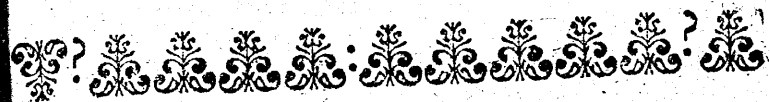


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AN
ESSAY

Against
Foretallers of Corn, Cattle, &c.



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A N
ESSAY

To Prove;

That REGRATORS, ENGROSSERS,
 FORESTALLERS, HAWKERS and JOB-
 BERS of Corn, Cattle, and other Market-
 able Goods, Provisions and Merchandizes,
 are Destructive of Trade, Oppressive to the
 Poor, and a Common Nufance to the
 Kingdom in General.

Recommended to the Perusal of the Inha-
 bitants of the Cities and Suburbs of

LONDON and *WESTMINSTER*,

And the Members of all other Corporations, Market-
 Towns, and Places of Trade.

And humbly offer'd to the Consideration of the
 PARLIAMENT of GREAT BRITAIN.



L O N D O N :

Printed for *James Roberts* near the *Oxford Arms* in
Warwick-Lane. MDCCXVIII.
 [Price 6 d.]



A N
E S S A Y

To prove, That REGRATORS, ENGROSSORS, FORESTALLERS, HAWKERS, and JOBBERS of Corn, Cattle, and other Marketable Goods, Provisions and Merchandizes, are destructive of Trade, Oppressive to the Poor, and a Common Nuisance to the Kingdom in General, &c.

THE Statute of the 5th and 6th of Edward the Sixth, made against Regrators, Forestallers, and Ingrossers, does, among other Things, declare, " That every Person shall be deemed and adjudged for a Forestaller, who shall buy, or cause to be bought, any Merchandize, Victual, or any other Thing whatsoever, coming by Land

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" or by Water, toward any Market or Fair, to be
 " sold in the same; or coming toward any City, or
 " Port, Haven, Creek, or Road of this Realm or
 " *Wales*, from any Parts beyond the Seas, to be sold,
 " or make any Bargain, Contract or Promise, for
 " the having or buying of the same, or any Part
 " thereof, so coming, as is aforesaid, before the
 " said Merchandize, Victual, or other Thing, shall
 " be in the Market, Fair, City, Port, Haven, Creek
 " or Road, ready to be sold; or shall make any
 " Motion by Word, Letter, Message, or other-
 " wise, to any Person or Persons, for the inhancing
 " of the Price, or dearer selling of any Thing or
 " Things above-mentioned; or else dissuade, move,
 " or stir, any Person or Persons coming to the
 " Market or Fair, to abstain or forbear to bring or
 " convey any of the Things above-rehearsed, to any
 " Market, Fair, City, Port, Haven, Creek or Road,
 " to be sold as is aforesaid.

And the said Act further declares, " That every
 " Person shall be reputed and taken for a *Regrator*,
 " who shall by any Means *regrate*; obtain or get
 " into his Hands or Possession, in any Fair or Mar-
 " ket, any Corn, Wine, Fish, Butter, Cheese,
 " Candles, Tallow, Sheep, Lambs, Calves, Swine,
 " Pigs, Geese, Capons, Hens, Chickens, Pigeons,
 " Conies, or other dead Victual whatsoever, that
 " shall be brought to any Fair or Market within
 " this Realm or *Wales*, to be sold, and do sell the
 " same again in any Fair or Market holden or kept
 " in the same Place, or in any Fair or Market with-
 " in Five Miles thereof.

And further, " That every Person shall be repu-
 " ed and taken for an *Ingrosser*, who shall *ingross* or
 " get into his Hands, by buying or contracting, or
 " promise-making, other than by Demise, Grant,
 " or

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" or Lease of Land or Tythe, any Corn growing
 " in the Fields, or any other Corn or Grain, Butter,
 " Cheese, Fish, or other dead Victual whatsoever,
 " to the intent to sell the same again.

The Penalties for Breach of this *Statute* are, for
 the *first* Offence, Two Months Imprisonment with-
 out Bail, and Forfeiture of the Value of the Goods,
 Cattle, and Victuals, so bought or had. And for the
second Offence, Half a Year's Imprisonment, and For-
 feiture of Double the Value of the Goods, Cattle,
 and Victuals. And for the *third* Offence, to stand
 on the Pillory; and forfeit all Goods and Chattels,
 and be imprisoned during the *King's* Pleasure. The
 Forfeitures to go one Half to the Crown, and the
 other Half to the Informer or Prosecutor.

Out of this Act are excepted, Those who buy
 (not *Forestalling*) any convertible Corn or Grain, to
 make into Malt or Oatmeal: As also Fishmongers,
 Butchers, and Poulterers, who buy (not *Forestalling*)
 to sell by Retail in the Way of their own Craft and
 Mystery. And further, all Those who have any
 Grant or Lease for Years or Lives, of any Cattle,
 Corn, &c. Also all Innholders and Victuallers, who
 sell by Retail in their own Houses. As also all Buy-
 ers of dried or salted Fish, Herrings or Sprats: And
 all Badgers, Laders, Kidders or Carriers, licenced
 by Three *Justices of the Peace*, and who shall sell
 and deliver in open Fair or Market, within one Month
 after he or they have so bought, to any Victualler,
 or any other Person, for the supplying of his or their
 House or Family. And further are Excepted, all
 Licenced Drovers, who may buy in Counties where
 they have been accustomed to buy, such Cattle as
 they shall sell in open Fair or Market, distant from
 the Place where they bought, at least Forty Miles.
 And further, All Persons dwelling within one Mile
 of the main Sea, are allowed to buy up all manner
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of Fish, fresh or salted. Also such Persons are Excepted, who have Licence to transport Corn, Grain, or Cattle, by Shipping, from Port to Port within this Kingdom. Also when Wheat is at 6 s. 8 d. the Quarter or under; Malt and Barley at 3 s. 4 d. Oats at 2 s. Pease or Beans at 4 s. and Rye at 5 s. (*London Measure*) there is an Allowance for *Engrossing* any, or all of these Kinds of Grain: Also all Contractors employed to contract for furnishing with Provisions any City, Borough, Town-Corporate, Ship, Castle or Fort, within the King's Dominions, are Excepted out of this Act. In all which Excepted Cases there is an express Clause against *Forestalling*.

