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# LETTER

Sir William Strickland, Bart.

Relating to the

# COAL TRADE.

*We know very well, that nothing is more injurious to the Police, or municipal Constitution of any City or Colony, than the forcing of a particular Trade. Nothing more dangerous than the over-peopling any Manufacture, or multiplying the Traders or Dealers of whatever Vocation, beyond their natural Proportion and the public Demand.*

SHAFTSB. Char. vol. 3. misc. 2. ch. 1.

L O N D O N : 2

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## LETTER, &c.

S I R,



THE Report of a Combination among some of the Dealers in Coals, and the extraordinary high Price of that Commodity, during the last Summer, having excited my Curiosity to enquire a little into the Course of that Trade, and the Cause of so surprising an Alteration, on a deliberate View of the whole, it seem'd to me, that the Masters and Owners of Ships employ'd therein, had far mistaken their own Interest, and taken Measures really prejudicial to themselves, as well as to many others. Their late Application to the Parliament occasion'd me to digest, into the following Order, some Thoughts which occur'd to me on that Head, which I humbly submit to the Consideration of my Superiors; and address thus particularly to your self, not only because you are eminently concern'd in enquiring into that Affair, but also because, from your known good sense and Integrity, I trust, you will distinguish between the Reason of Things and popular Complaints, and

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prefer the Good of the Whole, to the Gratification of any Party or particular Profession.

I am not unsensible how little Regard is usually paid to Things of this Nature, which are generally suspected of Design to serve one Purpose or other. But as I have no Interest on either Side to byass me, so I have endeavour'd to set the Thing in the clearest and most impartial Light, and to express my Sentiments and Reasonings in the most intelligible Manner I was able.

It may not, perhaps, be amiss to begin with a succinct Account of the Proceedings of those Gentlemen from the Beginning of this Affair, which was in the Year 1728, when Coals were sold at 21 s. 6 d. or 22 s. per Chaldron, and very likely to fall lower. The Majority of them, seeing the Trade at so low an Ebb, and their Substance (as they say) daily wasting, agreed to deliver their Ships *in turn*, as they came into the Pool, and to insist on a higher Price, and concerted Measures to bring all the rest into the same Order, which, with much Difficulty, by Sollicitation, Interest of Friends, Threats, &c. they pretty well effected; and by that Means advanc'd, and kept up their Price, so long as they kept their Order.

This, as was to be expected, caus'd a great Complaint against them; they, in Justification of themselves, publish'd what they call *An Account of the Charge of a Voyage to Newcastle*: By which they pretend to shew, that, allowing them only the common Price of Insurance for their whole Profit, Coals cannot be sold for less than 27 s. per Chaldron. This brought out an Answer, and some other Pieces on that Question, into the Particulars whereof it is not my Design

( 3 )

sign to enter. I only observe by the way, that, for several Years before this Contract begun, Coals have been sold from 22 s. 6 d. to 24 s. per Chaldron, which, if their Account be true, must have ruin'd most of them long ago.

They say indeed a hundred Masters or Owners of Ships have come to want within these few Years; it may be so, and two or three Hundred others, who had not better Opportunities, or more profitable Ships than they, have all that while liv'd reputably, and improv'd in the World. The Lazy, the Extravagant, and the Unskilful fail in all Trades; while their frugal and industrious Neighbours thrive by the same, as is here manifestly the Case: Besides, they must have a strange Opinion of the Credulity of Mankind, if they imagin'd the World ever could be brought to believe, that tho' Coals sold at 27 s. per Chaldron afforded them no more Profit than the common Price of Insurance, yet they, generous Souls! wou'd at the same Time sell them at 25 s. 6 d. or 26 s. per Chaldron; when, by the same Method which kept them at this Price, they might have set them as much higher as themselves pleas'd.

But this by way of Digression, as being no way material to my Design; which is to shew, from some general Considerations on Trade, and the Dependance of its several Branches one on another. 1. That allowing their Complaints to be just, yet the Method lately practis'd can by no Means be of any lasting Service to them; but may be of bad Consequence to the Public, and therefore ought not, on any Pretence, to be suffer'd in a trading Nation. 2. That the Method they now propose, by taking away the Lightermen's Charter, cannot help them. 3. What

has been the real Cause of all their Hardships ; and lastly, to propose an effectual Cure.

But before I enter on these Particulars it will be necessary to take a short View of the Rise and Progress of Trade in the World, which will better enable us to judge of the Fitness of any Remedies apply'd to cure its Disorders.

The original Employment of Mankind seems to have been *cultivating the Earth*, gathering it's Fruits, or the like Means of procuring the Necessaries of Life ; which before Societies were form'd, every Man was oblig'd to do for himself ; no Man having any natural Authority over another, or exclusive Right to any Thing besides the Fruit of his own Labor.

But as Men's different Abilities of Body, and the various Qualifications of their Minds fitted some better for providing Necessaries of one kind than another, as some for hard Labor, some for sedentary Employments, and the like, so Experience in time taught them, for their mutual Ease and Advantage to exchange one Commodity for another ; by this Means every one might constantly employ himself in what kind of Exercise best suited him, and be supply'd with all other Necessaries in exchange for Things of his own providing.

Thus were particular Professions establish'd, and the first Beginnings of Trade form'd, which remain'd for a long time confin'd within narrow Limits, practis'd chiefly between Neighbours among themselves, and rarely extending beyond the same City or the like : Nor was it till after many Ages, that Mankind establish'd that general Correspondence, which constitutes the Trade of the present Time.

A particular turn of Thought, and an extensive

tenfive Knowledge of the Growth, Produce and Improvements of every Country, with their respective Wants, as well as of the Genius and Disposition of the Inhabitants ; a Knowledge, in those early Times not easy to come at, was absolutely necessary to those who first struck out the Way to that extensive Commerce, whereby the Abundance of one Country is made subservient to the Wants of another reciprocally thro' the whole Earth. To be a good Tradesman in those Times was a great Accomplishment, attain'd by few, and those of the most Diligent and Industrious, and of the best Capacities. Trade must therefore of course afford them great Advantages, and enable them to live in much greater Ease and Affluence than their Neighbors, whose narrower Genius confin'd them still to their original Employments of the Plow and the Fold.

In process of time, when (Commerce being now pretty well establish'd) it came to be observ'd how well the Tradesman liv'd, Trade began to be more sought into ; and, a small Capacity being oftentimes sufficient to learn from another, what was a Task for the greatest originally to discover, Numbers crowded into it : For all Men naturally love Ease and Plenty, and so long as the Husbandman believes that the Tradesman enjoys a greater Share of these than himself, he will slip no Opportunity of putting himself, or his Son at least, into Trade. And the Tradesman, having the same Opinion of the Matter, makes his Children of course all Tradesmen ; so that the Proportion of the Number of Tradesmen to that of Husbandmen must continually encrease.

