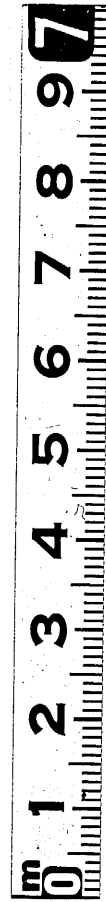


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THE  
CONSEQUENCES  
Of Laying an  
Additional Duty  
ON  
SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS.

11

THE  
CONSEQUENCES

Of Laying an

Additional Duty

ON

SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS,

Candidly confidered.

By a BYSTANDER.

*The Evil is too true.* — SHAKES.



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THE  
CONSEQUENCES  
Of Laying an  
Additional Duty

ON  
SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS.

**T**HAT every endeavour to improve the morals of the people, secure their health, and encourage industry, deserves applause, nobody can deny; consequently the right reverend prelate by his excellent sermon on Preventive Wisdom, has truly merited the compliments that have been paid him, for his laudable efforts to suppress

**B** that

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that pernicious vice of dram-drinking: nevertheless, as there is a possibility that different consequences may be deduced from very well meant principles, that the best intentions may be perverted to very bad uses, it is to be hoped, a By-stander may (without giving offence, or without being esteemed a patron of drunkenness) object to the measures, that the public papers intimate are about to be undertaken, for the cure of the evils so reasonably complained of.

It may not be amiss to observe, that this so universal depravity of morals, is not confined to any particular rank, sex, or age of our people; this species of debauchery has too certainly and too fatally diffused itself, as well among those of the highest class as the lowest; and it would be equally wise and necessary to propose a remedy for the  
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one as the other; happy it would be were it possible for both! And though the mischiefs arising from it's prevalence among the latter, may be more conspicuous in general than those of the former, they are alike dangerous in their consequences.

That the frequent and immoderate use of spirituous liquors, has of late years increased excessively among the inferior people, and that it has been, and must be extremely injurious to their strength and constitutions; that it must disable them from labour, and consequently diminish industry, and be detrimental to the trade and manufactures of these kingdoms, are truths that must readily be admitted: nor can it be doubted, but if those of superior fortune by any excess, render themselves incapable of, or unfit to perform the duties they owe to God

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their country, but they become equally obnoxious to the peace and welfare of the community, altogether unworthy members of society, and ought as well to be restrained by some coercive laws, as those who are not so happy in large possessions; and however custom may have distinguished the Patrician from the Plebeian, that what shall be thought fashionable and excusable in the one, shall be esteemed vicious and punishable in the other; there can be no real diversity in the nature of the offence; drunkenness will still be drunkenness, and attended in all with the same mischievous effects, though perhaps differently expressed; whether Citron-water or Aniseed, Ratifia or Geneva, Arrack or British spirits, Port wine or Porter, are the instruments employed. When the passions are enraged by the abuse of any inflammatory

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matory liquors, the only disparity between the wealthy and the needy is, that wantonness frequently prompts the one to indecency and outrage, while a self-occasioned necessity urges the other to acts of violence.

That a reformation is necessary, is universally agreed; but where and in what manner it ought to begin, is not so easy to determine: the before-mentioned learned Prelate, as well as the worshipful Author of an Enquiry into the causes of the late Increase of Street-Robbers, seem to have confined their considerations of this enormity, and calculated their remedies to prevent its Increase, only to the inferior sort of people; though it is not hence to be presumed, that either of these great men intended thereby, to flatter or connive at the debauches of the great; or that they could  
imagine,

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imagine, that vice accompanied with power, may not be pernicious to the common weal, and require restraint: yet it is not impossible, but the many-headed multitude may be induced to think themselves somewhat aggrieved, by this invidious distinction: may not such as by their situation in life, are deprived not only of all it's comforts, but even of almost all it's necessaries, think they have reason to complain of being abridged by law, of what they esteem the only refreshment in their power to procure? Poverty may not only be the effect, but the cause of dram-drinking; wherefore it is to be wished, that any attempt to prevent the latter, will be accompanied with a relief to the former.

Nothing is hereby designed to vindicate a practice so hateful in itself, so dreadful in it's consequences, and

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and so justly condemned by every sober industrious man; but only to submit it to the consideration of the public, Whether, as this pestilence is become so universal, that it's ravages affect as well the court and city, as the camp and navy; that with impunity it makes a dismal havock as well among the rich as the poor, the proposed antidote ought to be so contrived, that it may effectuate a cure alike on all ranks of persons? Experience sufficiently evinces the powerful influence of example, whether good or bad; even the foibles of the great, are generally the objects of imitation to their inferiors; wherefore it may be presumed, as well as it is greatly to be hoped for, that their virtue and sobriety would not be less exemplified.

