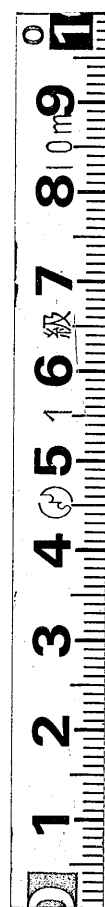


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AN
E S S A Y
ON
WOOL,
AND
WOOLLEN MANUFACTURE,
FOR
The Improvement of Trade,
TO
The Benefit of Landlords, Feeders of Sheep,
Clothiers, and Merchants.

In a Letter to a Member of Parliament.

IMPRIMATUR,

Decemb. 31. 1692.

Edmund Bobun.

LONDON:

Printed for Henry Bonwicke, at the Red Lyon, in
St. Paul's Church-yard. 1693.

(I)

AN
 ESSAY
 ON
 WOOL,
 AND
 Woollen MANUFACTURE.

As much as *Wool and Woollen Manufacture*, is of very great Concern to every *Landed Man*, and that your Honour is no less desirous to joyn in such Measures, as may conduce to the Benefit of the Nation in general, and that place for which you serve in particular, as of your own Estate, I hope with all humility, that you will entertain this Paper with the same Candour, wherewith you have always accepted my Labours for the Publick; and the rather, because your Honour will easily believe, that I have no Private Interest to serve, in relation to this Subject.

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It hath been observed by Men of the greatest Experience, that the *Undervaluation* of *English* Commodities abroad, hath been the first and most considerable detriment we have suffered in our Forreign Dealings.

And altho' at first the *Dutch* and the *Easterlings* did all they could to raise the Price of our *Woollen Manufacture*, to the end, that they might the better sell their *own*, yet having now established their own to a great and dangerous degree, they begin to run down our Cloth, as fast as before they hoisted it up, and care not how cheap we sell, provided they can assign for the Cause of that Cheapness, the false making of our Cloth of late, and the exacter care that *Forreign Manufacturers* take, for the Accusation now is not, that our Cloth is *dear*, but *false made*.

And it appears, not only by the Confession, but by the Complaint of our *Clothiers* in general, that this suggestion of *Forreign Dealers* hath but too much ground; they complain very justly, That *Dutch Chapmen*, and *private Merchants*, who have of late Years exported our Cloth, having not been able to give the full Price, have had great Quantities of Cloth made to that Price that they can afford to give, and tho' the *honest Clothier* doth make such bad Ware with great regret, yet he is forced to make such as he can vend, since the Societies of Merchants, who always gave a good Price (for which they had such Ware as *Forreign Manufacturers* cannot imitate) do now buy very little, being under-sold abroad by *petty Chap-men*, who, of late Years, have forced a Trade.

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This *sudden* and *unnatural Trade* hath for divers times been experimented, to make the Price of *Wool* for a while rise; for that low Price, at which *Forreign-Merchants* have set this false-made Cloth, hath caused many Buyers abroad, to take advantage of that cheap Opportunity of stocking themselves with *English Drapery*; and such a Trade hath lasted for Three or Four years, whereby much *Wool* hath been here manufactured, and the Price of *Wool* accordingly raised; but at length, when the Baseness of this *Manufacture* hath been discovered, and the Markets abroad clogg'd, as sudden a Fall of *Wool* must in all likelihood be expected to have ensued, and by this Opportunity the Value of *foreign made Cloth* hath been raised, our Cloth discredited, Merchants of Societies discourag'd, Clothiers had little to do, Growers to pay, and Landlords to receive. So that with Submission it seems absolutely necessary to the Good of this Kingdom,

- I. That our *Woollen Manufacture* be raised to its former *Credit* and *Esteem* abroad.
- II. That the *Ballance of Trade* be set even, and that neither too much nor too little be every year exported.
- III. That it may be put not only into a *flourishing*, but into a *lasting state*.

