

0585

105-10



BLUNT to WALPOLE:

A

Familiar Epistle

In Behalf of The

BRITISH DISTILLERY.

And tho' I say it, there's never a woman in the parish that takes more care for an honest livelihood than my self. I turn my hand to any thing to get a penny: sometimes I sell things in Leaden-hall market; and sometimes I do an odd chare at one house, and sometimes at another.—We market-women are up early and late, and work hard for what we have. We stand all weathers, and go thro' thick and thin. It's well known, that I was never the woman that spar'd my carcass; and if I spend three farthings now and then, in such simple stuff as we poor souls are glad to drink, it's nothing but what's my own, I get it honestly, and I don't care who knows it; for if it was not for something to cheer the spirits between whiles, and keep out the wet and cold; alackaday! it would never do! we should never be able to hold it; we should never go thorow-flitch with it, so as to keep body and soul together.

Sessions-paper, May 1725.

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B L U N T

T O

W A L P O L E.



MR Robert, tho' at your levee
A croud of authors there
may be,
Who with beseeching airs
attend

On you, their only true blue friend:
Insinuate their unlucky cases,
And hint, how well they merit places:
Yet all their claims to your regard,
Are trifling, when with mine compar'd;

B

And

[6]

And so to think you cannot fail,
When you have heard me tell my tale.

Not for myself alone I plead,
More generous I: — The life of *trade*,
The *revenue* of the royal house, and
The fate of *families* many a thousand,
Are all concern'd in what's before us,
And join with my address in chorus.

Methinks I hear you now cry *Humb!*
This must from some Distiller come. —
'Tis very true, — for who can ghes
Erroneous from such premises?

Not long ago, I knew the day,
When I could rent and taxes pay:
Each morning with my wife drink tea,
And who so happy then as we!

At

[7]

At night, to coffee-house repair,
And shine a politician there!
No creditor did I avoid,
And send down word I was abroad;
No dreary dun e'er twice came to me,
With — Blood Sir! pay me what you owe me!
Fearless of catchpole, with grave state,
I boldly past the compter gate;
And if from friend behind, in joke,
My shoulder felt a sudden stroke,
Surpriz'd, I never turn'd about,
And ask'd abruptly — At whose suit?

But from my landlord now I run,
And now the publican I shun:
Bohea and green no longer taste,
But water-gruel breaks my fast:
At coffee-house, no more debate
About occurrences of state:

B 2

My

[8]

My creditors may daily come,
 And daily hear, I'm not at home ;
 The public road no more I take,
 But thro' blind lanes and alleys sneak ;
 This way and that, I turn my eye,
 In constant dread some bailiff's nigh :
 And whence this wretched change? In fact,
 It comes from *The GENEVA Act*.

For ere the house had pass'd the bill,
 How often did I work my *still*?
 For this or that ingredient,
 How oft I to the *druggist* sent?
 Or to the *grocer's* shop? or where *Kate*
Botanic-stall keeps in the market?
 How frequently old casks to hoop, or
 Make new, did I employ the *cooper*?
 To what a sum, at the week's close,
 My *porter's* bill for jobbs arose?

And

[9]

And how my *carman* jee-hoa'd *Dobbin*?
 Ah, these were blessed days, *Sir Robin*!

But since the *Act* — scarce in a month
 The *spirit* thro' my *worm-tub* run'th:
 Of *sugars, fruits, drugs, herbs* and *spices*,
 I don't so much as know the prices:
 My *cooper's* addice is rusty grown ;
 My *porter* sits, and makes his moan ;
 My *carman* stamps, and raves, and curses,
 For want of work t' employ his horses.

Thus to *industry*, what a stop
 Is the decline of *one poor shop*?
 But what is *one shop*? --- let us rather
 Take the *distillers* all together.
 Think then, what devastation's made,
 A stroke how fatal given to *trade*!
 What a round sum the *court* will miss!
 The *landed interest* how decrease!

If

[10]

If calculations, with a grace,
 In poetry could have a place,
 I'd shew, — and not on *Woolston's* scheme,
 By allegory, type and dream;
 But, in a literal sense, and plain,
 As were th' insulting airs of *Spain*; *
 The vast advantages, that will e'ery
 Day proceed from the *distillery*,
 When with encouragement it's blest;
 And what be lost when 'tis deprest.

The muse, I say, could I but get her,
 To manage such accompts in metre,
 Should sing; How *British distillation*
 Invites the swain to *cultivation*;
 How many hundred thousand acres,
 Unfit for *brewer's* use, or *baker's*,
 Lay long unwounded by the plough,
 Which well repay the tillage now.

* In the Reign of Queen *Eliz.*

What

[11]

What loss the *farmer* did sustain,
 By wanting vent for damag'd grain;
 'Till the *distiller's* noble art,
 Extracted thence, th' essential part.