By this *Statute*, whoever shall buy Corn for Change of his Seed, having enough of his own for Seed, and for Provision of his Family, unless he sell or expose to Sale, as much of his own Corn as he shall buy in the same Fair or Market, is to forfeit double the Price of the Corn so bought. And whoever buys any Oxen, Runts, Steers, Kine, Heifers, Calves, Sheep, Lambs, Goats or Kids, being alive, and sells the same, not being kept and fed by such Buyer for the space of Six Weeks before such Sale, is to forfeit double the Value of the Cattle so sold as aforesaid.

The Act directs Prosecution to be had within Two Years, and empowers the *Justices* in their *Quarter-Sessions* to hear and determine all Defaults and Offences contrary to this *Statute*.

This Act of *Edward the Sixth* is further enforced by an Act made in the 5th Year of *Queen Elizabeth*, which declares, "That no Person shall be Licensed as a Drover of Cattle, Badger, Kidder, Lader or Carrier, Buyer or Transporter of Corn, Grain, &c. but at the *General Quarter-Sessions* in open Court, by Licence under the proper Hands and Seals of
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" Three *Justices* then present, one to be of the *Quorum*, and such Licence to be in Force for one Year only. Every Drover or Badger so licensed, must be a Married Man, a Householder, of the Age of Thirty Years at least, and must have dwelt Three Years at least, before the *Test* of his Licence, in the Shire or County where such Licence is to be granted." The Penalty for Defaults in either of these Particulars, is Forfeiture of Licence, and of 5 l. one Half to the Crown, and the other Half to the Informer. The *Justices* are also empowered to take Bond and Security by Recognizance of Persons to be so licensed, obliging them to conform in all Things to the above-mentioned *Statute* of *Edward the 6th*. And no Person, though licensed, is to buy Corn or Grain in open Fair or Market to sell again, under the Penalty of 5 l. for every Offence, unless such a Power be expressly contain'd in his Licence, to be specially insert'd for that purpose.

Out of this Act are excepted, the Purveyors of any City or Town-Corporate, having Privilege to appoint such Officers; as also the Inhabitants of the Counties of *Westmorland*, *Cumberland*, *Lancaster*, *Chester* and *York*.

By another Act in the 13th of *Queen Elizabeth*, the above-mentioned Act of *Edward the 6th*, is made perpetual. And many other Laws have been since enacted upon this good and wholesome Foundation laid in King *Edward's* Time; of which sort is that Act in the 22d and 23d of King *Charles the Second*, *To prevent Frauds in Buying and Selling of Cattle in Smithfield, and elsewhere*. By which, Butchers within the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, or Ten Miles thereof, are prohibited to buy fat Cattle, and sell the same to any other Butcher, dead or alive: And also all Persons are restrained from buying fat Cattle
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in the Market in *Smithfield*, and selling the same there again. Which *Act* was reviv'd in the 1st of King *James* the *Second*, with a *Proviso* in Favour of *Salesmen* or *Factors* employ'd by Farmers or Traders; and afterwards continued by another *Act* in the 4th and 5th of King *William* and *Queen Mary*; and by another in the 11th and 12th of King *William*, and so further continued by an *Act* made in the 5th of *Queen Anne*, which was since explained by another *Act* in the 7th of the same *Queen*, by which Butchers were allowed to sell to one another, Calves, Sheep or Lambs, dead, notwithstanding the Laws formerly in force against that Practice.

By this brief Account and Abstract of the *English Statutes*, for near *Two Hundred* Years last past, an Impartial Lover of his Country, may at one Glance plainly see, what was the Sense and Judgment of our Forefathers, concerning that vile and pernicious Set of Men, who are called in the Language of our Laws, *Forestallers*, *Regrators* and *Ingrossers*: And to convince us, that even in King *Edward's* Time the Grievance was not New; the *Statute* of the 5th and 6th of that *King* already mentioned and recited, does in the *Preamble* take notice of *divers good Statutes heretofore made* against this growing Evil: Which may serve to shew, that it was of a much older Date, and that it had ever been look'd upon as a publick Nuisance, of dangerous Consequence to *Trade*, Prejudicial to the common Interest of these Kingdoms, and highly deserving the Notice, Interposition, and severe Censure of our wise *Legislators*.

Whether it be that this *Statute* of King *Edward*, which in the present Case is the main Support and Bulwork of *Domestick Trade* and Commerce, has of late, by Reason of its Antiquity, been look'd upon and slighted as obsolete and *dormant*; or whether the Methods of detecting and convicting Offenders,
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are not so fully and accurately prescrib'd by the *Laws* now extant, as might be wish'd; or whether the Persons concerned in this wicked Practice, have been cunning enough to evade the well-meant Provisions and Restraints, which were formerly thought a sufficient Remedy for this National Distemper; or whether (as is most probable) the leaving the Prosecution at large, and making every Man an *Informers*, which is one Reason why no Man will undertake the Office, there being at present no fix'd and establish'd Order of Men, particularly appointed and empowered to redress this Grievance; or whether (lastly) it be for any one, or all of these Reasons put together, or for any others not yet discovered, that the Laws now in being are so weak and insufficient; this however we are sure of, and have found it true by lamentable Experience, that the Evil complained of, is risen to a greater Height than ever, and the Number of *Forestallers*, *Regrators* and *Ingrossers*, is so far from being lessen'd, that they are now spread all over the Kingdom; and out of them have arisen new *Species* of mischievous Creatures, such as *unlicensed Higlers*, *Jobbers* and *Hawkers*; and all these in Conjunction do now oppress the *Poor* in the most arbitrary manner, bear an absolute Sway and Command in all our *Fairs* and *Markets*, make a Prey both of the *Trader* and *Consumer*, are a Canker in the Vitals of the Publick, and obstruct, in the tenderest Parts, as well the *Mony'd* as the *Landed Interest* of this Kingdom.