For, *First*, If the Price of our Cloth be low abroad, 'tis impossible that *Wool* should continue to bear a good Price at *home*: If Cloth falls, the *Material*

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rial 'tis made of must fall with it, and consequently the Labours of the *Card-makers, Breakers, Combers, Carders, Spinners, Weavers, Fullers, Shearmen, Clothiers, Dyers, Cloth workers, Packers, &c.* must be beat down, if these be discourag'd, we must more and more lose our Manufacture, for who will breed up their Children to a *discourag'd Trade*? And in the end we shall as effectually lose it as the *Dutch* have already gained it.

Secondly, If the *Ballance of Trade* be not kept even, not only in reference to Goods *exported* and *imported*, which the *Foreigner* never observes, but in reference likewise to Foreign Markets, that one be not over-clogg'd with that Commodity which another wants, and that Times and Seasons be duly observ'd, we shall put the Chapmen abroad, that are to take off our Cloth to such Uncertainties, that there will be no dealing with us, for they will find in many places, that *private Merchants* have supply'd those *Retailers*, whom they used to furnish, they'll find Cloath cheap where they expect it to be dear; so that they cannot sell, and Cloth dear where they expect it to be cheap, so that they cannot buy; so when they buy, it shall be *Dutch Cloth*, and when they sell ours, it shall be for *what they can get*.

Thirdly, 'Tis of no advantage to the Nation to have a Fit of good Trading, if it cannot *continue*; nay, in this Instance of *Woollen Manufacture* it is injurious; for if a *Purchaser* buys *Land*, or a *Tenant* takes a *Lease*, or a *Grower* encreases his *Stock*, upon the consideration of *Wools* bearing such a Price, each one of these

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these is a Loser when it falls. And so if the *Clothier* encreases his Number of *Apprentices, Looms, Stock*, and the like, upon a false Supposition, he is like to be ruined. The Condition things are in at *present* is not only to be minded, but that which they must necessarily be in *hereafter*.

Wherefore 'tis humbly propos'd, in the first place,

I. That Care be taken, that our Cloth be made so good, that it shall bear a considerable *Price* abroad, and yet be *cheaper* to the *Buyer* than foreign-made Cloth; for if at the same time it be not cheaper in proportion to the Goodness than *Dutch-made Cloth*, 'tis impossible that we can keep the Trade from them. 'Tis natural for every Man to make the most of his Penny, and since our *Growers* and *Clothiers* cannot live upon their Profession, at the price of Cloth which the *Dutch* do now afford it at, we must make our Cloth *truer* and *better* than they do to outsell them. For though the *Wool* be of our *own growth*, and *Fuller's-Earth* peculiar to us, yet they have so many ways of getting the former, and so much Store have they got from us of the latter, that they can continue the Manufacture many years without us. And if inferior *Workmen* with them are to be had so much cheaper than with us, the Advantages of our Native Commodities do but little more than compensate for the dearness of our Workmen.

But something they do, and something we surpass them when we please in *Workmanship*, to which if a little *good Policy* and *State-Encouragement* were added, we may still retrieve a *Languishing Trade*, by suffering no Cloth to go out of *England*, but of such a *standard Goodness*, according to such and such Marks.

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II. Secondly, That our Cloth-Trade may be divided all over the World, into particular Cantons proportioned and ballanc'd, as may seem best upon due Information, to the Wisdom of *Parliament*, who may perhaps think fit to constitute of their own Members an Annual Committee, with fixed Allowances and Pen- sions out of a publick Bank, who may alter and recti- fie the Proportions of each English Corporation of Merchants, and place of foreign Sale, according as Times and Occasions alter.

III. Thirdly, That such a certain and definite num- ber of *Cloths* be every year exported necessarily, without any abatement for any pretended Contin- gencies, as may keep the Price of *Wool*, and the *Ma- nufacture* of it to such a height, as that the *Clothier* shall know it his Interest to make so many more Cloths than now he doth; the *Grower* to encrease his Stock of Sheep, and the *Landlord* to raise his Rent and Value of Land.

Concerning the first of these three Proposals, di- vers *Acts of Parliament* are still in force, which may be revived and amended as may seem good to the Legislative Powers; the other two are liable, so far as I can see, to no Difficulties and Objections, but what may be obviated by this *Method*, viz.