How *malt* sent up for *distillation*,
 Improves the coasting *navigation*.
 How many jolly *sailors* bred ———
 ———At this you laugh, and shake your head,
 As if there was but little in it,
 But, Sir, — have patience for a minute:
 These very *sailors*, mean and few,
 As they perhaps appear to you,
 Would make no more ado to kick,
 The saucy *** to Old Nick;
 Than, the prime gamester of the town,
 To tip a sett of nine-pins down.

What trade to us the *maltsters* owe;
 And how their *factors* wealthy grow.

Accrues

Accrues what profit to the *dealers*
 In all th' ingredients for *distillers*,
 What to th' *artificers* who form
 The *still*, the *back*, the *cask*, the *worm*
 And all th' *et-cætera*, requisite
 A *shop* and *still-house* to compleat.
 Then what employment for the *poor*,
 Will all these articles procure?

In fine, the muse should set ye down,
 The great *excise* we bring the crown,
 Whether for *malt*, or *spirits* made;
 Besides for *coals* the *duty* paid:
 A plea, that may to you, seem rather
 Better than all the rest together.

Now if you ruin the *distillers*,
 Who to the public are well-willers,
 How must the *farmer* pay his rent,
 When for his corn he has no vent?

Such

Such corn, as no man ever yet
 For bread, or beer, accounted fit;
 Tho' we from thence a spirit pure,
 By fermentation, can procure.

Why let him, you perhaps will say,
 Improve his land some other way.

But friend, — the lands that now produce
 Such crops, for the *distillers* use,
 Will never half th' advantage bring,
 In any other earthly thing:
 Their value therefore, must decrease,
 As our demands are less and less.

Our coasting *vessels*, how can we
 Full freighted now expect to see?
 Or *maltster's* trade in good condition?
 Or *factors* live by their commission?
 But name our case, and what a panic,
Shop keeper seizes, and *mechanic*?

C

So

[14]

So evidently do they find,
Their interest is with ours combin'd.

Unknowing where with work to meet,
Or how a maintenance to get ;
What numbers of the *poor*, in town
And country, saunter up and down ;
While others loiter at an *alehouse*,
And merit, in due time, the gallows ?
Whose starving families to cherish,
Makes over-rates in every parish.

Why tho' their old employment fails 'em,
You'll say, *yet what a devil ails 'em,*
But that they quickly may be able,
To find new work as profitable ?

—Ay, 'tis fine talking, on my word !
Money and time can they afford,
Strange business to acquire, and enter
On new vocations at a venture ?

When,

[15]

When, ere they can proficient grow,
Their families may starve, ye know.
Men now-a-days esteem it silly,
To teach their arts to others freely ;
Nor yet, has every one, a head
To learn new ways of getting bread .
These difficulties get but o'er,
And *Walpole* then — here follow more.

Are you with any trade acquainted,
In which there is one workman wanted ?
Employments, almost every where,
May half their old professors spare :
Can then a novice hope to gain,
What will his family maintain ?

Now do so much as turn your eyes,
To the late produce of th' *excise* ;
And there, instead of an addition, see
The devil and all of a *deficiency*.

C 2

We

[16]

We know, that while the bill depended,
The *brewers* mighty things pretended:
They'd make up all defects, forsooth!
But do ye find they spoke the truth?

Now by what method you'll supply,
This loss I can't devise, not I:
For say, what branch of trade is there,
That will a new taxation bear?
Are we not sufferers thus? and you, Sir,
At ballancing accounts, a loser?
So *Sampson* (as believe good christians)
To be reveng'd on the *philistins*,
To whom he had borne a grudge some years,
Pull'd an old house about his ears.

See here a scene of general woe,
That does from our misfortunes flow!
And other evils yet remain,
Which principally we sustain.

When

[17]

When a fair prospect does persuade
A youth, to enter into trade,
Who, by an honest care and labour, wou'd
Live reputably in his neighbourhood;
He takes a house, and stocks a shop,
And proper offices fits up:
Th' expence, his fortune does employ,
The fruit of which he hopes t' enjoy:
But see! an unexpected blow,
Does all his flattering hopes o'erthrow.

A cordial dram, like *Cheshire-cheese*, is
More valu'd as its age encreases;
And therefore, you must understand,
We kept large quantities in hand:
Not dreaming we should be prohibited,
The means of having them distributed.

But now, a *licence* must be had,
Ere we can drive a retale trade;

For

[18]

For which, by every mother's son,
 There must be twenty pounds laid down;
 And this not once, but every year,
 Tho' more than any shop can clear;
 Where none, to drink excessive stay,
 But take their glass and go their way.