It is very surprizing, that a Body of Men so inconsiderable in their own Character, should be capable of doing so much real Mischiefe, and of such an extensive Influence. The very best of them are *Broken Tradesmen* or *Farmers*, or such as have been Servants to *Butchers*, *Drovers*, or *Graziers*: The Generality of them, are Men who never serv'd to any
Trade,

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Trade, or were a Scandal to it, or frequently shifted from one Way of Business to another. They are a Vagabond Sort of People, without any certain Abode or Habitation, at least for a long Time, till their Wickedness hath purchased them a Settlement. They carry their *All* about them, and their Rise and Stock is no more than a plain *Riding Habit*, a good *Horse*, a List of the *Fairs* and *Markets*, and a prodigious Quantity of *Impudence*. They have the Mark of *Cain*, and like him wander from Place to Place, driving an Interloping Trade between the *Fair Dealer* and the *Honest Consumer*; both whom they must be sure to cheat, if they would be sure to live: For they deal with the former upon Credit, and with the latter for ready Money, and so make the *Difference* their Livelihood. But as wretched and contemptible as they really are in themselves, yet by being dispers'd every where, and having *Districts* and *Provinces* of their own, which they can so often and so easily pass through and repass, and by holding such a large Correspondence, and playing their Game so craftily into each others Hands, they are become truly dangerous and formidable; and some of them have, by their wicked Practices, made themselves such a Fortune, as qualifies them to become absolute Masters and Directors of all *Fairs* and *Markets* in those Parts, which are so unhappy as to be visited and pester'd by such Ravenous and Devouring Creatures. There are, no doubt, Persons of a quite different Character among these People, whose Figure in the World exempts them from Contempt, and whose growing Riches set them above being concern'd at the Scandal of that Way of Life, which is so sweet and profitable. But if they will list with such a Gang, they must take their Fate with them; for there cannot be a more weak, or indeed, criminal Tenderness, than to forbear speaking the Truth

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Truth in a Case, where it comes accompanied with the Tears and Groans of one's Country. The worst of it is, that the *Farmer*, *Grazier*, or honest *Dealer*, not considering the ill Consequences of such Conduct, is too frequently tempted, either for the sake of Easing himself, his Servants, or his Cattle, to shun the Markets, and deal with these Interlopers at his own Door: By which means he is at length brought to deal with them whether he will or no: And when he, who first hands down Provisions to us, will treat with such Sharpers out of Choice, and they have once got his Goods, they can then make the *Poor*, and all other *Consumers* deal with them out of Necessity; because the Commodities they traffick in, are such, as are immediately conducive to the Support of Life, and the Sustainance of Mankind. In Fact, these Oppressors, who seldom pay any *Taxes* themselves, do really set a *Tax* upon all sorts of *Provisions*, in their Passage between the *Growth* and the *Consumption*; and whilst they beat down the *Farmer* or *Feeder* in his Price, they raise the *Poor* in theirs, and so sink the Plunder of both in their own Pockets.

In descending to Particulars, I shall first enquire into, and expose, the Mischiefs done by this Sort of Men in and about the *Cities* of *London* and *Westminster*, the Suburbs and Parts adjacent: Where, as it is notorious that the Number of Inhabitants is much greater than formerly, so we may make the same Observation upon the Kingdom in general, that it is become much more populous than it was before the Days of *Queen Elizabeth*. And if there was so much Occasion then for good and strict Laws against *Forestalling* and *Ingrossing*, there will be so much more Reason now, for making a due Provision against these evil Practices, in Proportion to the Encouragement these People meet with in the Pursuit of their

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their unjust Gain, and in Proportion to the Increase of our *Poor*, who groan under the heavy Weight of these Oppressions, though they cannot so readily distinguish by what Hands the Burden is laid upon their Shoulders.

In *Smithfield* and other great *Markets*, where *Live Cattle* are brought for Sale, the *Forestaller*, *Engrosser* and *Fobber*, are arriv'd to that Degree of Power and Insolence, that they carry every thing before them, and Thin or Glut the *Markets*, raise and lower their *Prices*, just as they please to agree among themselves. In the Space of 10 or 12 Days, the several Kinds of *Cattle* design'd for *Provisions*, do commonly pass through Seven or Eight Hands before they come to the *Butcher*, whereby the Price of a *Bullock* is raised to 20 or 30 *s.* and of a *Sheep* to 3 or 4 *s.* more than otherwise they would have been worth; and so of other Kinds of *Live-Flesh* in Proportion. Bargains of this Sort are frequently struck by the *Fobbers* and *Forestallers* at the Towns-end, or perhaps within a Stone's cast of the *Market*; and they have their *Inns* and *Yards*, which are a kind of *Half-way Houses* for this Purpose, where they meet and cabal, and there openly carry on the *Forestalling Trade*, as if some *Fair* or *Market* were actually settled in those Places by *Patent* or *Prescription*. The *Laws* which are against them, have, by good Management, been made subservient to the carrying on of these unlawful Dealings: For there is a *Set of Men*, who either pretending to a Power which they have not, or if they have one, by notoriously abusing it, undertake for a small Sum, to grant *Licences* to *Fobb* and *Forestal*; whereby the Persons concerned in this Way of Business, do really look upon themselves as established, and that they have Authority for what they do, though it be to the visible Prejudice of all their Fellow-Subjects.

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When the *Markets* are thin, and the *Grazier* or *Fair Trader* is advis'd by his Agent or Factor, to send up his Marketable *Cattle*, then the *Fobbers* and *Forestallers* ride round the Countries, and way-lay the Roads, and so buying up what *Cattle* they can, and bringing in such as they had in Reserve, out of the Grounds nearest to the *Market*, where perhaps a considerable Part of their Goods is not really Marketable, they make a Glut at once, and thereby discourage the *Fair Dealer* from sending any more; so that they engross all his Dealings to themselves, and by thus thrusting in themselves between *him* and the *Markets*, carry an absolute Sway over both, and the *Butcher* and *Consumer* are then entirely left at their Mercy.

When the *Markets* are full and well-stock'd, and by the foregoing Management they can easily make them so at any Time; then they buy up out of the *Markets*, and carry away such *Cattle* into remote Parts, where their Correspondents advise them they will bear a much better Price; by which Means they cut out the *Fair Trader*, keep the *Butcher* always at their Beck, and make the *Consumer* depend altogether upon them for his Provisions.