How far what is said to be the intended alteration is likely to produce

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duce the desired effect, is intended the further subject of these considerations; which according to the public papers, is to lay an additional duty on all malt spirits distilled in *England*; and that no rectifier or compounder, shall presume to make, sell, or vend, any foreign or *British* spirits, except he enters a still of 100 gallons, and that the said duty be laid on all stock in hand. It may not be impertinent here to take notice, of the several endeavours heretofore employed by the legislature, to put a stop to the progress of this growing mischief. In the year 1729, an act was passed for laying an extraordinary duty on all compound waters and spirits; which after having been experienced for upwards of three years, was not only found ineffectual, but prejudicial; and accordingly in 1733 it was repealed, *Because it*  
*had*

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*had been a discouragement to the distilling of spirits from corn in Great-Britain; and that for the encouragement of the exportation of spirits drawn from corn in Great-Britain, a drawback or allowance of 6l. 8s. per ton, was to be paid and allowed on the exportation thereof.* But this poison growing still more diffusive and dangerous, it was thought necessary to subject not only all compound waters, but all spirituous liquors, which any retailer should from and after the 24th day of *June* 1736, be possessed of, to the payment of a duty of 20s. a gallon, and that every retailer of the aforesaid liquors should pay 50l. a year for a licence, for his so dealing: this was at that time thought to amount almost to a prohibition, and opposed as an intolerable grievance upon the distillers, and as an injurious oppression on our foreign  
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colonies; and notwithstanding this law was then passed, notwithstanding it was rigorously executed, yet it was soon found to be of little effect, and that the terrors of imprisonment were of no avail, to deter men from the indulgence of a vicious pleasure; wherefore in the year 1738, it was deemed expedient to enforce the execution of this law, by another more severe. Still vain was every attempt to this purpose; the laws were eluded, and the people not in the least amended: therefore in 1742, the aforesaid law was repealed; *because great difficulties and inconveniences had attended the putting the said act in execution, and the same had not been found effectual to the purposes intended.*

A misfortune that has attended these repeated efforts is not only that they have done no good, but that

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that they have been productive of many evils: particularly by encouraging idleness, a vice they were intended to cure: it is well known but a few years ago, many profligate fellows rather than follow any lawful employment, set up the trade of informing, and made it their business, to go about like the Devil, seeking whom they might devour; like him, first seducing the unwary by various artifices to offend, and then betraying them for offending: by the most flagrant perjuries attempting, and too often effecting, the ruin of many families; hence proceeded such clamours, disturbances, and riots, as greatly endangered the peace of the whole kingdom, and more particularly annoyed this great metropolis.

Tho' it is extremely to be wished, that the present design might

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be attended with the expected success, yet it is as much to be feared it will not; nay, that many inconveniences may follow the carrying such a law into execution; a law, that seems calculated to affect only the very poorest of the poor: the handicraft, the manufacturer, the labourer, will still have it in their power to purchase a debauch, though at greater expence: and from the experienced perverseness of mankind, more especially where the gratification of a favourite appetite is obstructed, it may not unreasonably be apprehended, that the additional expence will be so far from being the means of preventing their endeavours to indulge themselves, or the consequences of that indulgence, that, on the contrary, their inclinations will grow stronger, even from the difficulty of gratifying them, and by adding

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to their extravagance, their necessities will be increased, and their temptations to illegal methods of supplying their wants proportionally augmented.

The loss the revenue will in all probability suffer from this new regulation, deserves to be very seriously considered: the heavy debt the nation at present labours under, the numerous taxes the trading part of the people have so long been obliged to pay, and the distant prospect of obtaining relief, must afford very melancholy reflections: the reduction of interest, gave just expectations of a reduction of some of those taxes, that principally affect the necessaries of life: nor is it to be doubted, from his Majesty's known paternal care for the welfare of his subjects, and from the wisdom of the legislature, but the first favourable opportunity

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nity would have been taken, to have fully answered those expectations: but if this diminution takes place, these taxes must not only be continued, but perhaps increased; the sober and industrious, who have long cheerfully borne the greatest part of this burthen, must hereby have it as it were rivetted to their shoulders, in order to, what? To wash the *Ethiopian* white, to reclaim the idle and incorrigible; the useful part of the subjects, must be sacrificed to the vices of the abandoned and useless: is it not rather to be feared, that such proceedings may drive the careful and honest to despair, and induce them to become partakers of the crimes of the careless and profligate?