The only men, if there are any,
 Who can by a *licence* make a penny,
 Are those, who in such manner use it,
 As if their study was, to abuse it;
 Who rules and orders never mind,
 Whose shops you may at midnight find
 Throng'd, as with maggots is a cheese,
 Or like *Ward's* works with similes.

Our art, obnoxious first to censure
 Who made? who but these very men, Sir?
 From whom else did a late *grand jury*
 Take hints, t' exert a pious fury?

And

[19]

And who but these, by ill behaviour,
 Lost us the legislature's favour?

Yet so it is, these wicked whore-sons,
 Who are the only guilty persons,
 Instead of being suppress'd, in fact,
 Securely thrive, beneath the *act*;
 Tho' shops they keep, of ill report,
 They swear they have a *licence* for't;
 And point, to where you'll written see,
 GENEVA SOLD BY AUTHORITY.

While we, peace-keeping spirit-venders,
 Who never yet were deem'd offenders;
 Who due decorum well observe,
 Are in a hopeful way — to starve.
 For *leave to sell*, we cannot pay,
 And must we *give* our goods away?
 'Tis hard! --- But yet if drams compound,
 Are in our hands at *christmas* found;

A

[20]

A crown a gallon claims the officer,
By which we shou'd a greater loss suffer.

Tho' when so desperate is the case,
Men may be tempted to transgress;
And, finding thus their business fail,
Without a *licence* GIN retale.
For what great hazard can they run,
Who, tho' they offend, not must b' undone?
They timorous may begin indeed,
But bolder grow as they proceed.
Even so a buxom lass, I wot,
Who greatly longs to know what's what,
Is notwithstanding, fore afraid
At first, of being by love betray'd;
Because, poor thing, she can't acquire,
A *licence* to indemnify her:
But when she once has made beginning,
Undaunted drives the trade of sinning.

More-

[21]

Moreover, there's another grief,
From which we fain would have relief.
We are prohibited by law,
The spirit under *proof* to draw.
An act would scarce be more severe,
Forbidding *brewers* to make *small beer*.

Lord! what an outcry has there been,
About old women's drinking *Gin*?
As if it burnt their guts, and shrivel'd
Their skins, and made 'em look bedevil'd.
Meer calumny! for purpose ill
Design'd, — Howe'er, be that as 'twill:
Suppose the worst that is pretended,
D'ye think the matter will be mended,
By making *Gin* and *Brandy* more
Strong, than was usual heretofore?

The weaker spirits are, 'tis plain,
The less they intoxicate the brain.

D

Take

[22]

Take half a pint of *full proof* spirit,
 And try how well your head will bear it :
 Next day, as much to *punch* convert,
 And 'twill not do you half the hurt ;
 Tho' then, the quantity's encreas'd,
 To thrice what 'twas before at least.
 For spirits, properly diluted,
 Are to the constitution suited.
 Thus innocent are our devices,
 For selling drams at moderate prices.

But here's the devil! — Let a man
 Use all the diligence he can ;
 Yet often, this is not enough,
 To keep his goods exactly proof ;
 So many accidents befall,
 As unaccountably spoil all.
 Besides, you'll not find every where, men
 Who can a standard *proof* determine.

A

[23]

A judgment is requir'd, that nice is,
 Or we may suffer on meer gheffes.

Now don't you take it in your head,
 That what has here been sung, or said,
 Contains a catalogue of all
 Disasters, which attend our fall ;
 No, — this of some is but a specimen ;
 A ream of paper, to express 'em in
 The rest require. — However, you
 May on a retrospective view,
 Of what the muse has represented,
 Judge, if the *general good's* augmented.
 Judge, if its fit, that BRITAIN'S *trade*
 Should sink, or be to *France* convey'd :
 The old collections for the *court*
 Decrease ; the *landlord's* rent come short ;
 Ten thousand *families*, who deserve
 A better fate, be doom'd to *starve* ;

D 2

Ten

[24]

Ten thousand more, to *jail* be sent?
 And all this, *only* to prevent,
 Tho' all in vain, some *stroling punk*,
 Or *worthless sot*, from getting drunk?

If you but rightly understood,
 The nature of these fots, you wou'd,
 As soon be hang'd as undertake,
 A reformation *thus* to make.
 Reform their manners! make 'em live well!
 You may as soon reform the devil.
 If you deprive 'em of their *Gin*,
 Yet they'll with *British Brandy* sin;
 If *British Brandy* you advance,
 To equal price with that of *France*;
 It but the mischief still enlarges,
 By putting them to greater charges:
 For drink they will, what e'er th' expence is,
 Till they no more can use their senses.

True

[25]

True fots are never over nice,
 About the relish, or the price:
 So that their booze, at any rate,
 Will fumes afford, t' intoxicate.
 'Tis not, that they're so fond of drinking,
 But that they abhor the *thoughts* of thinking.

