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COLLECTION
OF
LETTERS
Published in the
Daily Papers
Relating to the
British Distillery.



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A
COLLECTION
OF
LETTERS.



LETTER I.

S I R,

I LIVE in a Part of the Town which gives me too frequent Opportunities of observing the scandalous Disorders and pernicious Consequences of the Common People drinking Spirituous Liquors.

And also what little Substance I have is chiefly in Land, which lies in a part of the Kingdom where the Price of Corn is the entire Dependance of the Tenants, who supply the Market at *Bear-Key*, yet I always thought the preserving the Strength and Morals of the Common People of so much Concern to every Man of common Sense in the Kingdom, that I reconciled my self very chearfully to the Thoughts of lessening my Rents, so as I could but have the Happiness of seeing this dangerous Poison rooted out.

(4)

But upon reading a Pamphlet lately published, entitled, *Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation*; wherein the Author asserts the Landed Interest would gain by the Destruction of the Distillery, I readily determined with my self that Manufacture was entirely a Common Nufance, and ought to be entirely destroyed in all its Branches.

In this Opinion I remain'd till I saw an Answer to the above-mentioned Pamphlet, in another Intitled, *An Impartial Enquiry into the present State of the British Distillery*; on reading which I was indeed the more convinced of the ill Consequence of the common Tipling Houses for Spirituous Liquors, and the absolute Necessity of providing an immediate and effectual Remedy; but at the same time I own, it appear'd plainly to me, that the Manufacture itself was useful, and of great Consequence to the Landed Interest to preserve; and that all good Ends proposed might be answered, without blowing up, at one Stroke, a Body of useful and industrious People, who as is mentioned in the Pamphlet I quote, have launched out their Fortunes in this Trade, on the Faith of several Acts of Parliament: For which reason, no doubt but a Parliament will be tender in this Point, and distinguish between what is useful, and what is pernicious, and not indiscriminately destroy the whole.

The Author of this Pamphlet gives a Calculation of the Number of Distillers, of whom he allows 300 to be free of the Company, and 1200 who are not.

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He computes the Utensils employed by them in this Manufacture, to amount to 379,000*l.* and that it Costs them about 10 per Cent. which is 37900*l.* annually for Repairs, in which many Trades and Artificers are employed, as Smiths, Coopers, Copper-smiths, Wheelwrights, Bricklayers, Carpenters, Plumbers, Worm-makers, Back-makers, Founders, Millwrights, &c.

That they consume 400,000 Quarters of Grain Yearly in the Distillery, as Wheat, Barley, Bear, which latter is supply'd chiefly from the *Northern* Parts; besides a great Quantity of Molasses and Sugars from the Plantations; and Cyder from the *Western* Parts.

And that the Tillage necessary for this Consumption employs at least 200,000 Acres of Land, 10,000 People, and 10,000 Horses; employs a great deal of Carriage as well as Factors to buy and sell; increases the Navigation, particularly the Coasting Trade; and employs a great Number of Hands in the Distillery; and what to my Understanding is of more Consequence still, effectually destroys great part of the Smugling of *French* Brandy, by making a Commodity little inferior in Goodness, and much Cheaper.

The Advantage of which appears by the Representation given of Smugling, which I shall quote in the Author's own Words.

Let any Man but go into the Counties of *Kent* and *Suffex*, *Norfolk* or *Suffolk*, or any other County conveniently situate for Smugling

