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REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

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Of Two Pennies Scots *per* Pint, on all

ALE and BEER;

First granted *anno* 1693, by the Parliament  
of Scotland, to the City of

EDINBURGH,

And since continued to Edinburgh, and granted  
by the British Parliament to many other  
Towns in

SCOTLAND.

EDINBURGH:

Printed in the Year MDCCLXI.

REFLECTIONS

X A T

ON THE TAX OF TWO PENNIES SCOTS UPON THE SCOTS PINT OF ALL ALE AND BEER BREWED, BROUGHT IN, OR VENDED WITHIN THE TOWN OF EDINBURGH AND LIBERTIES THEREOF;

BY JOHN GIBSON, ESQ. OF EDINBURGH.

AND JOHN GIBSON, JUNR. OF EDINBURGH.

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REFLECTIONS

ON THE TAX OF TWO PENNIES SCOTS UPON THE SCOTS PINT OF ALL ALE AND BEER BREWED, BROUGHT IN, OR VENDED WITHIN THE TOWN OF EDINBURGH AND LIBERTIES THEREOF;

# REFLECTIONS

U P O N

The TAX of Two Pennies Scots upon the Scots Pint of all Ale and Beer brewed, brought in, or vended within the Town of EDINBURGH and Liberties thereof ;

First granted by an Act of the Scots Parliament in the Year 1693, for a Term of fifteen Years, and further not exceeding thirty, and since continued to Edinburgh, and granted to other Towns in Scotland, by several Acts of the British Parliament.

## INTRODUCTION.

THE following reflections were intended to have been offered to the consideration of the public, above a twelvemonth ago ; but, upon recollection, the eve of the parliament was thought a fitter season for it, when  
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when gentlemen, upon a new election of representatives, might have it in their power to put a stop to the growing evil complained of.

TAXES, for the support of our happy government and constitution, though great, are yet necessary ; but such as evidently tend to diminish the public revenue, and to become burdensome to the trade, manufactures and landed interest of a country, and this only for private ends, are intolerable.

THE time now approaches when gentlemen may have an opportunity of doing their country and themselves justice. It is to be presumed that no candidate who means honestly, will (previously to his being elected) refuse to gratify his constituents, with an engagement to observe their instructions with regard to matters evidently hurtful to the general interest ; or should any have hardi-ness enough to scruple giving so reasonable a security for their behaviour, it is to be hoped they will be rejected as unworthy of the great trust they solicit.

## R E F L E C T I O N S

U P O N

The TAX of Two Pennies Scots *per*  
Pint, on all Ale and Beer, &c.

**T**HIS tax, in the first instance, is levied from the brewer, who disburdens himself by laying it upon the retailer, and he again by laying it upon the consumer.

By law the brewer is intitled to add the duties of the excise to the price of his two-penny ale ; whereby the price of every barrel containing twelve Scots gallons, would amount to fourteen shillings and four pence Sterling ; but this being found too high a price to afford retailers a living profit at two pence the pint, (to which price they are so far restricted as to become liable to pay five shillings *per* barrel if they charge two pence halfpenny *per* pint) brewers have been obliged to accommodate

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date their customers with ale of such quality and price as they can live by, at the above rate of two pence the pint.

THE acts imposing the town's duty of two pennies *per* pint, are silent as to the adding said duty to the price of their ale, and, in fact, they have been judicially debarred that liberty. This determination erroneously considers the tax levied by the town as part of the price; whereas the common brewer ought to be viewed in two different capacities; first, as a man selling a commodity at a certain price which belongs to himself; and next as the collector of a tax imposed upon that commodity which he must pay over to others. Besides this, brewers argue, that they are often obliged to trust retailers with their ale; that by this trust they are not only subjected to pay the tax before they receive it, but liable to suffer by bankruptcies, and other accidents; that it cannot be reasonably expected, they should be so unjust to themselves, as to become answerable for an uncertain collection, without gratuity, or uncertain, tho' necessary risks, without premium; and therefore,

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fore, in order to adjust an equivalent for these disadvantages, they are under the necessity of reducing the quality of their ale; and from these reasons it happens, that the said judicial determination is, and always must be eluded. But, without entering further into the merits of these pretences, I shall first endeavour to trace out what effects the two pennies Scots duty has hitherto produced, as being considered by brewers as part of the price of their ale, and afterwards make some observations upon a supposition that they might again raise the quality of it to the same standard it held before the imposition of this tax, if legally permitted to add the value of it to the price of their ale.