The same, or as bad, is the Case with *Dead* as well as with *Live Provisions*, which are engrossed and jobbed in the like shameful Manner. For from the Hours of *Two* or *Three* in the Morning, to the Time when the Inhabitants come to *Market* to supply their Families, the *Provisions* they want are shifted from one *Fobber* to another, and pass through many Hands, before they come to the *Consumer*; whereby the same Carcase of a *Calf*, *Sheep* or *Lamb*, shall be advanced one Third in the Price, on the very same Day, and in the same *Market*; which is a most intolerable Abuse upon the *Poor*, who must starve, or come up to the *Jobber's* Price; who by bringing in

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what they have in Store, or by carrying out what they buy to dispose of elsewhere, can Glut or Thin the *Markets* at their own Pleasure; and by these Measures both the *Butcher* and the *Houholder* are stinted in their Price, and depriv'd of their lawful Gain, by a Gang of Rascally Vagabonds and Interlopers.

What Provisions they glean up from the *Markets*, or what they have by them, which are really unfit for any *Market*, they either *Hawk* and *Cry* about the Streets themselves, or hire others to do it for them, in the Out-parts and less frequented Streets or Allies of the Suburbs, where the *Poor* are most numerous; by which Means abortive Carcasses, *Cows* cut out that dy'd in Calving, Measled *Pork*, Drown'd *Sheep*, and *Lambs*, and other Distemper'd and Infectious *Provisions*, come to be sold publickly: And this was notoriously the Case during the Time of the late Mortality among the *Cows*; of which the Lord Mayor of London, and the *Justices* for *Middlesex* met in *Sessions*, were made Eye-witnesses: But notwithstanding all their Care, and the Pains taken by the *Butchers Company* to inspect and remedy such Disorders, yet the Grievance continued, for want of more strict and effectual Laws to prevent it.

As to the other *Provisions* brought to these two great Cities, such as Corn and Grain of the several Kinds, Poultry, Fish, Fowls, Cheese, Butter, Eggs, &c. the Methods of *Forestalling* and *Engrossing* them, are not so common and notorious, as in the other Cases already mentioned; nor is the Malady quite so great, or attended with so many ill Consequences to the Publick. And yet even here there is some small Cause of Complaint, and good Reason to interpose by way of effectual Remedy and Redress. For if these *Provisions* did really come

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come in a regular Way, directly from those who furnish them, to those who want them in their Families; that is, from the Farm, the Dairy, the Fishery, &c. to the *Consumer*; with a sufficient Allowance for Carriage by Land or Water, and a reasonable Profit to the honest *Factor*, *Salesman*, or *Agent*; the Trade for these *Provisions* would then be much fairer, and more equitable than at present it is, and more to the Ease of the *Poor*, as well as of every good Subject and Houholder. But for want of a due Regulation of *Corn-Factors*, and a proper Method of Licencing *Badgers* and *Laders*, according to the true meaning of the Old Laws in that case made and provided, a Set of Unlicens'd *Higlers*, *Jobbers*, *Forestallers*, *Ingrossers*, *Hawkers*, and other Strolers and Interlopers, have crept in upon us, who traverse the Country, or have their *Half-way* Stages and Places of Resort, where they buy up these Commodities at the first Hand, and so forestall the proper *Market*. The *Engrosser* buys of these *Forestallers*, and sells again to others; and from them perhaps the Bargain passes to Two or Three Chapmen more, according as the Commodity is either perishable or fit to keep, before the *Consumer* and the *Poor* can come at it; and then not only they are miserably cheated, but the honest *Factor*, and the Licens'd *Higler* and *Badger*, is either tempted to join in these base measures, or must be utterly depriv'd of his Livelihood. It is also a common, though a very ill Custom, for *Waggoners*, *Carriers*, and others employ'd in conveying *Provisions* to London, by any sort of Carriage, not to content themselves with the reasonable Profit arising by such an Employ, but to turn *Hucksters* and Dealers in any kind of those *Provisions*, which it should be their sole Business to convey to the *Market*; they having by their quick and frequent Passing and Repassing between Town and

Country, a better Opportunity of knowing how the *Markets* are like to rise and fall; and by these Means they easily draw off a considerable, though a very unjust Gain, out of all *Provisions* of this kind; which Burden is sure at long run to fall altogether upon the honest Householder or *Consumer*. These Grievances, however trifling some may think them, are of fatal Consequence to the *Poor*, and deserve every good *Englishman's* serious Consideration, as well as his helping Hand towards a Reformation.

From this melancholy Prospect let us now turn our Eyes upon the Country, and there survey the wretched Spoil and Havock, which these *Forestallers*, *Ingrossers* and *Jobbers*, have made, in most of the Cities, Towns-corporate, and other Places of Trade throughout the Kingdom.

The Fact is undeniable, that in many of these Places, once populous and flourishing, the *Fairs* and *Markets* are become strangely thin; and where one can see little else besides Toy-shops and Stalls for Bawbles and Knicknacks. In some of them the *Markets* are intirely left off and disus'd, as if the Town had lost its *Charter*. The *Tolls* are sunk to nothing; and where, in the Memory of many Inhabitants, there us'd to come to Town upon a Day, *One, Two*, perhaps *Three*, and in some Boroughs *Four Hundred Loads* of Corn, now Grass grows in the *Market-place*. Many large Corporations are reduc'd to mere Thorough-fares, and have little other Dependence. Nothing relgns in them but Desolation all the Week long, in Comparison of the Throng and Concourse of People that us'd to be seen in the Streets; and the Shopkeepers are reduc'd to a very scanty Number, or forc'd to follow some other Business for a Subsistence. Those who love their Country, and are apt to enquire concerning its
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Good and Welfare, have often puzzled themselves with Questions about these Things, and are divided in their Opinion of the Causes of the Decay of *Market-Trade* every where in the Country. The Fault in general is commonly laid upon the Badness of the *Times*, or upon the publick Debts and *Taxes*, when perhaps there is no manner of Occasion for any Supposition of this kind; and they who look further into the Secret, do, it may be, still fall short of a compleat Discovery. So long as Property is secur'd, Buying and Selling will be of no Party; and as for the *Taxes*, and publick Burdens, they lie no heavier now upon the Country (if so heavy) than they have for many Years done; and as great Rents never hurt a Man where there is a Trade to answer, so all the present Charges will seem easie, where there is an Equivalent to balance, and where there is a due Circulation of Profit between the *Landlord* who lets, the *Farmer* or Rentor, who occupies or plants, and the *Consumer* who takes off the neat Produce; without the Intervention of too many Interlopers to cross upon this regular Course, and like Drones to rob the laborious Bees of their Cargo by the Way, which would otherwise be repositied in the Hive. Care has been taken to make the *Roads* better than ever: *Inland Navigation* has of late been much improv'd, and Land-Carriage, and Conveyance of Goods and Cattle from one Town to another, are as well perform'd as formerly, and as cheap as for many Years last past. We are therefore still to seek for the main Cause and Source of these Evils: Now if I can prove (as I hope I presently shall) That *Forestalling*, *Ingrossing*, and *Jobbing*, are the greatest, if not the only Reason for all Decays and Misfortunes complain'd of under this Head, or in other Terms, that they are the Bane and Ruin of the *Country Markets*, I think
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I shall have then said enough to prove, that the Persons concern'd in this mischievous Way of Living, are a common Nufance to the Kingdom in general.

