such a considerable summe, as two or three hundred pounds with some, it makes the masters lesse careful to expect duty from them, and it makes the Apprentice more presumptuous, and take greater liberty. And on the other side we hope it will appeare, that were there a freedome of trade permitted and published for *Holland, Zealand, Flanders, Brabant, East Freezland, West Freezland, Hamburg, and the territories of the same, and into all Germany*, it would not only be a great benefit to this Kingdome in generall, but also an extraordinary encouragement to all active and industrious spirits, to seeke more Ports, and make quicker returns, and wind the penny sooner; whereas the affections of many are now dampt, because they must be subject to the
Company

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Company in a servile kinde of obedience, and are illegally sworne to obey all their *unjust and unorderly Orders*, whereof we shall here insert a few.

First, let us take notice of the *Taxes and Impositions*, which the Merchants Adventurers doe lay or leavie upon all Woollen commodities which they transport, viz.

All Loner white Clothes pay per Cloth	4 s. 6. d.
Short white Clothes per Cloth	3. 0.
Loner coloured clothes Saffron, Kentish and Redding per Cloth	2. 0.
Clothes died & drest forth of Whites per colour	2. 0.
Plunkets	2. 3.
Clothes died and dressed of Spanish making.	2. 0.
Kerseys cont	0. 6.
Elbroad Perpetuanoes per peece	0. 6.
Yardbroad Perpetuanoes	0. 4. ob
Double Bayes	0. 9.
Single Bayes	0. 4. ob
Devons dozens single	0. 4. ob
Northerne dozens double	0. 9.
Northerne dozens single	0. 4. ob
Short Worsted hose for men pay per dozen	0. 4. ob
Long Worsted hose	0. 6.
Woollen hose for men	0. 5.
Woollen hose for children	0. 1. ob

Short

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Short Kersey stockings	0. 1. ob
Long Kersey stockings	0. 6. ob
Meniking bays and Frizadoes per peece	0. 1. ob
Buffins narrow, Moccadoes, and Norwich Grograns per peece	0. 1. ob
Buffins broad Philip and Cheaney	0. 2. q.
Carols of Norwich making	0. 1. ob
Buffins double	0. 4. ob
Cottons the hundred goods	0. 9.
Double Durances and Cameleons	0. 5.
Single of the same cont: 14 yards.	0. 2. ob
Flannell the hundred yards	0. 7. ob
Freezes	0. 9.
Venetian Fustians	0. 3.
Parogans of Norwich mixt and plaine	0. 4. ob
Pyramides and Floramides	0. 2. q
Porops Damosolos, broad Damas	0. 6.
Middles Sayes broad	0. 9.
Narrow	0. 4. ob
Narrow Linsey Woolsey drest the hundred yards	0. 5.
Cloth Rasnes broad per peece	0. 9.
Narrow	0. 4. ob

Now it must be confest that these taxes do endear the goods, and therefore the Company cannot afford as cheap as other Merchants might doe.

Secondly, their order for *stinting* or *limiting* their

E mem-

members to transport but a certain quantity of Cloth, runs thus.

At a Court holden Octob. 11. 1606.

Letters from the Brethren of Middleburgh of the fourth of October 1606. were now made publique, they give knowledge that they have agreed to the augmentation of the generall stint, and of the yearly and monethly number of Clothes to be shipped out upon the free licence, referring us to the specification of every mans proportion of stint sent with their letters, and now read; which proportion of stint all the trading Brethren are enjoyned not to exceed within the compasse of any one year, upon the penalty of 40. s. per Cloth. And to prevent abuse, they ordaine every Brother that shall ship any woollen commodity, shall be yearly purged upon his oath, the forme whereof was now sent and read also: and in case any should refuse or neglect to take the said Oath by the last day of August every yeare, then he to pay 20. pound sterling, and to have no benefit of the free Licence till he hath taken the said Oath.

Much might be said of this stinting Order, but we shall say but little for brevitie sake: how prejudiciall it is for any man to be stinted that would trade more freely if he were permitted, is best known to the members of that Company, and what an injury it is to the Clothiers, their Petitions depending in this Parliament can sufficiently witness.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, their order for shipping in no other ships then the Companies Ships, the substance of which Order is as followeth, viz.

