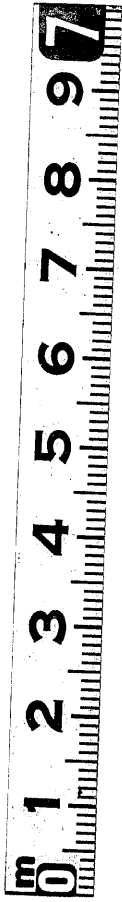


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INTEREST
OF THE
Compound DISTILLER
CONSIDER'D.
WITH
Some OBSERVATIONS on
the DISTILLING TRADE.

In a Letter to a Member of Parliament.

By J. BROWN, DISTILLER.



LONDON:

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THE
INTEREST
OF THE
Compound DISTILLER
CONSIDER'D.

S I R,

I IS with the greatest Pleasure I
comply with your Request, and
lay before you my Sentiments on
the Distilling Trade, fully convinc'd that
you have no other View but to improve
every Information to the publick Advan-
tage. I have indeed cause to rejoice in
the Honour you have done me, but I must
lament the little Time that I have to di-
gest my Thoughts in order; I must apply
to your Good-nature, and beg your Ex-
cuse

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cuse for the loose and incorrect manner of stating them.

As Trade is of such infinite Importance to the well-being of this Nation, nothing can better deserve the Attention of the Legislature, nor has any Thing a nearer Claim to their Care and Protection; they are by their Constitution Guardians of the publick Happiness, and as such can never be wanting in their Concern for the Essentials of all publick Felicity. Trade is the Life of this Kingdom, the Support of its Power, and the Source of its Riches.

Trade is the only universal Means; and if Labour and Knowledge may be consider'd as Commodities, perhaps the only just Means of acquiring Property, for Gifts cannot be deem'd Acquisitions; and what is styl'd the Right of Conquest, as it has no Reason on its side but the Sword, so will it never have any other Justification.

This you will allow to my Passion for Trade; I know how unnecessary it is to say any thing to you in favour of Trade in general, your Affection to it is disputed by no Man, you are only anxious to adjust its different Branches to the Good of the

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the Whole; for this you seek every Light and every Intelligence, and none that comes honestly and impartially, comes unacceptably.

You are pleas'd to acquaint me, that a Design is on foot to allow a Bounty and a large Drawback on the Exportation of *English* Spirits, for the Encouragement of our own Manufacture; and that it is propos'd to repeal the *Geneva-Act* as a further and additional Advantage; on which Points you desired my Opinion, and mean as it is, I have ventur'd to submit it to your Perusal. If it shall afford you any Light in the Affair, or be in any Shape beneficial to the Publick, my End will be answer'd, and my Satisfaction complete.

The distilling Trade is now so much increased, and of so great Importance, that it is undoubtedly worthy the Consideration of the Legislature, as it affects the Landed Interest in a large and extensive manner; and as it concerns the Health and Lives of his Majesty's Subjects.

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The Good Influence it has on the Land-
ed Interest, occasioned several Acts of Par-
liaments to be made in its Favour ; by the
Encouragement of which, it flourish'd so
much, that 'twas an Inducement to all
Sorts of People to run into it; and this
was the Introduction of many Mischiefs,
People never bred to the Trade, ignorant
of the right Management of Spirits, were
obliged to recur to the common Methods
of drawing a Trade to the Unskilful, un-
derfelling those who were regularly bred :
This at last reduced the Prices of Spirits
to so low a Rate, that it afforded the
meanest of the Vulgar, Opportunities of
Debauch, and introduc'd an Habit among
them exceedingly pernicious to their
Healths, and destructive of their Lives.