To make this out, let us but consider in what manner *Markets* are now held in the Country, that is, in such Places where the Shadow or Name of them is still kept up and retained. Many *Farmers* seldom or ever come thither, but have one or two *Forestallers* and *Fobbers* for their Dealers, who come home to them, and there buy up what Commodities they have to dispose of; and upon their Credit and Correspondence they, in a great measure, depend, as to the *Price* and *Demand*, for any sort of *Provisions*. Some, who do still use the *Markets*, bring perhaps a Horse-load or two, which are expos'd to make shew of a *Market*, and to have a *Price* set, which must, however, depend upon the *Engrosser*, who has Stores enough by him for that Purpose. Others bring only Parcels of Corn in a Bag or Handkerchief, which are called *Samples*; and these are expos'd, perhaps, in private Houses, to a few *Fobbers* or *Engrossers*. A Third Sort shall send in their Corn, it may be, by Loads, but not on *Market-days*, and then they hoard it up in Granaries or Rooms hired for the Purpose, and at a proper Time, or when the *Farmer's* want of Money calls upon him to sell, comes a *Fobber* or *Engrosser*, and sweeps away the whole Stock at once, and carries it off to some more remote *Market*, or up to *London*, according as there is a *Call* for it to his Advantage. The neighbouring Gentry, made sensible of these wretched Practices, by the best Argument (*Experience*) provide every Thing within themselves, for the Support of their Families, by agreeing with some Tenant for whatever they want all the Year round, at a Set-price; or by reserving so much Land

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as is sufficient to answer that End; and they have their own Slaughter-houses, Granaries, and Store-Rooms, for all their necessary *Provisions*, independent of the several Trades in their Neighbourhood. In the mean time the *Shop-keepers* in Town and City, for Want of a *Market*, are in a great Measure deserted, and have no Concourse or Resort of Customers; and most of the Commodities they deal in, are now *jobb'd* or *hawk'd* about the Country, from Parish to Parish, and from Door to Door, by Vagabond and Itinerant Retailers, who carry their *All* in a Pair of Panniers, or upon one or two Pack-horses. I appeal to every one conversant in these Matters, Whether what I have said upon this Subject, be not in Fact the present State of most of our Country-Corporations, and a lively Image and Picture of their *Fairs* and *Markets* as they now stand. And, I think, I have clearly demonstrated, That all this is entirely owing to that mischievous and incorrigible Set of Men, whom I have hitherto describ'd. Without a speedy Reformation in this Particular, nothing can retrieve our Countrymen from impending and unavoidable Ruin; and they must, upon some Occasions, to avoid Starving, be much more Selfish and Mercenary, than hitherto they have been represented. For if the *Fairs* and *Markets* sink and come to nothing, the *Towns* and *Boroughs*, where those are kept, cannot long survive a Disaster, that so nearly concerns their very Being, as well as their Prosperity.

But to set this Matter in a clearer light, I shall fairly and distinctly Examine, what influence these wicked Practices of *Forestalling*, *Ingrossing*, *Fobbing*, &c. have, and must have, upon the Welfare and Well-being of all the several Orders of Men throughout the Kingdom, from the Highest to the Lowest.

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There is one Common and General Grievance, arising from this Intestine Evil, which equally affects both Rich and Poor, runs through the whole Body of our Fellow-Subjects at once, and is alike pernicious to every Family and Inhabitant of *Great-Britain*. And therefore I shall dispatch this first, before I come to more particular Enquiries.

We all depend upon Trade, and Trade consists in a Due and Well-proportion'd Circulation or Exchange of Money for Goods, and Goods for Money. As to this particular Trade in Provisions, it is of the greatest Consequence imaginable, because it consists of such Things, as are absolutely Necessary for the Support of Humane Life: And then is this Trade most Fair and Regular, when *Provisions* pass from the first Producer of them to the last *Consumer*, through the Hands of such Honest and Lawful Dealers and Manufactures only, as are requisite to fit them for *Consumption*. *Fairs* and *Markets* were appointed as places of Resort or Rendezvous for the Parties concern'd, in which to Meet and Treat for the better carrying on of this Mutual *Exchange* and Regular *Circulation*. Whoever therefore gets any of these Commodities into his Hands, without making them more fit for Consumption than they were before he had them, and without forwarding them to that End; or whoever Diverts, Interrupts, or Molests any of those Meetings design'd for this good Purpose in furnishing the Publick with Provisions, is most certainly an Enemy to this *Trade*, and consequently a Nuisance to his Country. Thus for instance, where *Live Provisions* come from the *Breeder* to the *Feeder* or *Grazier*, thence to the *Drover*, and so on to the *Market*, and thence to the *Butcher*, and at last to the *Eater* or *Consumer*, this Course is Fair and Regular; because all these Trades serve to fit such Pro-

visions for *Consumption*. And the same is the Case with *Dead Provisions*; as where *Corn* passes from the *Farmer* to the *Baker*, *Brewer*, *Mealman*, *Malster*, and from them to the *Consumer* or *Householder*; all these Trades are useful in forwarding such *Consumption*, and ought to be supported by a Reasonable Profit and Advantage. But now the *Fore-staller*, *Fobber*, and *Ingrasser*, is neither Assistant to any of these Lawful Callings, but rather obstructs them; nor does any thing towards the Bettering of such *Provisions* as he is possess'd of, but often makes them worse; and all his Business, by Interloping, is only to raise the Price, by way of unjust Gain for himself: And so far as the Price is rais'd, which must at last fall upon the *Consumer*, so far in Proportion does he actually Cheat and Defraud every one of his Fellow-Subjects; and there is not a Family or Inhabitant in *Great-Britain*, who is not more or less a Sufferer upon his Account, and through his wicked Management. As to the *Fairs* and *Markets*, which are of such Use in this Trade, he does by Molesting and Ruining them, in effect Ruin a Trade, upon which the whole Nation cannot but depend; and it must certainly be shocking to consider, That every *Englishman* now in Being, though in never so High or Low a Station, should be so much at the Disposal of a Gang of Miscreants, who have nothing to make them considerable, but only Mischiefs, Oppression, and Knavery.