A town supposed to consume annually six thousand bolls of barley, reckoning each boll to yield twenty-four Scots gallons of two-penny ale, the whole number of gallons produced will be found to amount to one hundred and forty-four thousand; or Scots pints, one million one hundred and fifty two thousand, reckoning eight Scots pint to the Scots gallon.

Now,

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Now, if we suppose this town to obtain the privilege of laying a duty of two pennies Scots *per* pint upon the above quantity of ale, supposed to be brewed in it annually, that will raise the sum of eight hundred pounds Sterling. And hence naturally arises the following observations:

*First*, That the two pennies Scots upon the pint of ale, being one twelfth part of the price of that quantity, when sold by retail, and one ninth part of the price of the same quantity, when vended by the barrel; it cannot be imagined that the brewer, under such disadvantages, can afford to keep up the quality of his ale; on the contrary, he will probably think he does great justice, if he lowers it no more than one ninth part; and hence one million one hundred and fifty two thousand pints, now drawn from six thousand bolls, will, after the tax is established, be drawn from five thousand three hundred and thirty-three bolls, *by one third of a boll*

*Secondly*, The consumption of barley being thus lessened by six hundred and sixty-six bolls

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bolls and two thirds of a boll out of six thousand bolls, the public revenue of excise upon malt, must necessarily suffer proportionally, admitting the same quantity of ale as formerly still to be brewed; but when it is further considered, that the consumption of ale, must also suffer a vast decrease by being debased, this decrease must also necessarily have a very great effect upon the demand for barley; and of which, perhaps, a good judgment may be formed, by taking a view how this tax has operated upon the revenue of excise within the city and liberties of Edinburgh; and by considering what effects it has produced with regard to the consumption of two-penny ale and barley within the said city and precincts.

AND here I shall insert some observations taken from a pamphlet of reputation, published in Edinburgh in the year 1748, intitled, *A short view of the prejudice arising both to the country and revenue from the imposition on ale and beer granted to the city of Edinburgh, &c.* This Author remarks, that, “As this branch of the revenue of excise  
“ does principally depend upon the consumpt  
“ of two-penny ale, which is the liquor com-

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“ monly

" monly used in Scotland, as the consumpt  
 " of that liquor diminishes, the revenue of  
 " excise has proportionally suffered a de-  
 " crease, as will evidently appear from the  
 " books and accompts kept of that revenue,  
 " by which the gross amount of the reve-  
 " nue of excise upon two-penny ale, strong-  
 " ale, and small-beer within the city and li-  
 " berties of Edinburgh, from the union of  
 " the two kingdoms till the 24th of June  
 " 1725, being eighteen years, amounted to  
 " L. 271775 : 8 : 2 $\frac{1}{4}$  Sterling, of which sum  
 " the duty on two-penny ale alone, was no  
 " less than - - L. 263512 7 2 $\frac{1}{4}$

" And the duties of ex-  
 " cise on the same li-  
 " quors for the like  
 " number of years,  
 " from the 24th June  
 " 1725, to the 24th  
 " June 1743, a-  
 " mounted to no  
 " more than 201283 4 9 $\frac{1}{4}$

" Of which the duty on  
 " two-penny ale alone  
 " was 191050 12 7 $\frac{1}{4}$

" So

" So that the diminution  
 " of the revenue of ex-  
 " cise during these last  
 " eighteen years, ap-  
 " pears to be no less