This more than proportionate Increase in Number

ber will, by necessary Consequence, diminish the extraordinary Profit of Trade in like Proportion, and by degrees reduce it to pretty near an Equality with the Profits of Agriculture; but can never bring it much lower, because whenever the Scale turns in favor of the other Side, more than barely to pay for the Difference of the Labor, as before the Husbandman turn'd Tradesman, so now the Tradesman goes to plow.

The same holds good with respect to the several Branches of Trade compar'd to one another; for the best will continually be encreasing in Numbers, till reduc'd pretty near a Parity with the rest; but in the ordinary Course of Things cannot fall much lower, (so long as the Demand for that kind of Goods continues) for the Reasons above mention'd.

From what has been said it is evident, that Trade in general, and likewise every particular Branch of it, must of course be most beneficial in its Beginning, and immediately after the first Discovery: And this seems to be the Ground of the general Outcry of the Decay of Trade. If there be any Reason, besides the Growth of Luxury, why Tradesmen get not Estates so fast now as formerly, 'tis manifestly because their Numbers are vastly encreas'd beyond their former Proportion to the rest of Mankind, and not because Trade decays.

The Clamors so frequently rais'd about sundry particular Branches of Trade, that they are decay'd, and become good for nothing, tho' the Demand for their Goods continue, or rather encrease; when they have any Foundation at all (which they rarely have) can hardly be owing to any thing else than the Encrease of  
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the Numbers of their several Professors, beyond their just Proportion to the rest; but whenever this comes to be the Case, unless accompany'd with a Declension of the Demand for the Goods, a little time, in a free Country, will naturally reduce it to a Balance; and the supernumerary Members drop off to other Employments; for it is hard to conceive, that in a Country, where every one has Liberty to chuse his Employment at pleasure, any Trade can long continue in such Condition; unless we can suppose the Parties concern'd in it voluntarily and unanimously resolv'd to starve, while a hundred Ways of living by Trade are open before them, and last of all the original Employment of Husbandry, which can never fail while Mankind remain.

It is indeed possible that some extraordinary sudden Turn in a Trade, or some gross and thoughtless Mismanagement, or both, may reduce it so low, that there may not be room for all concern'd to procure a Livelihood, and the Number of Persons thereby distress'd may be so considerable as to deserve the Care of the Legislature; as may perhaps be the present Case of the Importers of *Coals* to *London*; but even this Condition is no sufficient Excuse for a Combination enter'd into in defiance of Authority, and in Contradiction to a positive Law, as all Combinations are.

That they did combine is, I think, too obvious to be deny'd: They have indeed, in excuse of themselves, labor'd to set forth in a very pathetic Manner the great Difficulties they lie under; and the absolute Necessity of an Attempt to relieve themselves; and put in their Plea for the Favor of the Legislature from  
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their extraordinary Usefulness to the Public, express'd in as strong Terms, as if they alone supported the State. Whereas wou'd they but extend their Views ever so little beyond themselves, they would quickly see, that 'tis to our Manufactory, that they owe almost their very Being; and that therefore all handicraft Trades have at least an equal Claim with themselves, and are by no means to be oppress'd in favor of them.

The Claim of every Trade to protection is in exact proportion to the Number of Persons it employs in honest Labor, for the Labor of the People is the Wealth of the Nation, and all useful Trades have a necessary Dependance one on another, and must rise or fall, encrease or diminish together, in a just Proportion, which if any one chance to exceed the Necessity of a Reduction is immediately felt.

To instance in Shipping, if we have more Ships than are sufficient to carry to and fro the several Goods which our Occasions require; 'tis obvious that, as no one Owner will content himself to be a bare Spectator of the others Gain, so they must of Course be struggling for Employ, and endeavoring by all Means possible, to be before-hand with their Neighbors; till by degrees the Reduction of the Freight, and frequent long Delays, destroy their Profit; and either by forcing some to seek other Employ, or (which oftner happens) ruining the Weakest, reduce their Number to its just Proportion. And 'tis as obvious, that there must be some very gross Mismanagement in the Owners themselves, if, without such an Excess of Number, any such Case happens: For if there is sufficient Employ for all, and  
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yet they work for no Profit; as they cannot be suppos'd to do that altogether of free Choice, so nothing but the most supine and inexcusable Negligence of their own Affairs could ever oblige them to it.

The extraordinary Fall of the Profit of Coal-Shipping seems to be owing, in great Measure, to a piece of Mismanagement, which shall be consider'd hereafter; tho' that might not possibly have had so bad an Effect, had not they been also overdone with Numbers.

That they are too numerous, they themselves are ready to allow; but they seem to think, nevertheless, that their Usefulness to the Public requires something to be done, that they may be supported.

Cou'd a Way be found out, to draw off the supernumerary Hands to other Employments, and by that Means prevent their unavoidable Ruin, Reason wou'd that the Government shou'd make Use of it; but this is a Matter, I fear, not easily to be done to any good purpose by Authority, but must be left to every one's Consideration and Foresight, or to woful Experience, the only Instructress of Fools. But that the Government shou'd take any Measures, or suffer them to take any, to support in their Trade a greater Number of Men and Ships, than are sufficient to do the Work, is on many accounts not reasonable for them to ask. For,

Be their Business as useful as they please, yet it is to be consider'd, that whatsoever Methods are taken to support their Trade, above its natural Proportion, and the Demand of the Public, must finally result in giving them a higher Price for their Work, than would otherways be requisite; and consequently the Maintenance of every  
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Man and Ship above the just Number is a positive Tax upon the Public, and might with the same Charge be furnish'd constantly from the Treasury. And what do they who ask it but tacitly confess, that they are unable to help themselves and submit to the mean Office of begging their Bread?

Besides, every Step taken, thus to enable a Body of Men to live without Full Employ, is a direct Encouragement of Idleness, than which nothing can be more destructive to a State. The Labor of every able working Man, who is fully employ'd in the very lowest Drudgery, is worth at least 5*l. per Annum* to the Nation: If he plays, let his Maintenance come which way it will, 'tis neat Loss. Industry is therefore by all possible Means to be encourag'd, as being our Wealth; and no Countenance at all to be given to Idleness, because it is an Impoverisher of the State, and besides, a most fruitful Mother of all Vice.