But to be more particular, The *Nobility* and *Landed Gentry*, who are Masters of Demesnes and Owners of *Estates*, have a Visible and Certain Dependence upon their *Rents*, and are sure to be affected in their Properties, according as their *Farmers* can afford to Raise or Sink their Leases, or to make certain or dubious Payments. Whatever there-

therefore affects the *Farmer* or *Rentor* in any near Degree, or disables him from paying a Good Rent, or from paying it well and duely, must in Proportion affect the Estate it self, lessen its Value and Income, and in Time considerably reduce it. The Prejudice hereby done to the Tenant must naturally rise Higher, and at the Year's End fall hard upon the *Landlord* or *Proprietor*, whether he be a *Nobleman*, *Gentleman*, or *Commoner*; and will be found by Experience, to be a much greater Burden, and a more reasonable Cause of Complaint than the *Taxes*.

Let us now see then, in what respects, and to what Degree, the *Farmer* or *Rentor* is really affected by this mischievous Practise of *Forestalling*, *Jobbing*, *Engrossing*, &c. The *Farmer* or *Rentor* of *Arable Lands*, who is first and chiefly concern'd in the Produce of *Dead Provisions*, is in a good Measure depriv'd by the *Forestaller*, of all the Benefit of his *Markets*, where is the proper Vent for his Commodities: And before those Commodities can circulate in a regular Course to the *Malster*, *Brewer*, *Baker*, &c. the *Forestaller* will have his Profit out of them; whereby the *Farmer's* Price comes to be lessen'd, and part of his Gain to be divided among *Vagabonds* and *Interlopers*. When he exposes his *Corn* or *Grain* to sale in an *Open* and *Free Market*, he has then choice of *Customers*, and such a reasonable Chance for a Price, as the present *Want* or *Demand* for Goods will afford him: But when the *Forestaller* has him in his Clutches, he is then stinted in his Dealings, it may be to one or two *Chapmen* only, and must in a great Measure be brought to depend upon them, both for *Price* and *Demand* too. These are great Drawbacks and Disadvantages in this way of Trade, and must in the Consequence very nearly touch both the Estate and the Owner or Proprietor

prietor of it: And when the *Farmer* is thus become Dependent upon one or two *Forestallers*, his Condition is very Precarious; and if either of them Fails (as they are often Out-witted by their own Fraternity, or sunk at once by running too Great and Desperate Hazards, upon Long Credit, or a very Mean Foundation) the *Farmer* is inevitably Ruin'd, and the *Landlord* at long-run the Sufferer. The same is the Case with the *Rentor* of *Pasture Grounds*. The *Jobber* is as much a Nufance in this particular, as the *Forestaller* was in the other. All *Inland Breeders* and *Feeders* of Cattle have an entire Dependence upon the *Markets*; and as those Dwindle, they are sure to be losers in Proportion. When the *Breeder* is once link'd to one or two *Jobbers*, the regular Communication between him and the *Grazier* or *Feeder*, is so far interrupted, that he must lose in his Price perhaps one Third, which is the *Jobber's* Profit and Subsistence. If on the other Hand, the *Grazier* or *Feeder* goes to *Market*, he there finds that the *Jobber* has been before-hand with him; of whom he must buy, or lose the Expences of his Journey: And if the *Jobber* cannot have his own Price, he then lies by with his Cattle, or Drives them away into another Country. If under these Discouragements the *Grazier* keeps at home, and gives himself up entirely into the Hands of the *Jobber* (as in these Circumstances he must do or Starve) then the *Jobber* is at liberty to make both *Price* and *Demand* as he pleases. And of this sort of Men some are now come to be such large and general Dealers, that when any One of them fails (as that is often the Case, either out of Design or Necessity) many *Breeders* and *Graziers* are Ruin'd at once, and their *Landlords* are left Destitute both of Rent and Tenant, which are

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swallow'd up and Devour'd by these Ravenous Spoilers and Plunderers of the Publick.

As to the *Butcher, Poulterer, Brewer, Baker, Maltster, Mealman, Innholder, Victualler, Corn-Factor, Chandler,* and other Honest and Lawful Traders, who are concern'd in Handing down *Provisions* to the *Consumer,* and fitting them for that Purpose, upon the Discouragement given to the *Markets,* they really know not when or where to buy, unless they apply to the *Fobber* or some other of that Gang: And then they find every Thing comes so dear to them, by that Time it has pass'd the Clutches of *Forestallers, Engrossers, Fobbers, &c.* that sometimes they cannot come up to the Price, at other Times they dare not run too Great Hazards; their Customers make hard shifts, and cannot or will not encourage a Free Consumption; and often beat them down in their Price, when they cannot afford it, and complain of them when the Fault is really none of their own. At the same time, the *Hawkers* and *Strolling Chapmen* step in between them and their Out-lying Customers, and that way draw off a considerable Part of their Business: All which Grievances bear so very hard upon this sort of Traders, that the Burden is become almost Intolerable; and yet without these, a State cannot subsist, and they are absolutely Necessary towards the very Being and Maintenance of all Societies.