27. April 1605. restraint of shipping but onely in two ships, upon paine of forfeiture of 40. s. per Cloth.

Orders of stint revived, and no newes to be sent over of any more Cloth to be sent till hereafter, and men should forbear wholly shipping for a time.

27. April 1605. Richard Fox Cloth-worker, condemned to pay 40. s. a Cloth for mis-shipping.

At a Court holden the 11. of September 1605. divers masters of ships made suit for taking in of goods, and were refused, and if any of the Company would lade as could, were restrained by order.

This order tends to the destruction of the Navigation of this Kingdome, and the undoing of sea-faring men, and this is the language of the Parliament in his late Majesties reigne, and the generall complaint of the Mariners now; moreover, to ship in the Companies ships will cost almost double freight, which is no small matter.

Fourthly, their order for shipping but thrice a yeare is to this effect.

At a Court holden the 9. of February 1604. no shipping out of Cloth to Middleburgh but three times in a yeare, February, May, September.

This order is of a threefold prejudice, in generall to the Kingdome, in particular to the Merchant, and especially to the Clothier, who cannot sell but when

the Merchant will buy, and the Merchant will not buy but when he may transport, and if he may not transport when he pleaseth, the cloth must lie unsold either upon the Clothier or Merchants hands, which losse of time endereath the commodities. It is to be feared this Company might for their private lucre also make an Act, that the members of their Company should be stinted in the price they should give for cloth, as well as the quantity they must buy or transport, and indeed they are come very neare to it, as manifestly appears by this following Order.

At a Court holden April. 19. 1634.

MAfter Withers did exhibit two severall Papers to this Court to be considered of, concerning what abatements should be made for all defects of Cloth, whether in weight, length, or breadth, as also some points for the ordering of tarre, which he desired might be commended to the Courts of Hamburg and Delph, that they might consider thereon, and further advise of any other course, and it was accordingly ordered; but the Court of Hamburg is to be desired to make no Act in this businesse, till they have acquainted this Court with their opinion therein. As for that Mr Withers desired might be considered here, to wit, that no brother should buy any white cloth that is made in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, and the Easterne limits of Somerset

Somersetshire, without abatements for all faults in which they shall be found defective: It was now by generall advice and approbation ordered and enacted, that every brother of the Company who doth buy cloth contrary to that effect, shall forfeit 20.s. upon every cloth so bought, toties quoties without favour or pardon; and to the end that every brother may bee acquainted with the contents of the said Draught now published, and whereupon this Order is made, it is thought fit that the said Draught be printed, and one given to each brother; but this is to be done after the Lords of his Majesties privy Councell shall have by their Order given countenance to this Act, to which end their Lordships are to be petitioned, and Mr Deputy accompanied with some of the Committees for trade, is appointed to present the same: After these things the Court did take into consideration the paines which Mr Withers hath taken in their businesse the last yeare, and have gratified him with 500 Marks, his time being to end with his accompt the 25 of March, hee did now thankfully accept thereof.

It is worth the observing when this Order was made, even about that time when they had by their often gifts at New years tide, and other left handed meanes, got their Authority to be proclaimed for restraining all Merchants, not free of their Company, from transporting any woollen Commodities, or to

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to pay 100.l. and come in to the Company; then they make this Order to curb the poore Clothier to abate for defects as much as they please; and though that Order was not to bee enacted by them before the Lords of his Majesties privy Councell had given countenance thereunto, yet notwithstanding at a Court holden the 21 of May 1634, the said Order was confirmed without consent of the Lords. Thus wee see how illegally the Company proceeds in their owne Courts, against their owne Orders, and molested the Clothiers by many suites in Law, and not only them, but also others, and were at vast expences to get their own ends.

At a Court holden March. 4. 1634.

THe Committees that were appointed to deale with Mr Withers touching his entertainment, now brought back that businesse to this Court, for that they found his accompt of charges to bee such, as they conceived it meet the Court should be made acquainted therewith before any resolution were taken touching his allowance of the same; for they finde in one yeare, viz. since our Lady day last, being now almost one whole yeare, a matter of 270.l. laid out upon ordinary charges, and about 150.l. laid out in charges of Law suites, whereof some 100 Marks in a Star-chamber suite against Sir Edward Bainton, whereupon the Court had consideration, and conceiving that the Company might bee brought
into

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into some disrepute by suits against Clothiers, or taking the benefit of forfeitures of penall statutes, but especially might perhaps be brought into some danger for maintaining that suit in the Star-chamber, it was for present ordered, that the allowance of Mr. Withers said accompt should for a while be held in suspence untill the Company were well satisfied what to resolve therein. In the meane while because Mr Withers is forthwith to goe into the Country, it was ordered that Mr Treasurer should imprest unto Mr Withers 200.l. upon accompt of his ordinary charges, untill further audit of his accompt, and Mr Deputy and Mr Peter Jones are desired to counsell in the Companies behalfe with Mr Attorney General, what is safe and fitting for the Company to doe in bearing or forbearing the meddling with the charge of Law suits, upon returne of whose opinion the Court will resolve herein as they shall finde cause.

