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A
DISCOVERY
Of some Gross
Abuses and Disorders
In the Retail of
Strong Waters.
Humbly Proposed
To the Consideration
OF THE
PARLIAMENT.

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L O N D O N:
Printed in the Year, 1720.



A Discovery of some gross Abuses and Disorders in the Retail of Strong Waters, &c.



HOUGH such is the Excellency of the Constitution of our Government, and so great is the Vigilance, and so quick the Penetration of those at the Helm, as even at a Distance to discern approaching Evils, that threaten the Common-Wealth in general, or any Part thereof; as is to be seen by the many excellent Laws and Constitutions that have been made and enacted from time to time, for the preventing as well as Punishment, of all fraudulent, unjust, injurious, and disorderly Practices, and Dealings: Yet such is the Obstinacy of many wicked Persons, so great and violent their Inclination to Evil, and what is destructive to Society; that they will one Way or another, either openly violate, or find

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Means to elude, the best and most wisely contrived Laws and Regulations, inventing and contriving new and unheard of Ways of corrupting and doing Mischief to themselves and others, so as to avoid the Punishment of all Laws hitherto made; and hereby they are continually providing fresh Work for employing the Care and Prudence of the Legislators to find Remedies against the growing or impending Mischiefs, which threaten the Destruction of many, and are altogether insufferable; being no other Ways to be prevented or restrained, than by inflicting such proportionate and adequate Punishments, as the consummate Wisdom and mature Consideration of the Legislature shall ordain by Laws made for that Intent and Purpose; which we have all the Reason in the World to expect, after a true Representation has been proposed of some flagrant Evils and fatal Disorders, that already have ruined, and still do ruine many, and are more likely than ever, to involve Multitudes in a common Destruction. What these Evils and Disorders are, whose pernicious Influence does so loudly call for a Stop to be put to them, is the Design of this Paper impartially to represent to all,

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but especially to such as are Members of Parliament, or are intrusted with Posts of any considerable Eminency in the Government, who, moving in a higher Sphere, can't so easily discern what are the Plagues in lower Life, and what the Sources of them; as those who, living in a middle Station, have daily Opportunities of taking a distinct View, and making a clear Discovery of them, and are not out of the Reach of being some way or other affected by them.

This City has lately been alarmed with Tumults, Disorders, and Complaints for Deadness and Want of Trade among the poorer Sort; all which we doubt not will be effectually redress'd: But if any one should take a View of what is daily and hourly expended, by this lower sort of People, upon what is not only useless and unnecessary, but hurtful and pernicious to the last Degree, robbing them of their Money, Time, Reputation, Health, Understanding and Consideration, and at length even of Life it self; as well of the Soul as of the Body; he would be so far from apprehending any Want of Money through the Decay of Trade, that he would be inclin'd rather to think that Money were found in the Streets

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by these Wretches, who thus lavish it away; whilst in the mean-time their Children are naked and starving at home, without either Bread to eat or Cloaths to put on, and must be sustained by the Charity of others, to the no small Burden and Charges of honest House-keepers, and Trouble of Parish-Officers, who are made but too too sensible of this growing Pest, now of about eighteen Years Continuance, in which Time the Number of strong Water-Shops appears to be so increas'd, as is even a Shame to be mention'd, were it not necessary to make known the Distemper in order to its receiving a Cure. That new-found Spirit call'd Geneva (that is, the common Sort now so much in Vogue) is sold by all ordinary Trades, such as Chandlers, Chymists, Barbers, Shoemakers, Weavers, Tobacconists, and others, as well as in Ale-houses, and the Shops of those who pretend to make it; and that by Half-penny or Penny-worths; insomuch that it is at Hand to every one, and by reason of its Cheapness, and the Smallness of the Quantity which can be sold by Retail, all the poorer Sort may have it at any time, and accordingly have been found not to neglect the pernicious Opportunity. Some have been ob-

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observed to repair to such Places twelve, some twenty times a Day. Some of both Sexes, going about their lawful Occasions, have been seen to call in at so many Shops as they pass'd, that they have neglected coming home in time, and when they did, were fit for nothing but either to plague others, or to sleep. Here might be mention'd the common Beggars, who no sooner have any thing given them in Charity, than they drink it out at the Brandy-Shop: But they being a Pest of themselves, are unworthy of any Regard, only so far as in their drunken Fits they are a Disturbance to all about them; and if Magistrates would send them to *Bridewell*, as the Laws direct, that would be soon amended. But the most lamentable Case is, that of those, otherways honest and working People, who are so besotted with this bewitching Liquor, as to drink away the scanty Maintenance of their Families; Women pawning their own and their Children's necessary wearing Cloaths; the Bibles, and other little Books, given their Children at Charity-Schools; which are no sooner brought home than carried by one of the Parents to the next Geneva-Shop; and, but for the Care of the Trustees, their Charity-Cloaths would go the same Way.