The *Shop-Keepers, Retailers, Handicrafts,* and *Mechanicks,* who are *Members* or *Inhabitants* of the several *Cities, Burroughs,* and other *Towns* within this Kingdom, are also great Sufferers by this detestable Practice of *Forestalling, Fobbing, Engrossing, &c.* For when their *Markets,* which are in a great Measure their support, are thinn'd and

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and less'n'd, or sunk to a mere Name and Shadow, there is no longer that Resort and Concourse of People, whereby Customers are brought to their Shops; but their Neighbours furnish themselves elsewhere, or buy of those *Hawkers* and *Strollers,* who traffick from Door to Door in refuse Goods and Commodities: And thus whilst their own Trade decays, and the Provisions for their Families are by this Means become dearer, the Taxes carry a double Weight, and they Mourn and Repine, without being able to discern the secret Hand that hurts them, and consequently without knowing where to apply for Relief. There is a *Record* in the *First* and *Second* of *Phil.* and *Mar.* Chap. 7. which says, That when the Corporations and Towns did enjoy their Rights of Trade undisturb'd, they did thrive and flourish, employ'd their Poor, bred up their Youth in good Order, and were on all Occasions an Honour and Support to the Government: And this it was which gave a Value to all the Adjacent Lands throughout the Kingdom.

At the same time every *Buyer* and *Consumer* (under which Names are included every *Subject* and *Inhabitant* of *Great-Britain*) is miserably Impos'd upon, Cheated and Oppress'd, by this Villainous Cabal and Confederacy of Bloodsuckers, the very Pest of Societies, and Vermin of the Body Politick. When our *Provisions* upon which we subsist are so long detain'd whilst we want them, corrupted and made worse before they come to us, and deliver'd down through so many unnecessary and griping Hands, for the Sake of a private unjust Gain, ere they arrive at the last Stage, and are in the Possession of the *Consumer,* such abominable Management must be a deadly Wound and Gangreen in the State, and it is

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high time to interpose with the proper Remedy, and such as may be safe, speedy and effectual. In vain are kindly Years and Seasons, rich Crops and Harvests, Fields and Meadows laden with Corn and Grass, if in the Midst of all our Hopes, the *Forestaller*, *Engrosser*, and *Jobber*, shall come like a Blast or Mill-dew, and devour the Fat of the Land, prey upon the Labours of the Husband-man, make spoil of the Industry of the Fair Trader, and rob every Family and Fellow-Subject in the Kingdom, of their Ease and Satisfaction, in the well-grounded Expectation, and quiet Enjoyment, of Plenty and Prosperity.

But above all other Orders of Men, the *Poor* are, upon this Occasion, the greatest Objects of Pity; and for their Sakes it is a sort of Stupidity or Cruelty, not to be transported with a more than common Resentment against those, who so unjustly Harraß and Oppress them. Their Cries are ever Resounding in our Ears; and a true and lively Picture of their Families, and the wretched Condition they are in, would not fail to melt the most Harden'd, and produce the Tenderest Effects in the Minds of a People, famous for Good-nature and Charity. To have their Provisions and Sustenance, by means of these wicked Wretches, brought to them at so excessive a Price, when there is really no Occasion for it, at a Time when they are so numerous, when so many Hands among them are incapable of Work, when so many are unprovided of any Employ, and Hire and Wages are at such low Rates, is a most afflicting and deplorable Grievance; for which, the Authors of it will be one Day severely accountable. Let the Times be never so Good and Plentiful, yet the *Forestaller*, *Jobber*, and *Engrosser*, like *Pharaoh's* lean Kine, fall upon and devour the *Fat*, and can make a Scarcity in the Midst of Plenty. Whilst the *Poor*, who feel the

the Effects, but are not Quick-sighted enough to discern the Cause, break out into Murmuring and Repining, perhaps into Mutiny and Sedition, and lay the Blame upon the *Times*, and it may be their *Governours*; though in the mean while the true Source of their Misfortunes lies nearer home, and all these Oppressions and Grievances are to be charg'd to the Account of a few of their own Fellow-Subjects, who grind their Faces, ride over their Backs, and have laid this Burden upon them. Whilst they suffer thus much from the *Forestaller*, *Jobber* and *Engrosser*, in the Scarcity and Dearness of their *Provisions*, they run as great Risques from the *Hawker* and Vender of stale, corrupted, and distemper'd Commodities; by which their Health is impair'd, their Lives are brought in Danger, and noisome and contagious Distempers are daily promoted throughout the Kingdom. And this *private Jobbing* and *Hawking* of *Provisions* is really a great Encouragement to *Theft*, and the killing of Cattle in the Fields and Pastures, by Night, near and about *London*, and other great Cities; where the *Graziers* are at a great Expence to keep Watch, and yet sometimes Fourteen or Fifteen Sheep are killed in the Night; others have the Fat taken out of them; some Ewes are kill'd when big with Lamb, and many Carcasses are carried off, before they are fit for *Consumption*; whereby abundance of stoll'n and unwholsome *Provisions* come to be vended, to the Damage of all Persons concern'd in *Grazing*, and of all the Families in and about this and other great Cities, which depend so very much upon the Goodness and Fair-marketing of *Flesh-Provisions* in general. Thus stands this great and necessary Branch of *Trade* at present; and in this wretched manner are we supply'd with the ordinary *Provisions* for our Families all over the Kingdom.

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What Effect a Remonstrance or Complaint of this kind may have, I know not; but certainly it is not unbecoming the Duty of a good Subject to set these Matters in a true Light, and to place them fairly in the Way of those, whose Business it is to provide for the common Safety and Welfare. I dare appeal to any Reader of common Judgment, Whether these Things do not call aloud for Redress and Amendment; and am perswaded, that it ought much rather to be made a Question, How the *Forestaller, Engrosser, Fobber, &c.* came to reign so long? Than, Why they should not now be put down and suppressed?