This part I rather insist on, because it is not probable, if any such Encouragement be given in this Case, that it will stop here; there is still a farther and greater Danger, lest it be drawn into Example. One precedent of this Kind would doubtless soon bring a Number of other Trades with as loud Clamors, as plausible Tales, as clear Accounts of their continual Loss, and as fair Claims to protection, as our Seamen; so that in all probability, in a short time, all other Trades must undergo the same Regulation; for one Man has as good a Right to be maintain'd without full Employ as another: and this, if ever it happens, will most certainly ruin the whole; for it is not in the power of Art to find out any other way to enrich the Nation, than by the Labor of the People, or to prevent our Expences exceeding our  
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Income, when any considerable Share of our Hands are but half employ'd.

Industry, and that alone, is the Source of Wealth, 'tis that creates Trade, and brings plenty to Lands, where Nature has been most sparing of all her Favors; and the Want of it makes the most fertile Soil a Desert. Industry has rais'd one of the most potent, wealthy and flourishing States in *Europe*, on the Mud and Marshes of *Holland*; while Idleness, the Offspring of Tyranny, as that is of Luxury, has render'd the most fertile Soils of *Italy* and *Greece* the Scenes of Want and Misery. All that is to be expected towards this, from the Laws of any State, is protection to the Subjects in the free Exercise of Traffic, wherever they shall find it to their Advantage, and a Security that they shall peaceably enjoy the Fruits of their Labor.

Of the many Laws, that have been made in favor of fundry Trades among us, I believe scarce an Instance can be given of one that has had its desir'd Success\*; that a great many have prov'd very detrimental, to the very Trades they were design'd to encourage, is very certain.

Of this the *Callicoe-Act* alone, among many others that might be mention'd, is a sufficient Instance; a Law which, tho' made on purpose to encourage our Stuff-Manufacture, has yet done it more prejudice than is easily to be imagin'd, or will ever be recover'd; for, by re-exporting so large a Quantity of Callicoes, we have taught all *Europe* to go a cheaper Way to Market, than buying our Goods; and so diverted the greatest part of our foreign Trade for Stuffs into another

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\* I wou'd here be understood, to except those Laws made to prevent fraudulent and unfair Practices, which have doubtless been of good use.

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Channel, from whence nothing can recover it, but so great an Abatement in the Price of our Manufactures, as there is not any probability we shall ever be able to make. And 'tis more than probable 'twould fare as ill with the Coal-Trade one way or other, were any such Law enacted, as the Managers of that Affair seem to drive at, as will appear by the Sequel.

The ill Success, of all past Laws of this kind, might, one would think, sufficiently inform us, that Trade is not to be forc'd by Law at all, but must be left to work its own Way: For it is hard to imagine, that, if this had been the proper Means of promoting it, no one Law among so many shou'd ever succeed, nor the whole Multitude of them put together have any better Effect on our Trade and Manufactures; which, as some judicious Persons have observ'd, were more indebted, for their florid State and great Encrease in the last Century, to the Ravage of the Duke of *Alva* in the *Low Countries*, than to Acts of Parliament.

If to this, in many Cases dear bought Experience, we add a little Consideration of the Nature of the thing it self, it will plainly appear it is vain to hope for Success this Way. For.

Trade, as has been observ'd already, being only the Exchange of one Commodity for another, for the mutual Benefit of the two Parties, out of the abundance of one to supply the Wants, either real or imaginary, of the other: Where such an Exchange can be so made, there needs no Command from Authority to do it. Interest is a Motive so prevalent, that 'twould be found no easy Matter in this Case to contrive a Law that wou'd effectually hinder Trade. On the other hand, if it cannot be done to Advantage, 'tis hardly  
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in the Power of Law to compel them to do it; besides that, such a Law would be unreasonable and unjust.

It may perhaps be objected, that a Law may be so contriv'd, as to render it the Interest of both Parties to Trade together, tho' before it might not be so. This indeed has in some Cases been done by a Bounty given on one side to encourage it; but, where nothing of that kind is given, every Man's private Interest seems a more likely Instructor, than any Command whatever. This is a prevalent Monitor, which must and will be heard, always present and incessantly Soliciting; this puts him on a thousand Inventions to turn the penny to advantage, which no Man, whose Interest was not at Stake, could ever have thought of; for Necessity is the Mother of Invention. If therefore they, whose Interest it is, find no way to make it advantageous, 'tis hardly to be expected, that they, who have no immediate Interest in it, shou'd do it for them.

I say no *immediate* Interest, for I wou'd not be thought to insinuate, as if our Legislators did not interest themselves in the Affairs of the Public; I readily give my Testimony to their great Care of the Affairs of the whole, and their Readiness to relieve all who want their Assistance. But yet, I think, it will be allow'd, that a Man has another sort of Concern for his own Subsistence, than it is possible for any Patriot or Body of Patriots, tho' of the most exalted, beneficent and heroic Genius, to have for the private Welfare of every particular person in the State they preside over. Besides that, a Man who is always in the Way of Trade, and conversant in Affairs of that kind, is better fitted to judge of such Matters, than by remote Speculations he possibly can.

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It is possible that in some Cases, for want of a comprehensive Knowledge of Things, a Tradesman may overlook Things, that would be for his Interest; but even then, if a hint of it deliver'd in plain Terms will not open his Eyes, I see not, but that he must remain as he was, and go on his own Way; for, till he believes it his Interest, he will be very restiff, if any Body attempts to drive him to it.

If this Reasoning hold good, with respect to every particular, it must do so with respect to the Whole; and consequently Force is not a proper Method of supporting Trade: For, no Man trades to any purpose, but where it is his own free Choice.

It is the Misfortune of those, who at this Time endeavor to promote a Law for Regulation of the Coal-Trade, that they have no Regard to any Thing beyond the narrow Compass of their own particular Employment, nor extend their Views beyond their own Interest. This partial Consideration of Things, must unavoidably mislead them grossly: For,

Trade is to be consider'd as one general System or Body, all the parts whereof are necessarily united to each other; and whatever Scheme is form'd for the Promotion of any one Branch, without considering it as part of a certain Whole, or any Regard had to the Variation it may produce in other Branches; and how that Variation may affect this very Branch it self, and frustrate the Design, must unavoidably miscarry.

The several Branches of Trade have so close a Connection and Dependance on one another, that no considerable alteration can be made in any one Branch, but a great many others feel the Effect of it. Some Branches, we see,  
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owe their Being wholly to others, and there is no one Branch but depends more or less on a great many; and those again, in like proportion on it. These Relations are so many and so various, that it is very difficult, if not oftentimes impossible, for the greatest Genius to collect them all in one View, or form such a Scheme to alter any Branch, as he can be sure may not injure both it and others a vast many Ways, which he never foresaw.