There being so many Societies of English Mer- chants exporting our Woollen Manufacture to foreign parts, they may be obliged, coming under such *Regulations* as the Parliament shall think fit, to export every Year each Company such a proportion of
Cloth

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Cloth as altogether may leave us but bare enough for our own use, and that at a round price. Thus suppo- sing the Cloth-trading Merchants to be the Merchant- Adventurers, the *Turky Company*, the *East-India Company*, the *Eastland Company*, the *Hudson's-Bay Com- pany*, the *Russia Company*, the *African Company*.

And suppose there be, in all *England* and *Wales*, (according to the ingenious and accurate *Mr Houghton*) 39938500 Acres of Land, and one Third part of it unfit for feeding of Sheep, as Woods, Parks, Fens, Mine-pits, &c. or otherwise employ'd; and that one Sixth-part of the Remainder be good Meadow, and such Land as will maintain two Sheep on an Acre; and that all the rest be plow'd Land, barren Downs, Wafts, Commons, Orchards, and the like; which may, one with another, maintain one Sheep on an Acre, this will amount to 31063257 Sheep in the whole Nation: Allow then 75 Fleeces to a Pack of Wool, there will be 414176 Packs.

One Pack weighing 240 *l.* all Detriments, Waste and Tare rebated, will make Three Pieces of Broad- Cloth, Thirty Yards to a Piece; and if we make yearly in all *England* 150000 Broad-Cloths, they are supposed to take up 50000 Packs of our Wool, and of the *Spanish* Wool imported, we may, at the most, reckon Ten thousand Cloths more; in all 60000.

One Pack of Wool will make likewise six Pieces of lesser Drapery, as *Kerseys*, *Bays*, *Flannel*, *Serges*, *Perpetuano's*, *Says*, *Frise*, and the like, one with ano- ther of thirty Yards a Piece; and, I reckon, that we make 1600000 of these lesser Draperies, (I may call 'em altogether) yearly, which will spend 266666 Packs, their's 316666 Packs disposed of; and suppose such
such

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such Uses as shall be hereafter mention'd, to take up the remaining 97510 Packs, here's the whole Product of Wool in the Land, which by the former Computation of Acres, amounts to 99402240 Pound.

Grant then, that in *England* there be 7000000 of Men, Women, and Children, of which 1000000 to be Infants, and their Wear not reckon'd, Two Millions more to wear old and patch'd Cloaths, Lindsey-woolfe, and the like, and but One in Seven to wear Broad-Cloth, and no more each than three Yards a piece for a whole Year, this amounts to 100000 Cloths: And that Three more in the Seven wear only lesser Drapery, and but 5 Yards each to a Year's Wear, (which in *Norwich*, and such-like Stuffs, will not go far) this comes to 500000 Pieces; then to every Piece of Cloth, allow one Piece of Stuffs in Linings, Waistcoats, Breeches, &c. and we have but 1000000 of lesser Drapery, and Sixty thousand Cloths yearly to Export.

Then for 97510 Packs of Wool remaining, allow to every one of the Six Millions, One pair of Stockins a Year, and Four pair to a pound of Wool, and a quarter as many exported, amount to 25000 Packs; then for Hats, that of Three Millions, each wears one Hat in two Years, and four Hats to one Pound of Wool, amounts to Five thousand Packs more.

Upholsterers Ware, as Blankets, Curtains, Hangings, Skreens, Linings of Coaches, Chairs, and the like, to be a quarter-part of the Stuffs that are made, spends Fifty thousand Packs; and if one thirtieth part of our Wool be put to such Uses as are here omitted, and

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and otherwise wasted in dressing and working it, what's left will be too little for burying Shrouds, and other Funeral Occasions.

And now we have none left but what is to be Exported, viz. Sixty thousand Cloths, and One Million of lesser Drapery.