Here we see the cunning dealing of this Company, that when they had done their worst in Law, and perceived they could not prevaile, then they seeme to be very cautious to meddle with the accompt of charges.

At a Court holden the 29. of August 1635.

THis Court did proceed to consider of the gratification of Mr. Withers for his last yeare, and for payment of his
his

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his bills of charges in the same, as also for his entertainment for the yeare to come, in which they desired to include his further charges whatsoever, and he not to accompt as hitherto he hath done; and having found that his bill of charges for the last yeare came to 420^l. whereof 150^l. was for Law-suits in the Star-chamber, and other Courts of Iustice, it was agreed and consented unto, that the 270^l. for ordinary charges should be paid, but for the other 150^l. they would deferre the payment thereof untill the cause betweene him and Sr Edward Baynton were ended; and if then Mr Withers were loser thereby, then he should have recourse to this Court, who would then further consider thereof.

Note the precedent order, the 150^l. expended in Law and Star-chamber suits, Mr Withers must not have untill the Company doth see which way the scale will turne, and if Sir Edward Bainton be cast, then the Company will owne the cause, if not, they will seeme to disclaime it, and finde out some back doore or private way to pay or gratifie Mr Withers.

Fiftly and lastly, the Company tieth their Members to trade to two Towns only, viz. *Hamburgh* and *Rotterdam*. First, it is well knowne that to goe to *Rotterdam* is but the entrance of *Holland* and other parts, and although the Merchant may transport his commodities as farre againe and deeper into the Countrey for the same freight, yet he may not; nevertheless before the commodities doe come to the
Retailers

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Retailers hands it must be transported from *Rotterdam*, and then it costs more freight and other charges then is paid from *London* to *Rotterdam*: thus unnecessarily they charge our commodities.

Secondly, it is prejudiciall in the highest nature to the sale of our commodities, for the petty Shopkeepers and Retailers will not come so farre to buy our Commodities. It is too chargeable, costly, and sometimes dangerous travelling, and will not quit cost to travell so farre to buy small quantities. Now this inconvenience is fallen upon it, that the great traders or buyers of our Cloth, which the *Dutch* call *Grossiers*. (and it is a proper name for them, because they are *engrossers of our Commodities*) doe come and buy great quantities together, and when these men are come to *Amsterdam* and other remote places, then they furnish all those smaller Shopkeepers and other Chapmen with our commodities, and these men get a competent gain thereby; which if trade were free, our Merchants might gaine so much the more, or afford our Cloth so much the cheaper unto the *Retailer*, and by cheap selling we should the sooner beat the *Dutch* from making. But there is a greater harm in it then this; for the chief makers of Cloth in *Holland* and those parts thereabouts be those great buyers or *Grossiers*, who aime at ingrossing our cloth for two reasons; first, because they get good gain upon our commodities in selling them, as aforesaid, to smaller tradesmen; but secondly and principally, to advance the sale of their owne home-made
F cloth

cloth before our English, which is easily done having the sale of both in their owne hands, none can hinder them; and seeing it is so, that the Dutch do make great quantity of cloth and other woollen commodities, there is a far greater necessity of a free trade and selling cheape then heretofore, when the Hollanders made none, or but few; for then it was easie to make them give what price we pleased for cloth; but now we must not onely endeavour to sell our commodities, but should chiefly aime to sell so cheape, as might cause the Dutch to desist from making of cloth.

The greatest *bane* which ever the commerce of this Kingdome received, was, that the *Hollanders* and others fell to the making of cloth, and other woollen manufactures; and if the *Flemming* should come to set up woollen Loomes as the Hollander doth, to what a low ebbe our trade of cloth would sinke unto, it is an easie thing to be a *Prophet*.