" than - - 70492 3 5

" Which is an annual

" decrease of - 3916 4 7 $\frac{1}{2}$

" Yea so remarkable is this decrease of ex-  
 " cise on two-penny ale alone, that, in the  
 " year 1724, it was L. 16245; but in the  
 " year 1743, only L. 8000. And, as the re-  
 " venue of excise is so greatly decreased du-  
 " ring the aforesaid space of eighteen years,  
 " the loss the country in general has suf-  
 " fered is proportionally higher; for the du-  
 " ty of excise on two-penny ale, including  
 " the malt-duty, is near one seventh part of  
 " the total price which the brewer is by law  
 " intitled to take from the retailer: By the  
 " same rule of proportion, a diminution of  
 " L. 70492 : 3 : 5 upon the duty of excise,  
 " must produce a real loss to the country of  
 " L. 422953, 6 s. more."

Thus far our author, to whose remarks I  
 shall beg leave to add, that as it appears the  
 duties of excise on strong-ale, small-beer,  
 and

and two-penny ale, within the city and liberties of Edinburgh, for the first eighteen years after the union, that is to say, from the union to the 24th of June 1725, amounted to L. 271775 : 8 : 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ , or at the rate of L. 15098, 13 s. nearly *per annum*: And seeing the same duties from the 25th of June 1725, to the 24th of June 1743, being another eighteen years, produced only the sum of L. 201283 : 4 : 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ , and occasioned a loss to the revenue of excise, during that period, of L. 70492 : 3 : 5. And, as it further appears by the books and accompts of excise, that the same duties, from the year 1743 to present year 1760, being seventeen years, produced no more than the sum of L. 145013 : 11 : 4; therefore, it may fairly be concluded, that the total loss which the said revenue of excise has sustained upon the articles of strong-ale, small-beer, and two-penny ale within the Edinburgh collection, from the 25th June 1725 to the present year 1760, being thirty-five years, must amount to the round sum of L. 182155 : 7 : 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ , as will appear by the following estimate, *viz.*

HAD the Edinburgh collection of excise, upon strong ale

ale, small beer, and two-penny ale gone on, as it ought to have done, producing at the rate of L. 271775 : 8 : 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ , as it did for the first eighteen years after the union; then for the same number of years subsequent to the 25th of June 1725, terminating the 24th of June 1743, it ought to have raised the sum of

L. 271775 8 2 $\frac{1}{4}$

Deducting  
one year  
short of  
eighteen 15098 13 0

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256676 15 2 $\frac{3}{4}$

These two sums then is the value which the excise on said liquors within the Edinburgh collection,

collection, ought to have raised during the above term of thirty-five years, and amounts to the sum of 528452 3 4 1/2

But, as said Edinburgh collection, appears by the excise-books, to have raised during the above period of eighteen years, terminating in June 1743, only L. 201283 4 9 1/4

And also, for the above period of seventeen years terminating in June 1760, only

145013 11 4

Amounting to the sum of 346296 16 1 1/4

Therefore, the loss which has been sustained within the Edinburgh col-

lection,

lection, upon the articles of strong-ale, small-beer and two-penny ale, during the aforesaid period of thirty-five years, terminating in June 1760, amounts, as before observed, to the round sum of - - - 182155 7 3 1/4

AND now, if we take a view of what effects have been produced, with regard to the consumption of two-penny ale and barley, within the city and liberties of Edinburgh, they will be found pretty remarkable.

THERE, from the union to the 24th of June 1725, being eighteen years, the excise upon two-penny ale alone, computed to be 2 1/9 shillings per barrel, containing twelve Scots gallons, appears by the excise-books to have raised L. 263512: 7: 2 1/2, or at the rate of L. 14639, and a fraction per annum. Now, as I said before, without taking in the town's duty of two pennies Scots per pint upon strong-ale and beer, if we reckon it upon two-penny ale only, (that being the great article of consumption), and consider said town's



town's duty as equal to two thirds of the duty of excise, abating therefrom a nineteenth part, and which it just amounts to, being one shilling and four pence *per* barrel, or two third parts of two shillings; then, I say, the said tax of two pennies Scots upon the pint of two-penny ale, must have raised *communibus annis*, for the first eighteen years after the union, something more than the sum of 9245 pounds sterling, as will appear by the following computation, *viz.*