To prevent these Evils, and remedy this
general Dissolution of Morals, was the
Design of the Geneva Act, it was then
apprehended, the taking away all that
was wholesome from these Spirits would
produce this good Effect : Who indeed
could imagine that the most Abandon'd
would continue to swallow down burn-
ing Spirit, prohibited by Law from having
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(9)

any salutary Ingredient in its Composition,
yet this has been notoriously the Case
ever since; the Vulgar, who have no Joy
in drinking these Spirits, but to be in-
toxicated and inflamed, are sufficiently
pleas'd with any Stuff that will raise their
Spirits, and heat their Brain to Mad-
ness.

The Repeal therefore of this Act ap-
pears to me beneficial in many Respects ;
it will render more wholesome these spi-
rituous Liquors, it will make useful ma-
ny Commodities of our own Produce, to
the great Advantage of the Farmer and
Gardener, as well as increase the Consum-
ption of our Brandies in a safer and plea-
sant manner.

With Relation to the granting of a
Draw-back or Bounty on the Exportation
of Spirits.

It must be allow'd to be the Interest of
every Nation to encourage the Exporta-
tion of all those Commodities which do
not enable other Nations to rival us in any
valuable Manufactory.

The Objection of Weight, which is
made to allowing Draw-backs and Boun-
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ties on Commodities exported, is the Opportunity it gives for Frauds; the *Malt* Distillers are sensible of this Objection, and of its Importance, in the Reasons they have offer'd to Parliament in Behalf of a Drawback or Bounty; they have endeavour'd at an Answer, by saying, That Spirit is less liable than any other Goods (upon which Allowances upon Exportation are granted) to be run, by reason it cannot be vended, and is seizable without a Permit. This I can only call an Endeavour at an Answer; when, in the same Paper, almost in the same Breath, They tell us that *French* Brandy is notoriously run upon the Sea Coasts all the Kingdom over. Pray, is not this *French* Brandy seizable? And is it not vended without Permit? May not *Malt Spirits* be run, and vended in the same manner? May not this Bounty which is intended, be thus abused? And may not the Zeal of some for prohibiting *French* Brandy, have no better View, but that they may run upon us *Malt Spirits* in the room of it.

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They say again, That it cannot be imagined, they will throw it away, for the Drawback, being suppos'd to be but 9*l.* *per Tun*, and the prime Cost of a Tun of Spirits, exclusive of the Duty, 13*l.* there is no room for such Frauds.

This demands a serious Attention: I think this something extraordinary; the Price of such Corn as *Malt* Distillers use, is now at most but Eighteen Shillings *per Quarter*, ev'n of malted Corn, of which they use but a small Proportion, and some is bought at Sixteen Shillings *per Quarter*. I believe every Person acquainted with the *Malt*-distilling Trade, will allow the Advantage they make of their Hogs, does more than pay the Charge and Expence of manufacturing the Corn into Spirits. Supposing then twelve Quarter of Corn to produce a Tun of Spirits, and allowing it all to cost Eighteen Shillings *per Quarter*, the prime Cost of a Tun of Spirits will amount to no more than Ten Pounds Sixteen Shillings; and I am apt to think, this is nearer the Truth than the other Calculation; especially when I consider that the Excise upon a Tun of Spirits is Five Pounds

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Five Shillings, which would make the Price of a Tun of Spirits amount to Eighteen Pounds Five Shillings, if the prime Cost were Thirteen Pounds; whereas they now sell their *Malt Spirits* to their Customers for Eighteen Pounds *per* Tun; yet even supposing the prime Cost of a Tun to be Thirteen Pounds, it will be necessary to guard against Spirits being exported *under Proof*; if that be not prevented, such Goods may receive the Drawback proposed, may afterwards be thrown into the Sea, and the Makers have sufficient Profits notwithstanding.

These Difficulties, I think, demand a more satisfactory Answer than what has yet been given. I will not insist on the Objection which is made by some to the allowing of a Bounty, to wit, that our Ships may be supplied with *French Brandy*, at the Mouth of the River, on such low Terms, that it takes away the Probability of their providing themselves with *Malt Spirits*.