Therefore there is no one thing that requires the policie of *England* more, then to draw the one, and prevent the other from making of cloth and other woollen commodities in that abundance. Now there is no way under Heaven to doe it but by devising wayes to sell our Manufactures at cheaper rates, and disperse them more up and downe the Countrey, which cannot be otherwise effected then by a free Trade, and multitude of Merchants, and by fitting all places and remote parts with such kind of

of Manufactures as are most proper for them: These reasons no doubt will give good satisfaction to indifferent men, who (under favour) cannot deny but this Company of Merchant-Adventurers is as prejudiciall to this Kingdome as ever the French or Spanish Companies were, and to prove they were so, it will be requisite here to insert an Act of Parliament in *tertio Jacobi*, by which they were dissolved; the Act runs thus.

VWhereas Divers Merchants have of late obtained from the Kings most excellent Majesty under the Great Seale of England, a large Charter of Incorporation for them and their Company to trade into the Dominions of Spaine and Portugall, and are also most earnest suiters to obtain the like from his said Majesty for France, whereby none but themselves and such as they shall thinke fit, as being meere Merchants, shall take the benefit of the said Charter, disabling thereby all others his Majesties loving Subjects of this Realme of England and Wales, who during all the time of her late Majesties warres were in divers respects greatly charged for the defence of their Prince and Countrey, and therefore ought indifferently to enjoy all the benefits of this most happy peace, and also de-

barring them from that free enlargement of common Trafficke into those Dominions, which others his Majesties Subjects of his Realmes of Scotland and Ireland doe enjoy, to the manifest impoverishing of all owners of Ships, Masters, Mariners, Fishermen, Clothiers, Tuckers, Spinsters, and many thousands of all sorts of handy-crafts men, besides the decrease of his Majesties Customes, Subsidies, and other impositions, and the ruine & decay of Navigation, together with the abatement of the prices of our Wools, Cloth, Corn, and such like commodities arising and growing within this his said Majesties Realm of England, and the enhancing of all French and Spanish commodities, by reason of the insufficiency of the Merchants, they being few in number, and not of ability to keep the great number of our Ships and Seafaring men a work, and to vent the great store of commodities which this his Majesties Dominion of England, doth yeeld. And by meanes that all Owners and Mariners with divers others (if these Incorporations should continue) shall bee cut off from their ordinary meanes of maintenance and preserving their estates. And finally, by reason that all French and Spanish commodities

ties shall be in a few mens hands: In respect whereof, as for many other manifold inconveniences growing thereby, much hurt and prejudice must needs redound to all his Majesties loving Subjects of this his Highnesse Realme of England, if reformation for the prevention of so great an evill be not had in due time: For remedy whereof, be it enacted by the Kings most Excellent Majesty, the Lords Spirituall and Temporall, and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That it shall and may be lawfull to and for all his Majesties Subjects of this his Highnesse Realme of England and Wales, from henceforth at all times to have free liberty to trade into and from the Dominions of Spaine, Portugall, and France, in such sort, and in as free manner as was at any time accustomed sithe the beginning of this his Highnes most happy Reign in this his Realm of England, and at any time before the said Charter of Incorporation was granted, paying to the Kings most Excellent Majesty, his Heires, and Successors, all such customes, and other duties, as by the Lawes and Statutes of this Realme ought to be paid and done for the same. The said Charter of Incorporation,

tion, or any other Charter, Grant, Act, or any thing else heretofore made, or done, or hereafter to be done to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding. Provided alwayes, that this Act or any thing therein contained shall not be of force to enable, or give liberty to any person or persons to goe over Seas without licence, who by the Laws and Statutes of this Realme, or by any Statute hereafter to be made, shall be restrained from going beyond the Seas without licence, any thing to the contrary notwithstanding.

Were there nothing more said then what this *Act of Parliament* relates, it is sufficient to convince any rationall man of the unsufferable wrong the Kingdom receives by such illegall Incorporations: severall Parliaments have found and adjudged them so, and particularly this Company of Merchant-Adventurers, against which there passed also two *Votes* in full Parliament a little before his late Majesties death, extracted out of the Parliament Records as followeth.

Die Veneris 30. Aprilis, 22 Iacobi.