After such a Melancholy Account, it may perhaps be expected of me, that I should offer something by Way of *Scheme or Proposal*, for the better Regulation of the *Markets*, and of the *Trade for Provisions* of all sorts in General. But I shall decline that Task, for two Reasons: One is, Because this Affair more properly belongs to those above me; And the other is, Because I am well inform'd, that there hath been such a *Scheme* for some time in Agitation, form'd and projected by very able Hands, and directed and approv'd by Persons of the first Note for Understanding, Justice, and Integrity; which, I hope, and make no doubt, will meet with all fitting Encouragement, according as it shall be found practicable in it self, easie to the Subject, and effectual to the removing those heavy Grievances, under which we now labour. I cannot, however, forbear making one Remark upon the Nature of such an Undertaking, with an Eye to the Laws now in Being against *Forestallers, Regrators, and Engrossers*. And what I would observe, is this; That since the Laws now in Force against these Men, have, by Experience, prov'd to be so very weak and ineffectual,

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because the Information and Prosecution upon those Laws have been left at large, and to every one's Discretion, it must follow, that unless a particular Set of Men be especially enabled and empower'd to enquire into, to detect, pursue, and effectually to suppress the Offenders in every one of these Kinds, the Remedy must fall short of the Distemper, and we shall still remain in as bad a Condition as ever. Other Methods have been try'd, and have not succeeded, as is plain from the Experience of near *Two Hundred Years* last past. The Evil hath all along grown upon us, and is now risen to a formidable Pitch: No ordinary or common Methods can subdue or keep it under, but such necessary Measures must be taken, as have been found upon Trial to be thoroughly effectual, in the Cure and Removal of many other National Grievances. Whenever, therefore, I shall be so happy as to see a *Proposal* of this Kind offer'd to the Publick, such as all honest Traders in *Provisions* may find their Advantage from, in common with the rest of their Fellow-Subjects, and may readily embrace and assent to, I shall then think myself amply rewarded for the Pains I have taken in my present Enquiries; and I make no Question but every honest *Citizen and Countryman* will lend a helping Hand, and chearfully unite to forward and promote such a useful and beneficial Undertaking.

Give me leave, therefore, before I shut up this Argument, earnestly to conjure and call upon all Ranks and Orders of Men in the Kingdom, to exert themselves upon this so pressing an Occasion, and heartily to interpose in Behalf of their Country. The Mischief done to Trade in these Particulars, is truly great, and of a pernicious and extensive Influence, though the Persons concern'd in doing

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ing it, are in themselves trifling and inconsiderable. Let me humbly intreat the *Nobility* and *Gentry*, as they value their *Estates*, and those who shall inherit them, as they tender the Welfare of their *Tenants*, *Dependants* and *Inferiors*, as they regard their own Families, and those of all their *Fellow-Creatures* and *Fellow-Subjects*, as they would protect and promote *Trade* in General, to embark in this good Cause with all their Power, Interest, Wisdom and Justice, Let me advise the *Members* of *Cities* and *Corporations*, the *Merchants*, *Traders*, *Mechanicks* and *Inhabitants* of *Towns*, as they hope to see their *Markets* revive and flourish, as they desire to have their Shops swarm with Customers; as they wish to have *Plenty* and Abundance dwell with them, and in their Neighbourhood; as they bear a Regard to the due Circulation of *Trade*, and as they love and pity the *Poor*, and would have them decrease, and share a Competency in the common Benefits of Life, heartily to join in the proper *Applications* for Redress, earnestly to *solicite* and *forward* the good Designs of those, who are labouring in this Respect to give us Ease; and to be sedulous, active, and importunate, that we may no longer groan under that Yoke, which so many Years hath miserably gall'd and afflicted us. *Lastly*, Let me exhort all other my *Countrymen*, especially those who are concern'd in *Tillage* and *Pasture*, or any ways dependent upon either; and the *Poor* among the rest, as they desire to have their honest *Labours* crown'd with Success, as they wish to *subsist* quietly and comfortably among their Neighbours, as they value *Plenty*, and the Blessings that flow from it; as they wish for the Increase of *Generosity*, *Hospitality*, and *Charity*; and as they tender the *Welfare* of the present and future Generations,

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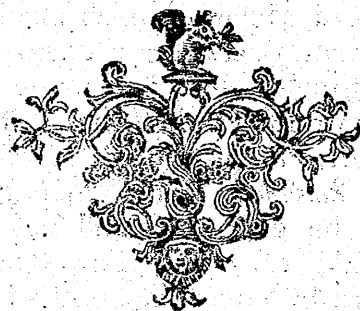
rations, to cry aloud upon this Occasion, to *address*, *expostulate* and *intreat*, with Freedom and Humility, and to take all other lawful Measures, that are allow'd to good and dutiful Subjects, for procuring the proper Redress for themselves, and for all their *Countrymen*; that this Grievance may be abolish'd, and that this important Branch of *Trade* may be restor'd to its regular Course and Purity, and settled upon a right Foot, and a solid and lasting Foundation. In which good Work whoever shall be assisting, or shall conduce towards bringing it to a happy Issue and Accomplishment, will approve himself a true Lover of his Country, and will richly deserve the united Thanks of this and future Ages.

Were the barefac'd wicked Practices of *Fore-stalling*, *Regrating*, *Engrossing*, *Jobbing*, &c. once suppressed and taken away, I am very sure there would soon appear quite a new Face of Things, both in *Town* and *Country*: For it may be pre-supum'd to have prov'd to a Demonstration, that these Offences are of the largest Extent, and of the most dangerous Consequence. Remove these, and we should then approach much nearer to the *Golden Age*, than was ever pretended. If we had *Plenty*, we should then be made sensible of it, and feel, and taste its Benefits. If *Property* were not better *secur'd*, it would, at least, be much more equally *divided*. The *Publick Burdens* would then hardly be ever felt, and never, with Reason, complain'd of. The Times must mend, and Societies flourish, when the Spoilers and Disturbers of both were taken out of the Way. For of such Universal Influence is this Affair, that a thorough Reformation would soon produce such, and so good Effects, as nothing but Experience could convince us of their Reality: And though after that,

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I cannot say there would, on this Account, be no Complaining; yet I might venture to say, there would be no *just* Complaining in our Streets.

The *Laws* of *England* have been remarkably strict and severe in protecting and securing this Necessary Trade in *Provisions*; witness the *Statutes* concerning *Weights, Measures, Standards, Proof of Commodities*, and the like: For enquiring into which, Ancient and Honourable *Courts* and *Inquests* have been erected and appointed. And why then should we imagine, that there will not be due Care taken in this Particular, which is of so much greater Importance in the same Way of Traffick and Commerce? All Great and Wise Kingdoms and States have pursu'd the like Methods, and in their *Sumptuary Laws* about *Provisions*, have been eminently tender of the Welfare of their People. Whence we may reasonably infer, That *Great Britain* will never fall short of any other Nation under Heaven, in this so conspicuous an Instant of Wisdom and Justice.



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