Hence the Probability, that Laws of this kind, may do Harm, is manifest; that they will do any Good, equivalent to it, is not so likely. This is, in short, a most tender Point; a very little Alteration having oftentimes been found sufficient, to divert a considerable Branch of Trade to a new Channel, or produce other Effects, which generally turn to the Detriment of the Aggressors.

The Owners of our Coal Ships seem indeed to be pretty secure, as to the point of losing the Trade, because Coals must be had for *London* whatever they cost: But let us then consider some other probable Consequences of their Proceeding.

They would have a Law to compel all Ships to deliver *in turn*; or else, to erect one Office or Factory for Sale of all Coals that come into this. As either of their Ways wou'd enable them to fix their own Price on Coals, I suppose they do not expect such a Law to pass without a Limitation of the Price, which they shall not be suffer'd to exceed: And how wou'd they relish that, if any Scarcity of Provision, or advance of Wages, should not leave them a reasonable Profit? But perhaps the *Lord Mayor*, or some other Magistrate, may be empower'd to fix  
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and vary the Price at his Discretion; and we will suppose he allows them always a tolerable Profit; what then will follow? Why truly this, so great a Number of Ships will crowd into the Trade, that the long Delay, in waiting for their *Turn*, will either eat out the Profit, or oblige them to make an unreasonable Advance of the Price.

That this is not a meer chimerical Notion the Experience of last Year may testify; when, upon the Advance of Coals, so great a Number of Ships crowded into the Trade, that did not use it before; which, if that Price had continu'd, must have encreas'd from Year to Year. For, whatever these Men pretend, Shipping in the Coal-Trade has all along turn'd to as good Account as in most other Trades, and better than in many others; and consequently, if this mends, many of them will certainly come in.

The Coal-Trade employs at present not more than 350 Sail of Ships, which I cannot conceive to be a fourth part of our Shipping: If then, out of the other Number, they spare but 100 Ships to add to the Coal Trade, which in a few Years they may very well do; as there is no room to expect any great Encrease of the Demand, the Consequence of this will be, that, instead of eight Voyages a Year, a Ship must make but six. Their Charge of Provisions will be the same, and Wear and Tear little less; so that, unless the Freight of Coals be advanc'd one fourth, they cannot live.

It is not at random, that I say 100 Ships may in a few Years be spar'd out of other Trades; for all our Trades are full stock'd, and some to spare; we are continually building, both here and in the *Plantations*, much faster than they decay:

cay: There are many *English* Ships go abroad, and work for Freight to and from other Ports for considerable Sums, the Profit of which, by the way, is all clear Gain to the Nation; and it is well known, that Labor of all kinds is as cheap or cheaper abroad than here; so that the Profit of these Voyages must run but low; and therefore the prospect of Advantage in the Coal-Trade must readily draw them home, and by that Means not only over-stock that Trade, but lose to the Nation all the Advantages of these foreign Freights, which, after a few Years neglect, may not be easily recover'd.

A fix'd and certain Profit upon their Goods must, it is plain, encrease their Number, which is already great enough, and if the Price, be from time to time rais'd to answer it, lay an unreasonable Burthen on the City, and Parts adjacent.

This advance will likewise make a very considerable Alteration in all our other Freights, which, together with the high Price of Coals, (great Quantities of which are us'd in sundry of our Manufactures) must be a considerable Clog on our Trade in foreign Markets, where we had need take Care not to do any thing that shall oblige us to advance the Price of our Goods; for many of our Neighbours, grown wise by our Example, have set up Manufactures of their own, and will certainly in a little time, if we take not great Care, be able to under-sell us: For Labor, which makes a great Share of the Price of most of our Goods, is much cheaper with many of them than with us. It therefore behoves us to use our utmost endeavour to dispatch all Business, with the fewest Hands possible, lest the price of the Work advance upon us: But such

a Law as this has a direct contrary tendency, and wou'd therefore certainly do us harm.

These are some of the many ill Consequences that wou'd follow, supposing the Government should think fit to advance the Price as their occasions wou'd call for it: It is therefore improbable, that the Price will be thus extravagantly advanc'd, and then, tho' this Method may put a little Money in their Pockets for a Year or two, yet a little time must put an end to it, and make them as weary of such a Law as they are now fond of it.

I know it is still urg'd by some, who allow, that, tho' in the main it is not proper to endeavour to force a particular Trade, nevertheless, as our Navy is our principal Strength, and the Coal-Trade the best Nursery for Seamen, they ought by all Means to be encourag'd, that we may have a constant Supply on all Occasions to Man a Fleet.

They ought, no doubt, to be encourag'd as much as may be, to be protected against all Interruptions; and all Opportunities ought to be taken to advance our Trade, which must of course improve our Shipping: But it may as well be argu'd, that we ought to keep a Fleet in constant Pay, as that we ought to maintain any supernumerary Men and Ships in any Trade; since the Charge, as I have before shewn, is equal; and it is much more reasonable, that the whole Nation contribute to the Charge, as it is for the Safety of the whole, than that the whole Burden should fall on those parts which are supply'd with Fuel from the Port of *London*. And besides, it is better that a certain Number of Seamen be set apart for public Service, if it be necessary, than that the whole Body shou'd get a pernicious Habit of Idleness. But

But there does not seem to be any Necessity at all for such an Expence; for, tho' the Coal-Trade be call'd the best Nursery for Seamen, it certainly furnishes, in Proportion to the Numbers employ'd in it, the fewest Hands to the Navy of any other. And the Number of Ships, sufficient to distress a Trade that is already full, is so small in Proportion to the Whole, that they are scarce worth so much Regard. Thirty Ships will do it in the Coal-Trade, these may employ 300 Men, of which scarce ever more than 30 will go to the Fleet.

But if after all there be an absolute Necessity, that the Number of our Seamen be kept up or increas'd; as they increase daily, there is, I think, a much better way of doing it than either by forcing the Coal-Trade, or keeping a Fleet in standing Pay.

There is a very valuable Branch of Trade, which tho' it lies most convenient for us of any other People, is yet almost wholly neglected, that is the *Fishery*. I know no Reason why we might not, by proper Application in a little Time, be able to make as great Advantage of it as the *Dutch*. They have, no doubt, by long Practice acquir'd the Art of managing every particular Article to Advantage; they have Men skill'd in the Business; have all Materials better and cheaper made; and can catch and cure their Fish fit for a Market, cheaper than we at first can pretend to do: But in all these, a little Practice would, no doubt, enable us to equal them. If then, in the present Circumstances of our Trade, we have no Means to support such a Number of Sailors, as it is necessary for us to have, without a Charge to the Publick; suppose that Charge were apply'd in a small Bounty for an Encouragement to this Business for a time, 'till we acquire the Art of doing it as cheap

as they, which a small Time wou'd doubtless enable us to do, one good End will be answer'd by it; our People will be taught to be industrious, and we may perhaps secure to our Posterity a Share at least of a most beneficial Trade, which has brought infinitely more Wealth to the *Low Countries* than all the Mines of *Peru* to the *Spaniard*. For it is to be observ'd in this Trade, that the whole Price of Fish exported is clear Gain to the Nation, except only the Charge of some few foreign Materials, which will be us'd in the Shipping employ'd therein.