But granting the Reasons of the *Malt Distillers* the Weight they desire they should have, and allowing that the Frauds which

which Draw-backs are generally liable to may here be prevented, will no bad Consequence flow from such a Draw-back or Bounty? Will it not give a great Accession of Power to the *Malt Distillers*? Will it not give them an Opportunity to increase their Oppressions on the Compound Distillers? This, Sir, I think may be justly apprehended, and ought to be carefully guarded against: I will endeavour to set this before you in a clearer Light, in order to which it will be necessary to look a little into the Nature of the Distilling Trade.

There are in the Distilling Trade two different Bodies of Men, the *Malt Distillers*, who are the first Manufacturers of the Corn into Spirits, and the *Compound Distillers*, who buy the Spirit, and compound it with various Ingredients, to render it agreeable to the People.

There is another Set, called *fine Distillers*, who make Spirit from Molossos and Sugars, but both Malt Distillers and Compounders have of late Years gone into this Trade so largely, that I think it not necessary to consider them distinctly, as I shall do the Malt Distiller and Compounder,

(14)

der, whose Interests have been separated, and who seem to demand a Parliamentary Regulation, to prevent the one Set being swallowed up by the other, and living entirely at their Mercy: There are no more than four and twenty Malt Distillers in and about *London*.

The Smallness of their Number makes them easily capable of combining together, and they neglect not the Advantage; this Union is facilitated among them by their meeting at *Bear-Key*, on Market-days for Corn, three times a Week, where they not only arbitrarily settle the Prices of Spirits, but oblige the Factors to take what Price they please for their Corn, often less than it costs in the Country; but what can the Factor do, he has no other Market, no other People to go to, who use the same Sort of Corn, and these are all agreed in the Oppression.

I intend in a very short Time to send you a particular Account of their Management at *Bear-Key*, and the Scheme by which they carry on their Oppression of the Corn-Factor.

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When the Geneva Act was passing, the Malt Distillers set forth in their Behalf, that within the Bills of Mortality, and Places adjacent, they then consumed not less than 300,000 Quarters of Corn yearly, which is a manifest Proof of the Importance of this Trade to the landed Interest. 2500

If the Draw-back on the Exportation of *British* Spirits should take Place in the Manner proposed, and the Geneva Act be repealed, in all Probability this Consumption of Corn will be greatly increas'd; and one would hope that this Increase which is likely to ensue should be a Benefit to the landed Interest.

Shall then this great and manifest Advantage, be defeated by the Combination of a few Men? Shall they, and they only, reap all the Fruits of the good Intention of the Legislature, while the Labour of Thousands is sacrificed to their Avarice?

That this will be the Case, if no Clause be inserted in favour of the Compound Distillers, their past Conduct will easily explain: Every Factor on *Bear-Key* knows their Power, knows they make their own Prices, and destroy all that would be a Check

Check upon their Proceedings, and a Controul to their Oppressions.

A few Years ago, when Corn was dear, when Markets at *Bear-Key* ran high, Who felt the Inconvenience? Who were the Sufferers? Were the Malt Distillers! No. They advanced their Prices accordingly, their Gain was still the same; while the Compound Distillers only were sensible of the Calamity of Scarcity; they were the Losers; every Man that carried on a Trade of Five hundred Pounds *per Annum*, lost not less than One hundred Pounds *per Annum*; for Men brought up to a Trade, and unskilled in other Business, must stick by that they are brought up to, and will carry on a losing Trade as long as they can, in hopes of some happy Revolution, in Expectation of better Times: But if this Drawback or Bounty should take place, and no Provision be made for the Compound Distillers, there will be no Ground for such Expectations, no Room for such Hopes; they must be ever the Vassals of the Malt Distillers; all the natural Advantages of plenteous Years will be lost to them; the Malt Distiller will pretend great Demands

Demands for Exportation, and raise the Prices of Spirits as he pleases.