One year's excise on two-penny ale, as before observed, is	-	-	14639	0	0
Deduct $\frac{1}{19}$ th part, as so much exceeding two shillings <i>per</i> barrel	-	-	770	10	0

Remains of the excise at two shillings the barrel	13868	10	0
And two thirds of which, being one year's value of the town's duty, at one shilling and four pence <i>per</i> barrel, amounts to the sum of	L.	9245	13 4

Now;

Now, if the said sum of nine thousand two hundred and forty-five pounds, be considered as one ninth part of the value of all the two-penny ale formerly brewed in Edinburgh in one year, the whole consumption, at that rate, must have amounted in value to the sum of eighty three thousand two hundred and five pounds Sterling in one year, producing, at twelve shillings *per* barrel, one hundred thirty-eight thousand six hundred and seventy-five barrels; or bolls of barley, reckoning two barrels to the boll, sixty-nine thousand three hundred and thirty-seven bolls and one half of a boll.

SINCE the above period, the consumption of two-penny ale has gradually fallen, infomuch, that at present, and many years back, it is presumed, the town's duty of two pennies Scots, has not raised above half of L. 9245, or L. 4622, 10 s. if so much; consequently, the consumption of barley in Edinburgh, must have sunk from  $69337\frac{1}{2}$  bolls, to  $34668\frac{1}{2}$  bolls, or just to one half what was formerly manufactured into the article of two-penny ale alone. And hence, it will not be difficult to judge how greatly both the public revenue and landed interest must be

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affected by so great a reduction of the demand for this staple article, chiefly to be attributed to this town's duty of two pennies Scots upon the Scots pint of two-penny ale. But,

*Thirdly*, As  $5333\frac{1}{3}$  bolls of barley, will supply an equal number of individuals, with the same quantity of ale, as 6000 bolls did before the imposition of the town's duty; therefore, the demand for barley, and consequently the price of it, must fall. This will apparently discourage the industrious farmer, and reduce the rent of land; because, (according to the received maxim, that all taxes laid upon the product of land, must ultimately terminate upon it), that portion which supplies the supposed town with  $5333\frac{1}{3}$  bolls of barley becomes virtually loaded with an extraordinary tax of no less value than eight hundred pounds Sterling *per annum*: And if we calculate how this L. 800 will fall upon the acre of land, it will be found to take place in the following proportions, according to the different quality of it; that is to say, if we suppose the land to be of that quality as to yield seven bolls *per acre*, the quantity of acres employed to carry  $5333\frac{1}{3}$  bolls, will

will be just the seventh part of said number, or nearly 762, and a tax of L. 800 falling upon that number of acres approaches to twenty one shillings every acre. If we suppose six bolls *per acre*, the number of acres employed will be near 889 acres, or about eighteen shillings *per acre*. If five bolls *per acre*, the number employed will be  $1066\frac{2}{3}$ , or about fifteen shillings *per acre*. If four bolls *per acre*, the number employed will be  $1333\frac{1}{3}$ , or twelve shillings *per acre*. And if we suppose  $3\frac{1}{2}$  bolls (which may be reckoned the lowest quality of arable land), the number of acres employed to carry  $5333\frac{1}{3}$  bolls will be about  $1523\frac{1}{2}$ , upon which quantity of acres, the tax of L. 800 Sterling, becomes a load of about ten shillings and six-pence each acre. And hence, it must be observed, that upon the best land, or that supposed to carry seven bolls *per acre*, this tax or town's duty of two pennies Scots upon the Scots pint of two-penny ale, rises to a value rather exceeding the rent; and by the time we get down to the lowest quality of arable land, or that supposed to carry  $3\frac{1}{2}$  bolls *per acre*, the said town's duty amounts to three, or perhaps four times the rent; and I am persuaded

ed it cannot be shewn, that the fair rent of an arable farm, consisting of this quality of land, can reach to three shillings *per* acre; whereas the town's-duty of two pennies Scots upon the Scots pint of two-penny ale, amounts to no less than ten shillings and six-pence *per* acre.