Another inconvenience that may be apprehended, is, that this diminution of the revenue, will not proceed so much from any salutary

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tary effect of this proposed scheme, as from the encouragement it will give to smuggling: the seasonable severity of the laws, and the vigilance of the magistracy in the execution of them, has now nearly broke the knots of these daring villains; but this will open a new door for them, this will revive their now drooping spirits: they will no longer be considered as a terror to their poorer neighbours, but rather as benefactors; for such are the bewitching charms of this *Circean* cup, to those that have been used to it, that friends, family, every thing that ought to be esteemed dear to them, is forgot for the sake of these intoxicating liquors: and while smugglers can sell a dram cheaper than it can be otherwise purchased, (and that they may do it under this additional duty needs no illustration) they will be assured  
of



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jefty, as in times of the greatest danger, may be invested with extraordinary powers, as well to hinder the outrages of smugglers, as other intestine disorders that may be consequent thereon, *ne quid detrimenti capiat Respublica.*

As it is to be presumed, that the funds necessary to provide for the exigencies of the state, are for the most part considered and settled by those Gentlemen, whose immediate province it is to take that care, previous to the meeting of the parliament: may not such a sudden and unexpected application, whereby the publick revenue must in course undergo great alterations, appear to some calculated rather to serve the purposes of a party, desirous or determined to distress an administration, than that any material benefits were expected from it? Would it not be deducing

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cing a consequence very bad in itself, and very injurious to the Right Rev. Author, from his so well designed principles, to insinuate that this arrow, which seems destined against the quiet and security of the commonwealth, was drawn from his Lordship's quiver? And will it not be matter of great concern to that eminently good Prelate, to find his pious intentions so far perverted, as to be made the instruments of fomenting divisions, and oppressing the government? Yet such is the partiality of most men in favour of their particular passions, that if by art or accident they happen to be extraordinarily animated, the voice of reason is seldom capable of restraining their impetuosity; and it is evident, that many mischiefs have been perpetrated under the mask of reformation.

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The experiment has been already frequently tried, and has been found fruitless in regard to the people, dangerous to the peace of the realm, and a discouragement to trade, which ought to be the principal object of care in a commercial kingdom. If every subject of abuse must be loaded with extraordinary taxes, it is to be feared, that even the necessaries of life, could not be procured without very great expence: or if imposts and restraints are to be laid upon particular commodities, according as they are approved or condemned by the Medical tribe, some of the most valuable branches of commerce, would in all probability be endangered, if not lost: tea and coffee has been as much disapproved, and decried as prejudicial to health, by many of those learned Gentlemen, as spirits:  
many

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many other just complaints have likewise been brought against the use of these liquors among the poor; as that they cause great waste of time, have introduced idleness, and occasioned the increase of the vice now intended to be restrained: all this is but too true, especially among the female sex; who by at first accustoming themselves to drops, to prevent or remove the languors necessarily incident to immoderate draughts of tea, proceed too often in a regular progression, from drops to spoonfuls, and from spoonfuls to drams: nothing is more common, even in our public coffee-houses, than to hear brandy, or as the more polite term it, *French cream*, called for to mix in coffee. Nevertheless, was any attempt to be made for the better restraining the poor from the use of tea and coffee, it would undoubtedly be  
strongly

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strongly opposed by every person concerned in the profits of those commodities: it would be considered by every dealer in them as an invasion of his rights, and a sort of debarring him from getting his livelihood: partial restrictions upon particular branches of trade, will ever appear grievous and oppressive, and consequently raise heats, animosities, and dissatisfaction, among those that think themselves oppressed.

When any disease has diffused itself through the whole fabrick, when the mass of blood is entirely tainted, local applications to particular parts, will never be of any real service; so when any vice is become so general, that a whole nation is infected with it, it is in vain to imagine any remedy that is confined to a particular class of the people can be effectual. To use the

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the words of a certain noble lord,  
 “ The morals and habits of a peo-  
 “ ple, are to be corrected by whol-  
 “ some advice and good example,  
 “ not by severe precepts and rigo-  
 “ rous punishments: let the bet-  
 “ ter sort refrain from the immo-  
 “ derate use of spirituous liquors,  
 “ and the meaner sort soon will.  
 “ To indulge the rich in excess,  
 “ while the poor are punished for  
 “ the moderate use, is like some  
 “ *Romish* priests, who sell indul-  
 “ gences for the highest crimes to  
 “ those that can purchase them,  
 “ but damn the poor for venial of-  
 “ fences.”

It is the vice that proceeds from the abuse of these liquors which requires attention, not the moderate use of that prohibition; and what seems to be chiefly wanting, are either the due execution of the laws against drunkenness, or an enforcement of them with severer punishments,

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nishments, to be inflicted on all persons who shall hereafter get drunk, or shall allow any person to get drunk in any of their respective houses: this is the most likely method to put a stop to that pernicious practice of drinking to excess: nor could such a law give offence to any particular rank of people, because it would equally affect the whole. Instead of contriving punishments, for what the poor cannot sometimes avoid, for idleness, which is for the most part the cause of other vices; Let proper employments be found out for them, let the industrious be rewarded, and the indolent compelled; let better care be taken for the relief of such as from age or infirmity, are unable to provide for themselves: so may we hope to see our streets clear of beggars, or highways freed from violence, and **INDUSTRY** and **SOBRIETY** flourish thro' the kingdom.

*F I N I S.*