First then, The Merchant-Adventurers being restored by Queen *Elizabeth*, upon the Petitions of the *Growers* and *Clothiers*, to all those Priviledges, which in the Twenty-ninth Year of Her Reign they had been deprived of, flourished so, that about the Year 1600, they Exported Sixty thousand White Cloths, besides all manner of Stuffs every Year, the White Cloths alone valued at 600000 *l.* Forty Years after they Exported about 50000 Broad Cloths, 1000 Bays, and 20000 Stuffs a Year: And the Reason they give, why of late they have not Exported a quarter so many Broad Cloths, and little more than half so many Stuffs, is, that *Forreigners* who understand not the Trade, have brought Quantities of *false-made Cloth* here, and Exported it, and not only glutted and mistimed *Forreign Markets*, but brought the Commodity into *disesteem*. Now if the Wisdom of the Parliament shall think fit to put a stop to that *private Trade*, and restore the Merchants to their former State, they cannot think themselves ill used, if it be upon Condition, That they every Year Export Fifteen thousand Broad-Cloths; and seeing the *Stuff-Trade*, and especially of new *Draperies*, is quicker of the two, 250000 of them.

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The *Turkey-Company* may likewise be obliged to Export yearly Twenty eight thousand Broad-Cloaths, and Five thousand Stuffs. The *East-India-Company* Five thousand Broad-Cloths, and 45 thousand Stuffs. The *East-land-Company* Three thousand Cloths, and Ten thousand Stuffs. The *Hudson-Bay-Company* Five hundred Cloths. The *Russia-Company* Four thousand Cloths, and Four thousand Stuffs. The *African-Company* One hundred and forty thousand Stuffs. So that now we have but Four thousand five hundred Broad-Cloths, and Five hundred forty six thousand Stuffs remaining.

And the *Portuguezes*, who would take off at least Three hundred thousand Pound a Year in our Wool-len Manufactures, if we would deal with them for Wine, do nevertheless take off about 180 thousand Stuffs a Year. *Spain*, about Two thousand Cloths, and Three hundred thousand Stuffs. *Italy*, Five hundred Cloths, and Forty thousand Stuffs. *Barbary* Six thousand Stuffs. The *Western-Plantations*, Ten thousand Stuffs. *Sweden*, and *Norway*, Two thousand Cloths, and Ten thousand Stuffs; without any Obligation, but the Necessity of their Trade. These Proportions I insist not upon, the Wisdom of Parliament will find out better.

But if the *Merchant-Adventurers*, or any other *Fraternity*, shall, after the Proportion is set out, think themselves hardly dealt with, by being obliged so to increase their Dealings, they have a Remedy at hand, and can ease themselves, by enlarging their Company, and making more Members of it Free upon easie Terms. In King *James* the First's time, they had Three thousand

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and five hundred Freemen of that Company; and since that, they have had Six thousand Free at a time: Now suppose they admit but Four thousand Freemen, and that but one quarter of these are Dealers; and that one with another, they Export each for himself, but Fifteen Cloths, and Two hundred and fifty Stuffs a Year, which is no great Merchandizing, it will do; and accordingly the other Companies, if they think fit, may take the like Measures.

I proceed therefore to the Advantages that we may expect to reap by such a Method.

I. First, This will keep the *Cloth-Trade* altogether in the hands of the *English*; I mean, the Profits of Trade in *English Manufacture*, in which *Foreigners* at present have too great a share, as *English Merchants* and *Clothiers* well know to their sorrow.

II. There will be less Danger and Loss upon the Seas. Societies of Merchants trading in *strong* and *well-mann'd Vessels*, and not adventuring, as petty Merchants do, without Convoys, to the enriching the Enemy, and impoverishing our selves.

III. This will encourage the Building of great and able Ships, which may be of Service to the Publick in Times of Necessity: for Societies will not hazard so valuable a Commodity as *Cloth*, and in such great Parcels, as doubtless they will send out at a time, in ordinary Vessels: for one of the *Mysteries* of *Merchandize*, being the right *timing* of *Markets*, they will not send over in Driblets, as independent Traders do,

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but send sufficient Quantities at a time, according to the Occasions and Fashions of the Places they deal with, besides, their By-Laws oblige 'em to Export only in *English Bottoms*.