0575

Smugling, there he will find all the young stout able bodied Men, who should by their Labour and Industry be useful to the Commonwealth, leading an idle vagabond, dissolute Life, acquiring in a Night the Price of a Month's Labour, by defrauding the Publick, and injuring the Fair Traders, which he immediately riotously consumes in all Wantonness and Debauchery; and being continually heated with the Liquors he deals in, and terrified with the Punishment the Laws inflict on Conviction, becomes desperate, values not his own Life, and is therefore easily Master of another Man's; goes about the Country like the *Banditti*, inures himself to Cruelty, and sometimes washes his Hands in the Blood of innocent Men, acting in discharge of their Trust. In the meantime the Farmer wants Hands sufficient to cultivate the Land; and all Labour, by that means, becomes exceeding dear; Hands are even wanted to get in the Harvest. The Supply from *Ireland* and *Wales*, which annually swarm to the adjacent Counties, are not sufficient, so that 3 s. or 4 s. a Day is sometimes paid for Labour in Harvest-time: And what does all this end in? Why sometimes Hanging, sometimes Transportation, sometimes running away for fear of the one or the other, sometimes a Goal for the Duty; or if all these fail, the Cargo being lost, he is laid in Goal for Debts contracted in the unlawful Employment; but in either Case, a Wife and miserable

ferable Family of young Children, are often left as a Charge and Burthen on the Parish, to be maintained by the Labour and Industry of honest Men; which Case happens so often, that in some of the Counties I have named, the Poor's Rate has amounted to 5 or 6 s. in the Pound.

On the Reasons given in this Pamphlet, I must own I think it of Consequence to the Landed Interest not to destroy so useful and beneficial a Manufacture, unless we are desirous to set up Smugling, and draw the Ready Money out of the Nation, with which only *French* Brandy can be purchased; and that the Method proposed in this Pamphlet would be sufficient to restrain the Abuse complain'd of.

That from and after the Day of no Distiller or other Person whatsoever, except Inn Keepers, Victuallers, and Persons keeping Publick Coffee Houses, to be licensed for that Purpose by the Justices in open Sessions, shall sell any Spirituous Liquors of any Kind or Nature soever, to be drunk in his, her, or their Shop, Warehouse, Shed, or other Place possessed by him, her, or them. And that all and every Person or Persons offending therein, and being thereof convicted on Oath of two credible Witnesses, before any of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, shall for every such Offence be liable to such Penalties as the Parliament in their great Wisdom shall think fit.

By which means the real Abuses would be remedied, and the National Interest in this

0516

‘ this Manufacture of the *British* Distillery
‘ preserved, and the reasonable Use of that
‘ Commodity to industrious laborious People
‘ left open.’

There are several other Things interspersed in this Pamphlet, very necessary for every Man to Read, who would judge impartially of an Affair of this Importance, which cannot be taken notice of in the Compass of this Letter, I only mention some general Heads, on which I have reformed my own Judgment, and doubt not, if the whole is duly considered, but that all the Abuses complain’d of, will be effectually remedied, and so valuable a Manufacture kept within its proper Bounds, and rendered useful to the Subject and the State, the rather for that the Revenue arising from *British* Spirits, amounted for the two last Years to upwards of 150,000*l.* a Year, which is appropriated in the first place to discharge the Interest of Part of the National Debt; and the Surplus makes Part of the Aggregate Revenue, called the Sinking Fund; a Sacred Treasure, which the Wisdom of the Legislature has appropriated to discharge the Principal of the National Debt, and now amounting in the whole to about a Million a Year, affords a Prospect of being one Day effected to the Honour of those who made that just and honest Provision.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R II.

S I R,

TH E Parson of our Parish, who is a mighty Newsmonger, last Week received a Bundle of Books from *London*, which he gives away to every one who will promise to read them; and makes not a little Noise in our Parts.

We are told they are wrote by another Parson in *London*, and are full of long Stories about Doctors and Gin-drinkers, two sorts of People we have little Knowledge of: But there is one Thing in this Parson’s Book we think very strange, he takes a deal of Pains to show that the Distillers using a great Quantity of Grain is not for the Advantage but to the Prejudice of the Farmer.

I happen’d t’other Day to be in Company with some of my neighbouring Farmers, when this Book was read over very soberly, and we agreed one and all, that the Gentleman who took so much Pains to write it, was certainly mad; and that if his Stories about Gin have no more Truth in them than what he talks about Farming, he may be said to have made a great stir about nothing.