The Government, sensible of the Benefit the distilling Trade might bring to this Nation, made several Laws to encourage the Increase thereof; and every Man may lawfully exercise the Manufacture of Spirits from Malt; but this Law is in a great measure made void, and its good Design frustrated by their Agreements, by their mischievous Union; they have taken every Measure to prevent the Increase of their Numbers, the most ungenerous Means have they practised. When encouraged by the Laws, others have set up the Malt-distilling Trade, they, to serve their Turn, and demolish these new Beginners, have advanced the Prices of Corn so high, and and at the same Time sunk the Prices of Spirits so low, that none but Men like themselves, of prodigious Estates, could stand the Trial; for such is the Nature of the Malt-distilling Trade, that it must be constantly carried on for the Support of their Hogs.

This gives them an Opportunity to prey upon every young Tree, and destroy every green
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green Thing ; their great Wealth enables them to bear Loss, and they have often voluntarily borne much, that they might undo others.

Nay, they have not spared their own Apprentices, they have been the Occasion of the Ruin of many, almost as many as there are now of the Trade, within a small Number of Years ; they have calmly and deliberately determined to destroy, and have pursued to Destruction all who would not come into their Measures.

Tyranny in Trade and Monopoly in Commerce is as injurious to the Happiness as opposite to the Prosperity of a Nation, as arbitrary Power, as Power without Law is to Liberty and Law.

Even this Evil which we are speaking of is so extensive in its Consequences, that it may almost be called a national one.

As it prevents the younger Sons of Gentlemen from a creditable and agreeable Livelihood, which they are entitled to by Law, and have a Right to enjoy.

When it is consider'd that the Manufactory of 300,000 Quarters of Corn is confined to so small a Number of Men by
bad

bad Arts, and when it is consider'd that the Manufactory of but 3000 Quarters of Corn *per Annum* would produce a handsome Support for a Family. 250

Is it not a melancholy Reflection, That by such wicked Means a Man is deprived of these Benefits, excluded these legal Advantages, unless he has an Estate so immense that he can cope with these Monopolizers, and resist these Engrossers ?

Is it not a deplorable Consideration, that with less than ten thousand Pounds a Man would in vain attempt to set up this Trade, when two thousand Pounds employed therein would naturally bring him in a desirable Maintenance ?

I speak these Things as a Friend to Mankind, from my Concern for general Happiness ; I think Humanity cannot but be moved, to see a Trade which would provide a genteel Support for five times as many Families, which would allow every such Family a Maintenance of five hundred Pounds a Year, to see such a Trade engross'd and monopoliz'd by not more than four and twenty Men, and that Monopoly carried on by the most ungenerous

(20)

Arts, is a Prospect that, if it has no other Effect, ought at least to make us guard against the Encroachments of such Men.

No Man has a sincerer Regard for the learned Professions than myself, no Man pays them greater Honour and Deference, and yet I confess, if such a Trade as this I am speaking of was open, was secured by Law from the Monopoly of avaricious Men, I should think such an Employment a more eligible Provision for the younger Sons of the best Families.

When we consider how plentifully stock'd all the learned Vocations are, what Numbers are little more than starving in the noblest Professions, I think we ought to be exceedingly careful, that Trades of superior Order and Credit be open and free from all Restraints but such as are legal.

I know, Sir, you are justly an Enemy to all Monopolies; I have seen your Zeal on this Head carry you so far, that you have thought Companies who have the Sanction of Law a Detriment to Trade.

But the Combinations I am speaking of have all been without Law, and against Law, and yet have they exercised all the Authority of a Law.

I cannot therefore doubt of your Interest in Behalf of so large a Body of Men as the Compound Distillers, and I am sure that your Abilities can easily supply you with Means for their Relief, if all that I shall offer should appear insufficient or improper.

When I declare myself an Advocate for my Brethren the Compound Distillers, it may not be amiss to inform you, that under that Name are comprehended only such as have serv'd their regular Apprenticeships to the Distilling Trade, and People of Reputation, who have by the Encouragement of the Laws been induced to embrace this Profession.