IF now we collect a short view of the consequences, which follow upon the plan of including the duty of two pennies Scots upon the Scots pint of two-penny ale, they appear to be in the first place, That, allowing the same quantity as formerly still to be brewed, the consumption of barley must decrease in proportion as 6000 is to 5333 $\frac{1}{3}$ . That this decrease must necessarily affect the duties of excise, discourage the growth of barley, upon which the rents of Scotland greatly depend, and lower the quality of two-penny ale to so great a degree, that the poor labouring consumers of it are prompted to have recourse to spirits of the most pernicious and cheapest kinds; and burdens the land with an unsupportable tax, certainly tending to injure trade and manufacture, and often to indulge whim and riot. And, in the second place, admitting what is certainly a fact, that the principal

principal cause of the decrease of the consumption of two-penny ale, is its being debased; then it seems plain, that, in whatever proportion that cause shall operate, in the same degree of proportion, must all the above hurtful effects increase.

ON the other hand, were brewers permitted to add the town's duty of two pennies Scots to the price of their ale, and thereby be enabled to raise the quality of it to the same strength and goodness it maintained before said duty was imposed; in that case, there could be no doubt, but that a much greater quantity, both of barley and ale, would be consumed than is at present; consequently, the duties of excise would advance, and the production of barley be less discouraged than upon the other plan; but then, as a counterbalance, the land will still remain immoveably burdened with the value of the tax in question, calculated to amount to eight hundred pounds Sterling, upon every six thousand bolls of barley consumed; or at the rate of thirty-two pence Sterling for every boll. And, with respect to labourers and manufacturers, their expence of living, consequently their wages,

wages, and consequently the price of the manufactures they deal in, must be advanced.

To institute <sup>a</sup>tenible calculations, shewing what effects these articles of additional expence might produce upon trade and manufacture, is a task extremely difficult, and much beyond the reach of my skill and experience; however, according to my idea of this matter, it seems to be no unreasonable presumption to suppose, that living and wages might increase, at least in proportion to the value of the tax imposed; and therefore, in this case, may be fixed to one ninth part. Upon this principle then, let us consider how it would operate upon the business of a manufacturer of linen, who entertains twenty journeymen, each (before the tax was imposed) producing cloth annually to the value of fifty pounds Sterling, or one thousand pounds worth of linen in the whole, and each earning ten pounds Sterling wages, or one fifth part of the value of his labour in the same time.

THE wages of twenty journeymen  
 at 10 l. each *per annum*, amounts to L. 200  
 Carried over L. 200  
 Brought

Brought over L. 200  
 To which if added for master's living, house-rent, public burdens, repairs of utensils, &c. &c. 70

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The master's yearly expence will amount to the sum of L. 270  
 To which, if we add one ninth part, or thirty pounds Sterling, occasioned by the tax, this will appear to fall an additional burden of three *per cent.* upon the above value of the cloth manufactured; and so much, at least, must the manufacturer raise the price of it, to enable him to carry on his business to the same advantage as formerly. This tax then cannot fail to give a severe check to trade: For, if our views are extended to exportation, and it be considered how powerfully an original dearness of three *per cent.* must operate upon a commodity, which must necessarily pass through variety of hands, before it reaches a foreign market; that every one in passing must have his profits; and that these profits advance progressively also upon the original dearness: it can hardly otherways be concluded, but that such accumulated exorbitance

bitance would at length produce an effect equal to a prohibition; at least, there seems to be no visible way of keeping so clogged a channel of trade open, but by landholders being obliged to abate in the former prices of their wool, flax, hides, corn, &c. &c. And thus it is that the whole loss sustained would inevitably and ultimately recur upon the landed interest.

AND upon the whole, in whatever light we view this tax, which seems to be wantonly spreading itself to every obscure corner of Scotland, it becomes matter of surprize, that gentlemen in general, and land proprietors in particular, have not been more attentive to prevent the progress of so glaring an imposition; and were our representatives in parliament (previously to their being elected) instructed with regard to this, and some other points of police, I am persuaded such a measure would be productive of very salutary effects.

*F I N I S.*