But of all the strange Things in this Book, there is one which every Plough-Boy knows to be false: He says, that we had more live Stock thirty or forty Years ago than we have now; when at the same time the Truth of the Case is, we not only sell more fat Beasts in a Year to Market, suckle more Calves and Lambs, but have three times more live Stock on the Ground than the Farmers in *England* knew how to

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keep forty Years ago; for you must know we don't eat Clover, Cinquefoil, or Lucerne ourselves, but the great Quantities of those Grass Seeds sowed in *England*, is to support that great Increase of live Stock to be seen in all Parts of the Kingdom: And can any Man in his Senses believe that we should increase the Food for our Beasts three fold, and at the same time have less in Number than we had formerly? Now if this learned Gentleman will allow a Farmer to be any Judge in his own Affairs, that he was bred and born in, as a body may say, instead of breeding too little Stock, we have too much, far exceeding former Times, and therefore our Markets are glutted, and little worth, so that our main Dependance for Profit is on Corn, which good or bad, wet or dry, or smutty, we are sure of a Ready-Money Market for at *Bear-Key*, or else our Landlords would soon feel the difference in the Payment of their Rents.

As Corn therefore is what we must trust to, we hope nothing the Parson can say will spoil our Markets: We have as little to do with Drunkenness perhaps as himself; and as to the Tipling Brandy-shops, we don't care what becomes of 'em, he may set 'em on fire if he pleases: But what must we do with our Corn, if the Distillers won't buy it? I am not able to judge what the rest of the Kingdom will suffer in that Case. But as for our Town of —, and all the Neighbourhood, I am sure, we shall be quite ruin'd and undone: The Parson himself who spread this Conjuring Book among us, I'll engage will loose one third Part of his Tithes,

Tithes, for we pay Tithe in Kind when the Land is sowed with Corn, but a small Modus only when laid down; and if the Parson who wrote the Book had a good Living in the Country, he would have known better than to have told so foolish a Tale.

Truth, I know your *Londoners* do not much mind the Farmers Complaints, but faith, Sir, what I say is a true Story for all that; and to convince you, I shall tell you a little more of my own Case.

My Father rented the Farm I now live in, about 30 or 40 Years ago, at 100*l.* a Year, and it was with great Difficulty that he paid his Rent and maintained his Family: I think I have not above 30 Acres in the Whole, one third Part of which my Father made little Use of, being very coarse, and over-run with Weeds; but since it came into my Hands, I have broke up the poor Land, and by the good Husbandry which the Goodness and Certainty of our Market at *Bear-Key*, enabled me constantly to bestow on it, and the Improvement of Turnips, I am not only able to sell 200 fat Sheep a Year, whereas my Father could never fat 50; but I have brought my poor Land into such good Order, that I have had very good Crops of Corn, and by these Improvements have not only lived comfortably, but helped my Landlord to do so too, by raising my Rent when my Lease expired, to 150*l.* a Year, which I can better afford to pay, than my Father could the 100*l.* before the Distillers were known. Besides this, I drink a Cup of good Ale in my Family, and have a Bowl of good Punch for my
B 2 Friends,

(12)

Friends, which, I hope, no Body begrudges us, since we earn it by our Labour, and the Sweat of our Brow, early and late ; and, I think, we have as good a Right to enjoy ourselves in a civil Way, to our own Fancy, as the best of you all.