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By strict Inquiry it has been found, that a great Part of the Money given by Parishes to their settled Poor, has been thus spent in a Day or two after Pay-day; and the Wages of working Artificers and Labourers received on *Saturday* Night are often thus sent a going by *Monday* Morning; as all Peace-Officers and Watches about *London* can testify, who see these Shops open 'till *Sunday* Morning near Break of Day; and are more troubled with Drunkards about the Streets those two Nights, than all the Week besides.

It has been Matter of great Wonder to Persons of Thought and Observation, that this Practice of Geneva-drinking, should become so general amongst the meaner Sort as to maintain so many Thousand Persons that live by the Selling of it, tho' to the Ruine of many more Thousands of others who are their Customers. But the Reason of this will easily appear if we consider the prevailing Wickedness of the Generality of Men, and more particularly the openly flagitious Lives of this sort of People.

Many particular Instances might be produced of the dismal Consequences of using this destructive Water, to particular Persons, to Families, and to the Publick; but

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but to avoid being tedious, we shall only hint a few general ones. As for single Persons, we find a new Article added to the yearly Bills of Mortality, namely, *Excessive Drinking, Sixteen*; and those only Beggars, or Parish-Pensioners found dead in the Streets, just haled out of some strong Water-Shop: But what a vastly greater Number might be added, of others who had Friends to conceal the Shame, is plain from the many Instances of that ignominious Death known to every Neighbourhood. As to Families it may justly be affirmed, That were the pretended Want of Trade as great as 'tis represented, it would not be so grievous to the Family as the Sottishness of Husband or Wife, which not only wasts their small Gains, but incapacitates them from getting by following their Business: For there is this Difference between a Geneva and an Alehouse-Sot, that the latter drinks in the Evening, after a hard Day's Labour; and the former is sipping all Day a Spirit which intoxicates more than other Drinking.

Lastly, As to the Publick, none who live among the ordinary Sort of People can be ignorant, what frequent Disturbances it causes, both in Houses and Streets, yea even Riots by such as most
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constantly use those Shops, being Wretches of profligate Lives, and the Plagues of the Neighbourhood. It has been found, upon a strict Enquiry at the other End of the Town among the Weavers, that their insolent and tumultuous Carriage some Months since was animated by loose Women, Frequenters of those Shops, and their Companions some idle drunken Weavers, who meet these, in their nocturnal Revels, exasperating one another to Mischief: And what a Detriment must it be to any trading Nation, not only to lose the Benefit of so many Persons Labour; but that all this idle Crew are as a Canker in the Body Politick, that must needs prey upon its Substance.

The Persons of this Trade that suffer Drinking in their Shops and Houses, whether under the Name of Distillers or Rectifiers, are generally found to be of bad Characters, and to have the best Part of their Gains from their fraudulent short Measure, entertaining for their Customers a rude flagitious Gang, whom they often entertain all Night, Midnight Debauches being their chief Employ. Their Shops make a fair Show towards the Street, as if design'd for a whole-sale Trade; but are never clear of Customers by Day, besides what
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are behind the Scenes in the Back-Room, where they have a Fire, and which at Night is the Rendezvous of young Men and lewd Women, where if they can't have Conveniency, they adjourn to other Places of Uncleaness: Yea it has been known of a certain, that many young Girls and Servant-Maids have been decoy'd into those enchanted Shops, where after losing their Senses by the stupifying Spirits, they have fallen an easy Prey to the Lust of vicious young Men, and being thus once debauch'd, have been thrown upon the Town, a most certain Plague to the growing Youth; and of this there have been very frequent Instances.

Such of these Trades as keep open Shops call themselves Distillers, though in Truth they buy their Spirits of the whole-sale Distillers, who pay the Excise; yet they have all Stills to rectify their Spirits as they call it, which is to make them palatable: These Rectifiers being so numerous, and of so ill Fame, may well be presumed considerably to defraud the Excise, notwithstanding the utmost Diligence of the Officers, who cannot possibly discover it among so many petty Stills: And the great Number of these Shops is probably the Reason why the Brewers Excise is so considerably lessened. An-

Another great Evil which accrues from their Number, is the Danger of Fire, which in such a populous and well-built City ought carefully to be guarded against: For being by their Business of Retail frequently call'd into the Shop, they are apt to forget the precise Time of the Still's working; and besides, too many of them, to force a Trade, will drink with their Customers, till they are not fit to manage a Still: So that by some one Accident or other it often happens that the Still's Head flies off, to the Terror, and often great Damage of the Neighbourhood.