Having already shewn that this Method of delivering *in turn*, or, what comes to the same Thing, establishing one Office or Factory for the Sale of all Coals, must either be carry'd to such a Height as will be injurious to the Public, or else not answer the Masters and Owners End at all; I shall now proceed to consider the Case between them and the Lightermen; and examine the other Scheme they have newly enter'd on, relating to the Lightermen's exclusive Privilege of Trade. A Scheme which has so little shew of Favor to their Cause, that it may reasonably be doubted, whether they came into it with a View of bettering their own Condition, or merely out of a Pique to the Lightermen, whose Management has been, it seems, the principal Cause of all the Evils that have befallen them.

The Scheme, I own, at first somewhat surpris'd me; and the more, because I was not able to devise what shou'd occasion so sudden a Breach of that strict Unions declar'd by a Vote of the *House of Commons* the very last Session, to subsist between them. 'Tis true, they had, before that, made a shew of a Quarrel with the Lightermen, and pretended, in Conversation as well as Print, to accuse

them of using unfair Arts to beat down the Price of Coals, and of laying such heavy Burdens on the poor defenceless Masters, as they were no Ways able to bear. And the Lightermen, on the other hand, seem'd utterly averse to their Proceedings, and made a shew of vigorous Attempts to put a stop to them. They were indeed generally suppos'd utter Enemies to each other, 'till the *House of Commons*, after an Enquiry into the Affair, in a Committee appointed for that End, having discover'd, notwithstanding all this Pretence, that there was at Bottom a good Understanding between them, voted both Lightermen, Masters and Owners guilty of a Combination, not to beat down, but advance the Price of Coals; which is sufficient Proof, that they look'd upon all this shew of Quarrel, to be only a Contrivance to amuse the World, and cover a close concerted Design, in which both Parties were concern'd; by which Discovery, all, that they had said against the Lightermen, was fully answer'd, because it prov'd the Design of the whole to be only to deceive.

It must be own'd, it was a refin'd Piece of Policy, and, if we consider the Persons concern'd in it, really amazing: Neither Side being remarkable for a politic Conduct; but one so notoriously inconsiderate, as, notwithstanding the said Vote, to endeavor still to persuade the World, that they never held any Correspondence of that kind at all with the Lightermen; tho' in so doing they are reduc'd to this Dilemma; that they either now deny a certain Matter of Fact, or else they prevaricated so grossly in their Representation of the Matter to the Committee, that they impos'd upon them and the whole House; and are resolv'd to bring the Lightermen into a Scrape  
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on one Side or t'other, and render them obnoxious to the Legislature, either for combining against the am to beat down the Price of Coals; or, if that fail, for combining with them to advance it.

But be that as it will, it is past doubt, that it is now no longer Peace between them; and as they, by still insisting on their former Complaints and Arguments against the Lightermen, seem to imagine that they are really justifiable and conclusive; I shall examine the most material of them, and endeavor to shew them their Error: Because I should be very unwilling to see an useful Body of Men hurt by their own Imprudence, which is the usual Consequence of this Kind of Quarrels among Tradefmen.

They alledge first, that, before they enter'd on these Measures, Coals were sold for much less than cou'd be afforded, and that the Importers had for several Years been continually losing Money. Tho' the great Number of Ships built within the same Number of Years, with Money all gain'd in the Coal-Trade, leaves not room to believe their Case is altogether so hard as they pretend; yet let us here suppose the Complaint to be true, the Reason they have assign'd for it is, methinks, a very odd one. Two thirds of the Coals that come into this Port, or perhaps more, are bought by the artful Management of fifteen Lightermen. The Term *artful* stands here, we may be sure, for something blame-worthy, of which anon. But in the mean Time I cannot see how it affects the Price of Coals at all, whether they are bought by 15, 1500, or but 5 Lightermen. If there were any room to expect that the Encrease of the Number of Buyers would also encrease the Consumption, then I own they might reasonably enough hope, that it would also advance the Price: But that

that is not to be expected here; for no body about *London* or *Westminster* keeps the less Fire, because either Coals or Lighters fall short, and are not to be had. The Quantity of other Fuel burnt here is very small in comparison, and can make no considerable Alteration: There is not therefore any room to expect an encrease of the Demand, unless the People encrease, or any of those Trades which consume large Quantities are improv'd. As to remote Places, whither Coals are carry'd from this Port, they being excepted out of the Lightermen's Privilege, and the Trade to them always free, they are entirely out of the Question.

Now, while the Consumption continues the same to multiply the Number of Buyers, is but to divide the Trade into less Shares; and the Difference, between a great and small Number, is equal in value to that between 21 Shillings and one Guinea; you have more trouble in telling, but are ne'er a whit the richer for the Change. If the same Quantity be both imported and consum'd as now, there will always be the like Quantities at Market; And will it not be as difficult, when the Market is overstock'd, to sell 100 Chaldron of Coals to 10 Men who have present Occasion for but 5 a piece, as to 5 Men who want 10 a piece? In either Case, if the Seller is in haste, he must make a like Abatement of the Price; and has a like Advantage when the Market is empty.

The Buyers, whether few or many will always use their best Art, to buy as cheap as they can, and would be the more oblig'd so to do, were their Number encreas'd, for the present Number is rather more than sufficient to carry on the Trade; a great many of their Lighters often lye  
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idle, and few find full employ, which an Encrease of Number must make still more difficult to come at. Every one will strive for Customers, which always turn to him that sells cheapest; by this their profit will be reduc'd, and they consequently oblig'd to look more narrowly to their buying than now. An Encrease of Lightermen in the Coal-Trade, may possibly bring down the Price of Lighterage from 12 *d.* to 10. *d.* per Chaldron; but for any purpose of the Masters and Owners of Ships will be useless.

To this I have heard it objected, that Experience shews the contrary: The Price of Corn at *Bear-Key* always rises or falls as there happen to be more or fewer Buyers in the Market. But this is by no Means a parallel Case; for there, *more* Buyers buy *more* Corn, but with us it will not be so. 'Tis not the Number of Buyers absolutely, but the Difference of the Demand, that makes the Alteration; the Matter is not, whether there be in all a greater or a lesser Number, who supply themselves generally from that Market; but, whether a greater or less Share of those that do use it have present occasion.