But can this trade be carry'd on,
 You'll say, --- *When all their money's gone?*
 Lord help your head! — Why then for more,
 They'll pawn, beg, steal, or play the whore.

Mean while, the *poor*, whose way of living
 Makes requisite a *dram* reviving,
 Half naked, must without it go
 Thro' wind and rain, thro' frost and snow.
 Cou'd these (as seldom can they) spare,
 Three half-pence, for gut-starving beer;
 Like cordials, wou'd it warm the heart,
 And joy and sprightliness impart?

Colds,

Colds, agues, rheumatisms, and death
Prevent, — at least retard ? — No, 'faith !

Your well fed *squires* and wealthy *grandees*,
Pamper'd and proud with plenty and ease ;
Who night waste in debauch and riot,
And sleep till dinner time at quiet ;
But little dream, of what the *poor*
In need of stand, and what they endure.
No wonder, if such swear and damn,
At mention of a low-pric'd dram.

As parson *Betty* well remarks,
In's *holding-forth* t' *Oxonian* clerks, *
Tho' some divinity professors,
May be most damnable transgressors ;
Yet no man ought from thence in wrath,
To cast reflections on the cloth.

* An Ordination Sermon preach'd before the University of Oxford, Sept. 21, 1729. by *Joseph Betty*, A. M.

Who

So, tho' there may b' among *distillers*,
Some authoriz'd *Geneva* fellers,
Who tipling day and night encourage,
Against the trade why should it stir rage ?
Absurd it is, t' impede the use
Of what e'er may be turn'd t' abuse.

Now Sir, if fots without compunc-
tion, will in spite of laws be drunk ;
'Tis better sure, that this be done,
With manufactures of our own ;
By which the poor will be employ'd,
And many blessings more enjoy'd ;
Than these be sacrific'd, t' advance
The trade, the wealth and power of *France*.
But *Britain* sure, has not so base
A son --- a slave ! so void of grace,
As such a thought to have in's head ;
But should it be, — and succeed !

Even

[28]

Even basket-women wou'd, with fury,
Cry out, the plot was laid by ***.

The mischiefs of dram drinking fail,
To equal those of wine or ale.

Dram drinkers, who are harden'd in ill,
Perhaps may roll along the channel ;
Convene a mob of hooting boys,
Laughter excite and make a noise ;
At worst, by abusing a good cordial,
May get into the round-house, or jail :
But tho' they follow such a course,
Few but themselves are for't the worse :
Poor scrubs ! No trades they have, nor dealings,
To ruin others by their failings.

But when your tradesmen haunt an *alehouse*,
Or at the *tavern* grow good fellows ;
Their time and money sot away,
How soon is there the devil to pay ?

When

[29]

When one of these is doom'd to break,
How many hearts of course must ach ?
For failing in a trade extensive,
Must needs a fatal consequence have.

I see no reason therefore, why *Humph-*
ry Parsons should in brewing triumph :
Why *vintners* should be so carest,
And poor *distillers* be deprest :
Why't should be deem'd a crying sin,
To drink a little too much *Gin* ;
And yet extravagant debauches,
With *wine* or *ale* escape reproaches.
' *But little sots must yield to fate,*
' *That great ones may be drunk in state !*

Far be it from the pious muse,
Excesses, even in *Gin* t'excuse :
But why should men the *liquor* damn,
When 'tis the *vice* they ought to blame ?

E

That

That we have *laws*, you may object,
 Which do the *vice* alone affect ;
 Yet their old courses men pursue,
 As much as ever --- Why, that's true.
 But you another tale wou'd tell,
 Were those laws executed well :
 If things were judg'd with impartiality,
 And, far'd like beggars, rakes of quality :
 If officers were well protected,
 In acting as the law directed.
 But who dares set my lord i'th' stocks ;
 Or put him under compter locks ?

The *little vulgar* imitate
 The manners of the *vulgar great* ;
 Like *courtiers*, *pedlers*, keep their words,
 And *tinkers* will b' as drunk as *lords* ;
Poor fots think much the laws t' obey,
 Before *their honours* lead the way ;

Lct

Let *these* bring temperance into fashion,
 And, hey boys ! then for reformation.
 Ah *Walpole* ! wou'd not this be better,
 Than trade to knock o' the head, or fetter ?

Thus, with some reason and much rhyme,
 Fonder of truth than thoughts sublime,
 The muse has made a presentation,
 Which needs no recapitulation.
 And what d'ye think she'd now be at ?
 Nothing but this, *Sir Robert* ; That
 Your vote and interest you wou'd give,
 To let the poor *distillers* live.
 This do — 'Twill b' in your *Country's* favour,
 And then you'll win her heart for ever :
 Do it I say — and don't affront,
 The muse of

Your Old Friend,

A. Blunt.

Grubstreet, Dec.
20, 1729.

F I N I S.

[12]

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