To prevent all these Disorders, was, no Doubt, the Reason of inserting the following Clause in an Act that passed the 12 and 13 K. W. 3. Cap. 11. ' That
' no Person or Persons whatsoever shall,
' from and after the 29th of September
' 1701, sell Brandy or other distill'd Li-
' quors by Retail, to be drunk in his, her,
' or their House or Houses, but such Per-
' sons only, as shall be thereunto licens-
' ed and allowed in the same manner as
' common Alehouse-keepers; and every
' Person or Persons so selling Brandy or
' other distilled Liquors, by Retail as
' aforesaid, shall be subject to the same
' Rules, Penalties, and Forfeitures for
' selling Drink without Licences, as com-
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' mon Ale-house-keepers now are; and
' the several Justices of the Peace of this
' Kingdom, and other Officers, are here-
' by empowered and authorized to have
' and exercise the same Jurisdiction,
' Powers, and Authorities over such Re-
' tailers of Brandy and other distilled
' Liquors, which they now have and
' exercise over common Ale-house-
' keepers, by any Law or Statute what-
' soever.' But by sad Accident a Law
was made not long after, the Whole of
it affording nothing but Disputes, and
Repealing the former Clause, The 1 Q.
Anne, cap. 14. wherein are contained these
Words: That ' as for and concerning
' all Distillers, who keep Houses or Pla-
' ces of Distilling the Liquors aforesaid,
' and also all other Shop-keepers, whose
' principal Dealings shall be more in
' other Goods and Merchandizes than
' in Brandy and strong Waters, and
' who do not permit or suffer Tippling
' in his or their Houses, the said Clause
' in the said recited Act, for compelling
' all Distillers and others to take Li-
' cences as common Ale-house-keepers,
' shall be repealed, and the same Clause is
' hereby repealed.' Since which Time,
the Insolence of the Retailers has insult-
ed Authority, tho' the Generality of
them are openly faulty and scandalous:
And when this Act has been attempted
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to be put in Execution against the vilest and most notorious Infringers thereof, it has been always carried into *Westminster Hall*; so that honest Gentlemen, fit to serve, and willing to undertake the Conservation of the publick Peace, have dropt the Pursuit, not being able to undergo the Trouble and Charge of so many Law-Sutes, tho' their Zeal be great for their Countrey's Welfare.

Another great and growing Evil, both for Lessening his Majesty's Revenues and Destruction of our Trade, and corrupting, as well as increasing the Poor, is the Expence of *French-Brandy* in the Kingdom; wherein if the common Higglers in this Commodity were more restrained, the Encouragement for clandestine Import would be lessened. It is well known that Men under the Disguise of Seamen, and Women as their Wives, go daily from House to House offering to Sale *French Brandy* and *French Wine* with great Secrefie and extraordinary Bargains: From whence 'tis apparent, that the Liquor is really *French* that has run the Customs, or that it is some home-brew'd *Spirit* or *Liquor*; in either Case it is a Fraud, in the first Cheating the King, and in the other the Subject: And many other Cheats and Disorders have been found from such Traders,

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ders, much to the publick Harm; they being in Reality Vagrants, stroling from House to House, and cheating under false Pretences.

It seems therefore highly necessary for the pulick Peace and Welfare of this Nation, and as such is humbly offer'd to the Consideration of Parliament, that the aforementioned Clause in the 12 and 13 K. W. III. Cap. 11. be re-enacted with an Addition to the following Purport: Whereas several idle Persons, both Men and Women, go about stroling from House to House selling Wine, Brandy, and other distilled Liquors, to the great Prejudice of his Majesty's Revenues and Excise, the Hindrance of fair Traders and Shop-keepers, and defrauding his good Subjects; That it shall be lawful for such Persons to be seized and detained, by any one able to prove the said Fact against the Offenders, until a Constable or other Peace-Officer may be charged with such Offender, who shall immediately apprehend and take him or her into Custody, and all Wine, Brandy, and other distilled Liquors, which they so offer to sale, and carry the Person and Goods before the next Justice of the Peace, who upon Conviction on Oath of one credible Witness, shall send the Person so offending to the House of
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Correction, there to be kept to hard Labour, for any Time, not exceeding Months: And the Wine, Brandy or distilled Liquors so seiz'd, shall be delivered to the Church-Wardens, or Overseer of the Poor in the Parish where the Offender was apprehended, to be sold within five Days, for the most it will yield, and the Produce to be divided, half to the Poor of the said Parish, and half to the Person securing and convicting the said Offender.

And since Taxes must be raised to secure the publick Credit, it is here humbly proposed, that a Ten-Shilling Stamp, more or less as shall be thought expedient, may be put on all Licences; which will not at all burden Trade, but be paid out of the Extravagancy of the People, collected with the least Charge and Trouble: And if Ale-houses and Brandy-Shops, be compelled thereto, it will yield a great annual Sum, the Licences now granted in *London* and *Subburbs*, being about five Thousand, and the Brandy-Shops in those Limits would amount to the same Number, which if computed at the twentieth Part of the whole Kingdom, such a Tax would do good Service towards the publick Necessities, and help to redeem those Taxes that are more hurtful to Trade.

F I N I S.