There are, besides, a great many Inconveniences, of which they seem not at all apprehensive, which will attend an Encrease of the Number of Buyers: Let us suppose them doubled, the Encrease must come chiefly from among the Lightermen's present Customers, the Wood-Mongers especially. These Men generally take long Credit, frequently 5 or 6 Months, and must have the same of the Masters if they deal with them; the Interest of the Money, and the Hazard of bad Debts, which will be eight times as much as now at least, is worth 9 *d.* per Chaldron at a very moderate Computation; the Delay and Trouble in de-

delivering to so many persons will be great, and frequently detain a Ship, a Day or two extraordinary; and the Fatigue of getting in the Money, which will be at least four-fold, is worth 3 *d.* per Chaldron more; it will therefore stand them in stead to consider, whether they be likely to gain any thing by the Exchange, since it is not probable that the price will be advanc'd by it.

But were the Encrease of the Number of Buyers of ever so great Advantage to them, as it certainly is of none, what course will they take to encrease them? Their propos'd Method, of taking away the Lightermen's Charter, will not effect it; for there is nothing in that to restrain any one from Buying any Commodity when, where, and how he pleases: Yet the Brewers, Dyers, Glass-makers, &c. who consume large Quantities, buy wholly of the Lightermen, tho' they might as well, if they thought it worth while, buy of the Masters. 'Tis true, they must make use of a Lighterman to carry them, but the Price of Lighterage is well known, and they cannot be impos'd on in that; and I believe, if they had the Liberty, few of them wou'd think it worth their while to keep Lighters for four or five hundred Chaldron of Coals a Year; so that little is to be expected from among *them*. The Wood-mongers, and Keepers of Wharfs, have all a Right to keep Lighters of their own, to serve their own Wharfs; and yet few of them do, tho' they might, to much the same Advantage now, as if the Trade were open. The Bargemen who go with their own Barges to fetch the Coals out of the Ships, and are entitled to all Privilege belonging to the Trade, being most of them free Lightermen themselves, yet generally

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buy of the Lightermen. All which seems plainly to prove, that the Lighterman's Profit is very reasonable, and not more than equivalent to the Trouble and Inconvenience it would be to those several Trades to buy of the Masters; and that it is not worth any Man's while to follow their Trade, who does not make it his full Employ. There are many Hundreds of free Lightermen in the River, whose Right to deal in Coals is every whit equal; and I can see no Reason, why no more of them do, but that the Trade is full stock'd.

But then, say they, so small a Number easily combine to beat down the Price, and oppress the Masters. This, I believe, the first Complaint of the kind: We have many Laws against Engrossing, Forestalling, and all kinds of Combinations, and unfair Practices to enhance the Prices of Goods; but not one, that I know of, against combining to beat down the price; nor is it probable we ever shall, because no such Combination can take effect, to the Detriment of the Public. For,

It is the Interest of the Public, that the Price of all Goods be as low as possible; the Seller is, or ought to be, Judge of his own Profit, and of the Price he can afford to sell for. If then the Buyers should combine not to give that Price, the Goods are still his own, he keeps them till the Buyers Stock is consum'd, and then they will be oblig'd to give the price, if it be a necessary Commodity; and the same Interest, which tempted them to combine, will oblige them to break the Combination. If it be not the Buyers Interest to give the price at last, and no other reason can be given for their Refusal, then it is plain,

plain, it is not in Use worth so much to them, or that their Occasions are supply'd other ways at a cheaper Rate; and, if that be the Case, I need offer no Reason to prove, that every one will take sufficient care of himself, to go the cheapest Way to Market, without any combining at all; nor is it fit that they should be forbid so to do. I conclude therefore, that as no such Combination can be made, either to hurt the public, or serve any Man's Interest, therefore none such will be made.

It is possible, that a Ship may chance sometimes to lye a long time, and the Owners be Losers at last by the great Expence, tho' they get the price insisted on; in which case it may, perhaps, sometimes be more advisable to sit down with the first Loss, than hazard a greater: But this can only happen when the Market is overstock'd. If that be, as they pretend it is, almost constantly the Case, it is plain, the Importation exceeds the Demand; and then there needs no Combination to lower the price, it will fall of it self: And besides, if that be so, some of our Ships and Sailors may well be spar'd to other Uses; in which Case, as I have before shewn, it is the Interest of the public they shou'd find other Employ; and, if nothing else will drive them to it, poverty must; the World is open before them, and the Industrious never want Means to live in a free Country, where every Man enjoys his own without becoming a prey to lawless tyrannical power.

But a farther Argument, of the Improbability of a Combination among the Lightermen, is this, that they are not the Consumers of Coals, and therefore not interested in the price; many of their Customers know the Course of the Market,

ket at *Billinggate*, as well as themselves; and the Price there rules the price they sell at, at all times; and their profit is known to be equal, be Coals dear or cheap; What then should tempt them to combine to beat down the price?

All the concern a Lighterman has in the price, lies in the Comparison of the price he gives, to the Price his Neighbors give; it matters not to him, whether he gives 21 s. or 27 s. but, whether he buys dearer or cheaper than the rest; if he buys dearer, he must disoblige his Customers by selling dearer, or else be a Loser. There is therefore no manner of doubt, but every one for himself labor'd to his utmost, to be equal at least with his Neighbors, and it happen'd perhaps, now and then, that he might have an Opportunity to oblige a Customer with a good pennyworth, which he cou'd not so well have in case of a Combination.

This Emulation of Buying cheaper one than another is common to this with all other Trades, and will always be so while Trade remains; every one uses his best Art and Endeavor for that end, and it was never, that I know of, accounted a Crime, provided no unfair practice is us'd to deceive or impose upon the Seller.

This brings me to their next Complaint of unfair practices of that kind, which they charge on the Lightermen; *They refuse, say they, to make a positive Bargain for Coals before they take them out of the Ship:* The Masters very well know to whom they are indebted for the first Introduction of that Custom, which is now become so heavy a Grievance. How common was it, but two Years ago, to deliver all the Coals out of the Ship first, and then squabble about the price? Or rather how rare a thing was it to hear of any body who stood to talk

talk about the Price before-hand at all? It is, one wou'd think, in the Master's Power to put an End to this whenever they please; and, were it their own private Concern, they would quickly do it no doubt; for no Body can oblige them to deliver without making a Price. But then, say they, whoever insists on a positive obligatory Bargain is markt out, and every one of them shuns dealing with him: But this is false in Fact, nor can they produce any one Instance of any thing like it. On the contrary, if the Master is known to be a Man of Probity, not apt to speak better of his Coals than they deserve, tho' he be ever so much noted for insisting on a positive Bargain, shall sooner sell his Coals (if he holds them not above the Market) than another, who is apt to commend his Commodity at Adventure, tho' less careful about the Price.