Of these, Sir, there are some Thousands, Men who were ever averse to that base Prostitution of the Distilling Trade, which render'd it destructive to the Vulgar, and contemptible to the better Sort, and made it justly fall under the Displeasure of the Legislature.

Perhaps you will here ask me, if this be the Case, who were the Authors of this Prostitution! And how came it so universally practised?

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I have already observ'd to you the oppressive Union of the Malt Distillers, and what Power they have over the Compounders. I did not intend to say any thing more on this Head, for fear you should think me too severe, although I know that I have us'd them tenderly; but here the Importance of the Case demands that the Cause of it be truly and justly explain'd.

The Malt Distillers not satisfied with this Exorbitancy of Power to fix Prices as they pleas'd, went still further in their Oppressions of the Compounders; they supported a Man, and supply'd him with Means to open Warehouses for the Sale of spirituous Liquors in every Part of the Town, underselling the Compounders, and prostituting the Trade in that detestable manner which has given so much Offence.

This brought the Prices of spirituous Liquors to that vile Price, as has not only made them the Bane of the Vulgar, but the Hurt of the reputable Trader.

Had not this Agent of the Malt Distillers been a lewd extravagant Man, instead of ruining himself, he had in all Probability

lity ruin'd all the Compounders in *London*. 'Tis therefore for the valuable, the reputable part of the Distillers, that I am pleading with you; you cannot but think that so many Thousands ought to have some Share in the Relief and Advantage which the Legislature intends to the Distilling Trade. Surely their Numbers entitle them to some Regard; and where their Interest is not only agreeing with, but advancing of the Landed Interest and National Advantage, it cannot be presum'd, that they will be entirely neglected, and the Interest of so small a Number of Men be allow'd a superior Attention. Their Request cannot appear unreasonable to disinterested Men.

To prevent Monopolies, to enlarge the Boundaries of Commerce, has ever been the just and wise Concern of the Legislature: Nor is there the least room to doubt, but that they will shew as generous a Regard now for the Preservation and Extension of Trade, as ever their Predecessors have done before.

I shall now humbly lay before you, by what Means I apprehend these Monopolies,

(24)

lies, this exorbitant Power, which the Malt Distillers already have, and which the allowing a Drawback or Bounty is likely to increase, may in some measure be restrained, and their ill Effects prevented. Either by fixing a Price upon Spirits made from Malt, according to the Rate that Corn bears at the Market at *Bear-Key*, allowing to the Malt Distiller a sufficient Profit upon every twelve Quarters of Corn, the Proportion suppos'd to be necessary to the making a Tun of Spirit; or by preserving the due Boundaries and Distinctions between the two Trades, settling them by a Clause to be inserted in the Act for allowing a Drawback or Bounty on Spirits exported, if such an Act should take place: By which every Malt Distiller should be prohibited from rectifying and compounding Malt Spirits, and vending the same. And every Rectifier, or Compound Distiller, should be prohibited from exercising the Trade of a Malt Distiller, or making Spirits from Corn, and vending the same. These are Regulations which, I think, the Distilling Trade is easily capable of, and will be greatly to its Advantage.

With regard to the first; it will not only be a Benefit to the Compound Distiller, but its Influence will be extended to the Landed Interest in an immediate manner;

(25)

ner: It will prevent the Malt Distiller's oppressing the Corn-factor, and make the good Intentions of the Legislature have their natural Effect, in an universal Advantage; which otherwise will be confin'd, and sunk in the Gain of a few Men. This Regulation has been made by the Legislature in the Prices of Bread, and the Success and good Effect of it has shewn the Wisdom of such Laws.

What Inducement could the Malt Distiller have to oppress the Corn-factor, and make the Farmer sell his Corn for less than it stands him in, when his Gain would not be increased by such Oppressions, Oppressions which now prevent a fair and open Market?