Upon a Report this day made to the Commons House of Parliament from the generall Committee for Trade, concerning the imprest money set by the Company of Merchant-

chant-Adventurers of London upon Cloth, and after long debate thereof in the House, It is resolved and declared by the said House of Commons, that the opinion of the House is, that such setting of the said imprest money upon Cloth is unlawfull, unjust, and a grievance to the people, and is to bee taken off, and no longer to bee continued by them: And upon further Report from the said Committee, and like debate in the said House, It is further declared, that the House thinks fit, that as well the Merchant Adventurers, as all other Merchants promiscuously, may transport to all places all Northern and Western Dozens, Kerfies, and new Manufactures.

H. Elsyng Cler. Dom. Com.

Die Lunæ 10. Maii, 22. Iacobi.

Upon a Report this day made to the House of Commons from the grand Committee for Trade, concerning the freedome of exportation of died, and dressed, and all coloured Clothes into the parts of Germany and the Low Countreys, by other Merchants besides the Merchant-Adventurers, and after long debate thereof in the House, It is resolved and declared by the said House of Commons, that the opinion thereof is, that other Merchants besides the Merchant-Adventurers, may freely trade with died, and drest, and all sorts of coloured Clothes into Germany and the Low Countreys.

H. Elsyng Cler. Dom. Com.

But

But to this they seeme to object the Ordinance of this present Parliament for the continuance of their Company: This, under correction, cannot hold plea, for the said Ordinance passed with this proviso and clause of reservation by the wisdom of both Houses, *That all rights confirmed by Act of Parliament, or ancient Charters, should be thereby saved*; so that it is rightly conceived that that Ordinance is not binding nor of a restraining nature.

Therefore it is most humbly desired, that the aforesaid Patent of the Company of Merchant-Adventurers may not be binding to others not free of their Company, in regard it is

Illegall,
Unusefull,
Prejudiciall,
Abusive.

It is illegall, because it is repugnant to expresse Acts of Parliaments.

It is against the naturall right and priviledge of free born Subjects, as appears by Magna Charta, and Petition of right. It is a meere Monopoly both in the intention and the execution, for by paying money the Subject enjoyes his right, and denying payment he is debarred of it.

It is a grievance of the highest nature, in regard it gives an extrajudiciall power to imprison the Subject without baile or mainprize, to take away his goods,

goods, to contrive and impose oathes, to lay and levy taxes without limitations, and convert them to private profit to the prejudice of others, which is the truest badge of a Monopoly.

It is grounded upon Prerogative, not warranted by Common Law, or Act of Parliament, but directly opposite to all.

The pretence of it is the same that all monopolizing Patents have, viz. Regularity and Conformity, but indeed to usurp a right, and liberty, and to restore it againe for money.

The Patent is obtained by some particular men, without the knowledge or consent of others; and it is a rule that no man is bound to observe that Law, which himselfe consents not to be made against him.

It is Unusefull, because that this Trade, and every other profession in England, is subject to regularity, either by laudable customes confirmed by Acts of Parliaments, or by Statute Lawes; and it is strange that a Projector should see a better way for regularity of trade, then ever was thought on by Act of any Parliament.

That other Merchants have no such need of regularity, onely they are subject in generall to the Lawes and Customes of the Land, yet they flourish and prosper; and in Flanders, Brabant, Artois, Henegow, and other Provinces under the King of Spaine, there

there hath beene no government by the Company for about fourscore yeares together, yet the trade of our Manufactures thrive farre better there, then in *Holland*, or *Germany* where regulation in trade hath beene, and our Nation is farre more beloved and respected.

That those moneys which are leavied, are not any wayes employed for the benefit of King or Kingdome, or for bettering the Trade, but serve only for bribes to preserve the ill-begotten Patent, and punish such as endeavour to enjoy their naturall right against the said Patent, which ends with this odde clause, *That every thing in it shall be taken, construed, and adjudged most strongly against us (that is the King) our Heires, and Successors, and most benignly, favourably, and beneficially for the said Governour, Assistants, and Fellowship of Merchant-Adventurers.*

The Patent is prejudiciall and abusive, for that they have done and doe this Kingdom the greatest detriment that ever befell it in point of trade, by instigating the Dutch to make a vertue of necessity, by making them fall to the draping of Cloth and other woollen Manufactures, out of the hatred they conceive to their Monopoly. It is too well knowne what clashings and contestations have happened from time to time betweene them. To instance in one amongst others, about the yeare 1634 there was such a contention betwixt them and the Dutch

Dutch about Tare, that the Company kept their ware-houses shut up about seven or eight months, which made the Dutch, in meece despight, to set up his looms and to fall a draping, and so continueth.