There is no other Way for the Buyer to come at the Knowledge of the Quality of the Coals, but by the Master's Word, on which so little Dependance is generally to be had, that they ought, if they had been impartial, to have imputed this, at least in Part, to their own want of Honor, which makes the Lightermen cautious of making positive Bargains, by which they shou'd be oblig'd to take the Coals, whether fit for their Customers, and worth the Price or not.

Their next Complaint is, that when they have bought the Coals, and taken out Part of them, they frequently make a Stop, and refuse to take the rest, without an Abatement of Price; and, by giving the Coals an ill Name without Reason, prevent their being sold to any Body else. This is owing mostly to the very same Reason with the former, *viz.* a wrong Character given of the Coals; for to one Ship thus dropt, where the

the Coals answer in Quality to what they were sold for, there are ten prove otherwise; and in this Case, the Contract being already broke on the Side of the Seller, it is not reasonable the Buyer shou'd be oblig'd by it.

They complain further, that when the Lighterman has got the Coals in his own Possession, he refuses frequently to pay the Price agreed for. It must be own'd, that when the Coals prove not good, 3 *d.* per Chaldron, which is the usual difference in Debates of this Kind, is but a poor Recompence to the Lighterman for the Disappointment it gives him in his Business: But however, if a positive Bargain has been made, and the Coals prove as good as reported, if any Man refuse to pay the Price, the same Remedy is to be had here, as in other Trades; the Law is open, and will certainly oblige him to it.

There are, no doubt, Men of indifferent Principles among the Lightermen, who make groundless Cavils about the Goodness of the Coals, and so leave them, or insist on an Abatement as best suits themselves; but this is no more than happens in most other Trades. Such Men, wherever we meet with them, are difficult to deal with; for going to Law is troublesome; but, where Men have not a Principle of Honor and Honesty in themselves, there is no other Way of reducing them to Reason, but by an Appeal to the Law. It were to be wish'd, we cou'd have in such Cases a more summary and expeditious Proceeding, that Property might be speedily determin'd in Disputes, which happen in Trade, as in *Holland* by their *Law Merchant*. If the Legislature shou'd think fit to establish any Thing of this Kind, in such Manner as not to lay an equal Burthen on the Buyer, who must take his Goods unseen on the Seller's Word, there

there is no fair Dealer but would rejoice; because it will deprive the Knaves among them, of their old way of enabling themselves to undersell them. But it is hop'd, that the unjustifiable Practice of a few will not be made use of, to deprive the whole Body of Lightermen of any Privilege they may be justly possess'd of.

I know there are many of Opinion, that all exclusive Privileges of dealing are injurious to the Public, effectual Stops to Improvement, and very detrimental to Trade; and indeed I cannot but join with them, for many Reasons, which might be given, were it consistent with the design'd Length of this Letter: But these hold equally against all Privileges of this Kind, as well as this; and in some Cases, especially all Manufactures, are much stronger: For the Business of a Lighterman, so far at least as concerns their exclusive Privilege, is only to let Lighters to hire to carry Goods, which is capable of no other Improvement, than as our Trade encreases; and, besides the free Lightermen are already as numerous as the Trade will bear; so that whatever Arguments are drawn from those general Reasons, for abolishing this Company, are at least equally valid against all the Charters in the City.

It is, no doubt, the hearty Wish of every Man, who understands the Interest of his Country, and seeks its Welfare, that there were no such Thing among us; it wou'd, I am fully persuaded, redound very much to the Benefit of this City, and the general Encouragement of Trade: And why may we not hope, from the Wisdom of our present Legislature, to see in due Time something of that kind accomplish'd.

If on this Occasion they should think fit to begin with the Lightermen, the Situation of their  
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Affairs is such, that I think they need not be apprehensive of any ill Consequence that can thence accrue to them, nor fear many new Comers into their Business; For if the old Professors find it difficult to make it worth their while, what must new Comers do? As the Trade seems to be quite full, I think, they need not fear that 7 Years hence there will be one Lighterman more, if they lose their Privilege, than if they keep it. I believe some of them are very sensible of this, and wou'd readily give up all Privileges they enjoy by being incorporated, for the Good of the Public, and an Example to other Trades; altho' the Fear of the unjust Scandal, of having forfeited it by an Abuse of the Trade, may engage them to use their utmost Endeavor at this Time to support it.

In short, I see no Reason they shou'd be at all solicitous about it, provided that no new Monopoly be erected, which may injure them. But here are two Petitions lodg'd against them, which seem both to tend that Way. The Masters purpose, if they cou'd accomplish it, is to get an Office erected for Sale of all Coals that come into this Port, which wou'd be a Monopoly with a Witness. What, besides a View of procuring to themselves that very Privilege, they complain of in the Lightermen, shou'd tempt the Woodmongers and Keepers of Wharfs to join in a Petition against them, I cannot see: For it is provided by a Clause in the Act (11 and 12 William III.) which incorporated the Lightermen, that all Woodmongers and Keepers of Wharfs shou'd still retain the Right of keeping Lighters to serve their own Wharfs as before; a Privilege they have hitherto thought so little worth their Notice, that they seem almost to have forgot they have it. I think

think there is therefore no Doubt, but their Aim is at bottom to get themselves incorporated: But tho' that should prove to be so, I believe, still the Lightermen may rely on the Legislature's Disapprobation of any new Grant of that Kind, for the general Reasons before hinted, which are stronger far against new Monopolies than old; for the old, by long Continuance, are often so well stock'd with Hands, that there is little Difference between an open and restrain'd Trade; but in new ones the Case is otherways. Besides, the Woodmongers Abuse and Forfeiture of a former Charter leaves still less Reason to fear they shou'd succeed.

Having shewn, that the Masters and Owners of Ships have been mistaken in the Reasons assign'd for their Difficulties, and that their propos'd Remedies can neither of them answer their End; I shall next proceed to enquire into the State of the Trade among themselves, and see whether we cannot discover the real Cause and proper Remedy of all the Mischiefs.

The Masters of Ships, using this Trade, are most commonly Part-owners of the Vessels they navigate, and be their Property therein ever so small, yet they are mostly possess'd of the \**Grand Bill of Sale*; and all the Parts, which they hold not, are sold by them, and Bills of Sale given in their Names. This entitles them to the sole Management of the Vessel, to go where and when they think best, to buy and sell her Cargo, or let her out to Freight at their own Discretion. Some there are, who have no Concern at all in their Vessels, who yet are wholly entrusted with the Sale of the Coals.