The second Regulation propos'd, is of great *Consequence* to the Compound Distillers, to secure the Trade of the Country, the most valuable Part of the Distilling Trade, from the Monopoly of two or three overgrown rich Men, who otherwise will engross all the Country Trade. Perhaps some may think any Regulation of this Nature uncommon, but it is not without Precedent. If wholesale Traders, and the first Manufacturers of a Commodity, assume to themselves also the retailing and vending the same, they can do it upon such

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Terms

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Terms as will be the Ruin and Destruction of all other Dealers, who being obliged to buy their Goods of the wholesale Traders, and consequently to give them a Profit, can never be able to vend them again at such low Rates, as the first Manufacturers.

The Legislature, sensible of this, have in several Cases endeavour'd to prevent such Monopoly and Oppression, and put a just Difference between the Wholesale Trader, and the Trader that buys from him.

In the Wine Trade there is an additional Duty of two Pounds fifteen Shillings and four Pence *per Tun*, on all Wines that the Importer himself shall retail; and in the Brewing Trade, every Brewer that retails his own Drink, is allow'd but thirty four Gallons to a Barrel, while others, who are Wholesale Brewers only, are allowed thirty six Gallons to the Barrel.

These afford Ground to hope, that the just Boundaries and Distinctions between the Malt Distillers and Compound Distillers will be settled, and the Trade of so great a Body of Men be prevented from being swallowed up by a few avaricious Engrossers,

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Engrossers, at least that the Malt Distillers shall not be allowed to compound Spirits, and vend them on the same Terms as those who are obliged to buy of the Malt Distillers, but in such case pay some additional Duty.

This Grievance, Sir, is not the Child of Imagination only, or the Creature of Fear; it is fact that the greatest Part of the Country Trade is already engrossed by these Means into the Purses of two or three Men; and if no Prevention of these Monopolies can be found out, they will *in a few Years engross it all.*

Is it not therefore natural to desire, and reasonable to expect, that something may be done in Favour of so large a Body of Men; and have not the Legislature on every Occasion shew'd their Concern to prevent Monopolies, and destroy pernicious Combinations?

Have they not on this Account made a Law that no more than four Men shall unite together in Trade and Copartnership?

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Can it then be thought that they will neglect to remedy and provide against the Evasions of this Law?

But I will trouble you no farther on this Head. I will lay before you some Regulations of so beneficial a Nature, and of such general Advantage, that they will plead for themselves, and want no Apology for being offer'd to publick Examination.

That no Spirits be exported and receive the Drawback, which are not Proof, under a large Penalty.

That no Persons shall hawk and vend about the Streets any Spirits or distill'd Liquors.

That no Distiller shall keep his Shop open after eleven at Night, or before six in the Morning.

That no Person or Persons be permitted to sell or retail any Spirits or distill'd Liquors,

quors, but such as shall keep Shops for the said Purpose, or Victuallers or Innkeepers.

The first of these Articles I have spoke to before, and think absolutely necessary to prevent Frauds in the Drawback, otherwise Spirits will be exported below Proof, not half the Worth of the Drawback, and be thrown overboard: Which will be a Tax upon the Publick, to the Gain only of a few Men.

The second and third Article, I believe, will be allow'd by all requisite to prevent the Debauches of labouring Men going to Work, and other Abuses too commonly practis'd, and justly complain'd of.

Nor is the last of less Importance; when it is consider'd what universal Mischief is produced by the private selling of distill'd Liquors, how many Tradesmen vend it to their Journeymen, to the great Detriment of them and their Families; and what hidden Debaucheries are promoted and carried on by such Means, it must be thought very desirable to restrain and put some Stop to so extensive a Mischief.

Thus,

Thus, *Sir*, in as brief a manner as I could, have I sent you what occur'd to me on this *Affair*. If I had had more *Time*, I might have wrote fuller, and should have wrote better. I shall endeavour to convince you of this in my next *Letter*.

I am,

Your most Devoted,

Most Obedient

Humble Servant,

J. BROWN.