But were it not for the restraint they make, and the power they arrogate to themselves of appointing the place where, the proportion what, the manner how, the time when our woollen Manufactures should be transported, the Gentleman would have more Clothiers for his wools, the Clothier would have more Merchants for his cloth, and the Merchant would have more chapmen for his ware.

And although the Company receive some Immunities from the Towne where they seat themselves, yet are they prejudiciall to the Kingdom in generall, for in lieu thereof those Dutch in London and other places, who terme themselves members of the *Intercourse*, receive the like Immunities here. And observable it is, that though the Company have such priviledges both at home and abroad, whereby they engrosse the trade of the Kingdome in such a high measure, yet are they liable to pay no greater taxes then others that have neither Charter nor priviledge. If they will have all the trade, it is reason they should pay all the taxes; but they are farre from paying more then ordinary taxes, although the taxes which the Company receives from their members are extraordinary; for as it is extracted out of their owne books, that from the yeare 1616 to 1641 they recei-

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ved in *taxes* 182295. l. and odde moneys, besides what they received beyond the seas.

The Company of Merchant-Adventurers doe keep up their Patent for one of these three reasons,

- Either { for the generall *good* of this Kingdom,
- { for the *benefit* of Merchants in generall,
- { for the *profit* of their particular members.

To the first, if it were *good* for this Kingdom in generall, it is almost impossible but this Company would have bene established by Law, the conveniences and inconveniences thereof having been so oft debated in Parliaments, as is clearly proved for above 150 yeares past; but on the contrary, it never was complained of, but it still was condemned by the wisdom of the Kingdom, and freedom declared for all Merchants to trade.

To the second, if it were for the *benefit* of Merchants in generall, then for a certaine those Merchants of old time, and the succeeding ages, and the Merchants of these times would not have opposed and complained of them (as it appeares they have) but they would have soone discerned the benefit, which would have been sufficient inducement for Merchants to have joyned with the Company, and needed not to have been forced or beaten into that which is for their owne profit, nor need the Company constrain Merchants to grow rich against their will, especially by indirect meanes.

To

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To the third, if it be for the profit of their particular members (as it cannot be otherwise conceived) then no doubt, but the Company will speed as in former Parliaments, *which God grant.*

For were there a freedome of Trade, it would be the onely meanes to cause the Dutch to desist from making of Cloth; and there is nothing that conduceth more to the enlargement of selling any commodity then cheapnesse, for the Dutchman alwayes goeth to the cheapest, though from a *Christian* to a *lew*.

All the premises impartially considered, it is humbly conceived, that it will stand with the policie of this Kingdome to *dissanull*, and *cancel* the Patent of those that ascribe unto themselves the sole name of *Merchants-Adventurers*, in regard it is already proved *illegall*, *unusefull*, *prejudiciall*, and *abusive*.

To conclude, this is not a new *Complaint*, but an old *grievance*, having been petitioned against above 150. yeares agoe, and complained of since from time to time, and in this present Parliament there are Petitions depending against the Company, as a Nationall grievance, of *Merchants of London, the Clothiers of Worcester, Essex, Suffolke, Norfolke, Kent, Colchester, Norwich, &c.* Whereupon it pleased the Honorable House of Commons to appoint a Committee to consider of the Patent of the said Merchants Adventurers, who being permitted to bring in

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in their learned Counsell, yet they could not prove the legality thereof.

Thus without any aime of particular interest, but for the generall welfare of the Kingdome, with sincere hearts, and out of the deepest sence of sorrow and grieffe of mind, having long observed their *mis-carriages*, we are emboldened to present this *generall grievance*, as being thereunto bound by a two-fold tye of duty. First, as free-borne Subjects of this Kingdome our birth-right and hereditary Priviledges are neerly concerned, and therefore we ought in conscience to endeavour to preserve them for our posterity, as they have been transmitted to us.

Secondly, for that by the *Protestation* and *Covenant* lately taken by us at command of this Parliament, we are againe ingaged so to doe: And truly those two vowes (if remembred) will cause every true-hearted man at least to pray for that which hee is bound to defend and maintaine with the utmost hazzard of his life and fortunes.

FINIS.

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