IV. The Nation's Credit abroad will by this means improve, and those Societies yearly bring to such and such Places, so great a quantity of our Manufacture, as will be a *Security* to any *Town* or *State* we deal with, and each Society will be more able upon any great Exigence, as by taking up Money, or engaging Themselves, and their Effects, for the Service of their Country, to do the Nation, especially in time of War, some signal Offices; as the *Merchant-Adventurers* did, about the time of the *Spanish Invasion*.

V. Exportation of Manufactured Wool will be never attempted: for when the Manufacture is so much encourag'd, Wool will bear a better Price at home, than now it doth abroad; here will be Ready Money without danger, and variety of Markets; whereas the Exportors run great *Risques*, are forced to sell where they first Land, and sometimes, to take *Words* instead of *Money*. For,

VI. The Price of Wool must necessarily rise and keep up, if every Year so much is Exported, as not to leave enough for our home use.

VII. Our Cloth will bear a constant good Price abroad, when no body can much undersell another, because all Wares of such and such Marks, will be of like goodness, the Price at the first Penny will not be much

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much different, the Charges and Hazards almost equal to every one, and no Merchant will be over or understock'd, to the unpeakable undervaluation of our Ware.

VIII. It will prevent our Clothiers, and other Manufacturers, transporting themselves into *Holland*, to the irreparable damage of this Nation, as 140 Families did out of *Norfolk* and *Suffolk*, in the Years 1635, 1636. and when Two or Three thousand of our English Clothiers settled themselves in the *Palatinate*.

IX. The Orders for Overseeing and Sealing Cloth will be more strictly look'd after, by publick Officers; and indeed every Member of these Societies: Whereas the Foreigner looks no farther, than to get so many Yards overplus, in consideration of the want of Breadth and Goodness, provided he hath it at his own Terms, beating down by that means the Price of Cloth here, and underselling it abroad: So that the Retailers abroad, that buy it of us, do only look upon the *Muste* and *Outside*, and finding themselves afterwards cheated, they change their Chapmen, and deal with the *Honest Dutch*; which might be prevented by Publick Officers, and a *Publick Seal*.

X. This will make the Commodity more staple and more considerable all over the World; whereas now the proffer'd Sale of it makes it contemptible, and they that accept the Bargain make good the Merchant's Proverb, That *there is Twenty per*

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per Cent. difference between, Will you Buy, and Will you Sell.

XI. Greater quantities of Cloth will be here made than now is, when the Clothiers are morally sure of a certain Market, and Ready-Mony before the Year goes about, and that make as much as they will, it shall be all taken off their Hands.

These Benefits I have enumerated regard the Good of the Nation in general, and those belonging to the Merchant and Clothier in particular, are likewise worth consideration. For,

1. Wealthy Merchants will not be able to *Engross* so much the Trade to themselves as now they do, but every Member will have a *Share* in the *Circulation proportionable* to his *Abilities*. The Great Ones shall not have too much upon their Hands at a time, nor the lesser Merchants too little, but every one shall have so many Lots as his Trade requires, which may be known and attested by Certificates from an *English Publick Notary* abroad, which will make every ones Factor industrious to drive as good and as speedy a Trade as he can. Nor will this be any Wrong to great Merchants, or exposing their Effects or Abilities, since every one hath Liberty to be of more than one Society, as we see divers Merchants belong at the same time both to the *East-India* and *African Company*, and so others.

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2. Again, *Young Traders* would hereby have *Assistance* and *Direction* in their Dealings, and not be suffer'd to *Ruine* themselves, as they do, by wading out of their *Depths*. They would not find a way easily of *Trading without a Stock*, whereby they often *ruine* themselves and *dishonour* the Nation, it being a *Reflection* upon us abroad, that our *Young Merchants* engage themselves too deep, and when not *governed* by a *Society* too *extravagantly*.