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\* The *Grand Bill of Sale* is from the Carpenter, that built the Ship, to the Master for the whole Vessel.



( 34 )

The Owner's Interest lies in the Price of the Coals; the Master's in Dispatch; his own and his Servant's Wages, his Portage, &c. are all Profits accruing to him in this Trade, by the Voyage, and allow'd him, whether the Owners gain or lose. Here are two separate Interests, not only entirely independant on each other, but oftentimes opposite; both under the Direction of the Master, and it can be no Question, which will be preferr'd.

Where the Master is an Owner, I grant, he is engag'd in that Interest in Proportion to his Part: For, a Master of a Ship of 200 Chaldron of Coals, if he has two Servants (and few have less) by lying still a Week loses out of his proper Perquisites at least 3 *l.* 10 *s.* If by this Delay he gains 6 *d.* per Chaldron in the Price, that on 200 Chaldron amounts to 5 *l.* out of which deduct for a Week's Provision for the Ship's Company 3 *l.* there remains clear Profit to the Owners but 2 *l.* in all. If he advances 12 *d.* per Chaldron, that will make but 7 *l.* clear Profit; so that, even then, his Part must be half, to make him an Equivalent for his lost Time. And this being as great, or greater Advance, than can ordinarily be expected by a Week's Waiting, it follows, that unless the Master's Part in the Ship be at least one half, his Interest as Master is greater than as Owner, and the Scale, will consequently turn on that Side.

If then the Majority of the Masters have less Concern in their Vessels than one half, as they most certainly have, it is plainly their particular Interest to run as fast as they can; and they will naturally study Dispatch rather than Price: For every ones private Interest will certainly sway him more constantly than any other.

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( 35 )

That it has done so with them, their past Conduct may sufficiently testify, by which they have prov'd, that their fuddled Brother, t'other Day, spoke the sober Sentiments of them all, when he said, *If we get but our Wages, ne'er mind the Profit.* For, whatever they may pretend about the Lightermen's Arts, &c. their own hasty, precipitate running on, and unparallel'd Neglect of the Interest of their Owners, has been the main, if not only Cause of the Reduction of the Market.

Another Thing, which renders some of them still more careless, is the Difficulty of bringing the Master to account with the Owners; for he being possessor of the Ship, by Virtue of the *Grand Bill of Sale*, he manages her at his own Direction, and makes up his Account as he pleases, or renders none at all, as best suits him; and, tho' he be really Owner of not more than one sixteenth Part, all the rest of the Owners, join'd together, cannot turn him out. If they go to Law, it is but making bad worse; for Suits are tedious, and he all the while defends himself at their Cost.

While these divided Interests remain thus under the Direction of one Party, nothing can be expected but what has hitherto constantly happen'd; a Neglect of one of them to serve the other. The Measures, they have hitherto taken, tend not in the least to unite them, and therefore cannot help the Owners; for the same Cause will always produce the same Effect.

As last Summer the long Delay, in waiting for Turn, became Matter of as heavy Complaint to the Masters, as the low Price of Coals was before to the Owners; they accordingly broke those Measures, to which they submitted at first, more to appease the Complaint of the Owners, than

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out of their own free Choice; nor do I believe the Owners will ever be able to bring them so generally into the like Method again, without a Law for that Purpose.

In order therefore to remedy all these Evils, it is absolutely necessary to unite those Interests, the Division whereof has produc'd them all; if this can be effected (as I think it easily may) the Cause being remov'd, the Effect will cease.

There is a Method already in use in some of our coasting Trades, as at *Brightelmstone*, and some other Places, that effectually answers the End: Which I am inform'd is this. Two thirds of the Ship's Freight are allotted to the Master, who, out of that, victuals and mans the Ship, and pays Port-Charges, and takes the Overplus to himself in lieu of Wages: Out of the other Third he pays for Repairs of the Vessel, and divides the rest to his Owners. By this Method the Master is oblig'd to take some Care of their Interest, as well as his own. Whatever Freight the Ship makes, the Owners have an equitable Share of it for the Adventure of their Money; and if the Master takes not Care to make a tolerable Freight, so as to give them something, he must himself be a Loser: Whereas, in the Method now in Use in the Coal-Trade, the Master's Profit, if he makes the Voyage, is certain; the Owner's very precarious, and wholly independent on it.

This Method fully unites the two Interests, and is likewise in it self equitable and fair; for it is as reasonable, that the Owner have a Consideration for the Adventure of their Money, as the Master for his Labor and Care of the Ship; and, if at any Time they fall short, I see no Reason why he ought not also to suffer with them. There

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is not, in my Opinion, any Thing more unequal, than the present Distribution of the Money rais'd by the Coal-Shipping; where the Master's Wages and Perquisites enable him to live well, tho' his Owners get not a Farthing.

I am sensible I shall here have the Masters against me, who may perhaps see the thing in another Light, and be unwilling to submit their Interest to the Chance of Trade, and their own good Management: But let them lay aside the Master for a while, and put themselves in the Place of the Owners, and see whether then it does not appear reasonable, that a Law should be made to establish some Method of this kind, under such Regulations as may adapt it to the Circumstances of this Trade; and that the Masters be laid under a stronger Obligation to account to their Owners.

The main Objection I have yet met with is, *That such a Law would deprive the Masters of a Privilege, which all their Owners, by accepting Parts on the then customary Terms, had consented to allow them: Which they think is depriving them of their Property, or at least altering it very much.*

To this I answer, that here is no privilege or property taken away, without an Equivalent, or what ought certainly to be deem'd so. As to the Alteration, if the Good of the whole Trade requires it, that of a Part must submit; we have many Instances of Taxes on one part of a Community to support the other, and this is an undoubted Alteration of Property, and yet not therefore counted unreasonable; much less can it be thought so to alter, or even take away a Privilege that has been abus'd to an unreasonable Purpose, and the Detriment of the Persons from whom they first had it; especially where

( 38 )

where there is no other probable Method left of preventing the Abuse: Nay, are not they at this very time attempting the self same thing against the Lightermen, tho' with much less Reason?

Upon the whole I cannot see, but that since private Interest is the generally prevailing Principle among Mankind, such a Law would certainly help the Owners, and be injurious to no body; provided only that all Combinations be effectually prohibited. But this, as well as all I have before said, I submit to impartial Censure; if, by publishing these Thoughts, I may either do any Service to the Trade, or excite some abler Hand to set the Matter in a clearer Light, I have my end.

*I am, SIR, &c.*

**F I N I S.**

**E R R A T A.**

**P**AGE 15. l. 24. r. this *Port.* *ibid.* for *their*  
r. *these.* p. 20. l. 33. r. *union.* p. 22. l. 3. for  
*the am* r. *them.*