Young Merchants, and those that cry out so much for *free Exportation*, do often take up Goods upon *Credit* or *Exchange* to *Ten* or *Twelve per Cent. Loss*, and afterwards upon some sudden *Pinch* being forced to *Sell*, they *underfell* others to keep up their *Credit*, to the *disparagement* of our *Commodities* and *ruine* of themselves, as well by *losing* in the *Cloth* they *sell*, as buying *Foreign Ware* at too dear a rate, *enhauning* the *Price* of our *Neighbor's Commodities*, and *lessening* that of our own, to make quick *Return*. So the *Merchants of York, Hull, and Newcastle* send young men over with their *Cloth* (too young indeed to deal with *Hollanders, Hans-towns, and Jews*) who having engaged themselves to *relade* their *Ships* at a certain day with *Foreign Ware*, before they can *sell* their *Cloth* they buy of *Foreigners* upon *Credit*, and having a *Day* of *Payment* set, are forced, be the *Market* how it will, to *sell* their *Cloth* at any rate, to keep up their *Credit*; which wild way of *Traffick* makes the *Price* of *Cloth* so *uncertain* to *Foreigners*, that the *Retailer* knows not when and how to buy, and so *grows weary of the Trade*.

3. This

3. This will be a Means to hinder the raising of *Tolls* and *Imparts* abroad, each Company having Influence and Authority where they reside, especially in such a Town as *Hamburg*, where the Trade hath maintained 20000 Persons at a time, and be able likewise to contravene all fraudulent Dealings and Combinations against the Trade.

4. This will not only keep up, but encrease the number of *Publick Places of Sale* abroad, where our Cloth is exposed in an open Market; and all the Sellers are obliged to attend with great *Plenty* and *Variety*; which Method is known by long Experience to forward the Sale of any Ware: And such publick Places and Markets can no more be settled abroad by *Private Dealers*, than it could be practis'd here at home by *Foreigners*, who though they had upon mis-information of *Queen Elizabeths* Council, the *George* in *King Street, Westminster*, assigned them for a publick place of Trade, yet could never bring one Waggon-load of Clothes to be unloaded there: And if under the notion of *Buyers*, People in a foreign Country cannot without being *incorporated* make a *Publick Place* of Trade, much less can they under the Notion of *Sellers*.

Beside that, publick Places of Sale are more for the *Honour* of the Commodity, and of the *Merchant*, than private bartering and pedling up and down, as those stragling Merchants did in the year 1565, who went up and down at *Narve* in *Lifland*, with

with *English Cloth* under their Arms, and a Measure in their Hands, bringing the noblest Commodity of *England* into the greatest Contempt.

But most Advantage of all will by this means accrue to the *Clothier*, and by consequence to the *Grower*; for there will be so current a Price, and such certain Dealings for this Staple Commodity, that *Broakers*, *Wool-jobbers*, and the like, will not henceforth eat out the *Clothiers Profit*, (a great cause of the dearth of Manufacture in *England*) but the *Merchant* and *Draper* will be forced to employ Factors to go about the Country, and buy Cloth at the *Clothiers* home, paying ready Money: At least the *Clothiers* bringing their Cloths to Market every week, will find Customers enough: So the poorest *Clothiers*, which have but a little Stock, may Trade for themselves, which now they cannot do.

I could enumerate many more Conveniencies both *National* and *Particular*;

As, That it would be a means to prevent the King's being defrauded in his *Customs*.

That *Taxes* upon Stock and Effects may hereby be more *easily laid*.

That Trade will be judiciously varied according to *Emergencies* and *Alterations* abroad.

There will be less quarreling with our Merchants about *Tare* and *Rebatements*.

This will raise the Price of Corn throughout the Nation; for Wool keeping hereby certainly to a round price, Stock will be encreased, and a great deal of Land laid down in Pasture, so that there will be less Corn-Land, and less Corn sowed.

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But what I have said may perhaps suffice to satisfy your Honour, That however I succeed, I think it my Duty to study the good of my Country.

I will not now trouble your Honour with an Account of the great Damages this Nation sustains, by the Exportation of that which is not full Manufactured, I leave that to another Hand.

I am, &c.