However, the Mischief is, we can't tell how long it will hold, for we have a strange Story among us, that the Distillers are going to leave off Trade ; the last Market Day, I am told, they shrugg'd up their Shoulders, and said, they wanted no Corn, the Effect of which was soon perceived, the Market fell, and my Factor writes me Word, the next is like to be much worse. I am sure, if our Markets are ruin'd, we are ruin'd ; for I don't suppose my Landlord will be willing to make any Abatement of his Rent ; however, were that the Case, he is like to do it, whether he will or not ; for between you and I, although we have as much Honesty as our Betters, yet we are not such Fools to be held to Leases when our Markets are gone. It will signify little to work ourselves into a Jail. No ! no ! we know a Trick worth two of that ; we will sooner go to *Georgia*, where Land is to be had for 2 *d.* an Acre, without Taxes, and here we pay 10 *s.* I can't but think how your fine Gentlemen will live on their Land, when their Tenants are gone ; and if they should set their Stewards to keep it in Hand, what fine Accounts they will have at Quarter-Day ! there will be rare Plowing and Sowing, I warrant you !

But supposing now that neither this Parson or his Book should do us any Mischief, which

(13)

which, at present we are not a little afraid of, yet there is one Thing they talk of which gives us some Uneasiness ; they say we are not to have Brandy or *English* Spirits in the Country for any Use at all. — Sure we hope nothing will ever hinder a Man drinking a Bowl of Punch with his Friend, that's one of the greatest Pleasures we enjoy in the Country, after our Labour, and it will be hard if an *English* Man can't have Leave to do that to his own Liking, for you must know Sir, in our Part of the Country we must drink something strong ; Ale will not keep the Cold out of our Guts, or cure Agues, so that Punch is our favourite Liquor, especially of late Years, since the Inn-keepers have got the Trick of brewing every Thing they sell ; and give us a Sort of Stuff they call Claret at 2 *s.* a Bottle, fit to poison a Man, when at the same Price we can drink a Quart of good Punch, a Liquor we know the making of, for 6 *d.* or 8 *d.* at our own Houses, and save our Money as well as procure our Health at the same Time.

We have also another want of *English* Spirits for the Use of our Cattle. What shall we do with lame or disordered Horses, in many Cases ; I am sure without it we should lose many a Milch Cow ; and altho' it may have an ill Name, yet we could not make white Veal without it. The Gentry in *London*, perhaps, little think that in suckling our fine Calves we are forced to give them many a Dram of the Bottle.

Having thus told you a piece of my Mind, and as your Paper is pretty much read in our Neigh-

Neighbourhood, I desire you to put this in Print in your next, or we shall find some Body else that will.

Had the Parson put his Name to his Book, which he might have done unless he is ashamed of what he writes, I should not have troubled you; but as the Case stands, I know no other Way to send him an Answer. And if he has a Mind to write another Book about Farming, rather than fill it with such idle *Canterbury* Stories, he shall, upon Request, be informed of the Truth of our Case, and be told what is for our Interest, and what is not. I do not think he can be so good a Judge, as, your's to command,

A Man of KENT.

LETTER III.

S I R,

THERE is not a Branch of Trade more deservedly requires the Care and Attention of the Legislature, than that of our Colonies in *America*, which for a long time have been the great Nursery of our Navigation, as well as the Employment and Support of our industrious Poor, by their annual Consumption of our Home-Manufactures.

From hence arises a great Part of the Wealth and Riches of this Kingdom to private Persons, and a considerable Share of the publick Revenues apply'd towards the Discharge of the Principal or Interest of the National Debt.

How beneficial soever this Trade may have been to *Great-Britain* for Time past,

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we have a melancholy Prospect of it for Time to come, for unless something effectual be done to relieve them from the Difficulties they labour under, they will soon be past Redress.

The frequent Complaints of the Planters have indeed occasion'd the Considering their Case in the proper Place for Relief: And altho' it has been there own'd, *That they are reduced almost to the last Extremity, even to a State of Despair*; yet the great Difficulty of reconciling their Interests with others which are imagin'd to stand in Competition with them, has prevented any effectual Measures being taken to cure the Evils complain'd of.

Among all our Possessions in *America*, there are none more the National Interest of *Great-Britain* to preserve than the Sugar Colonies, whose Welfare I have entirely at Heart, not only from the Advantage which must accrue to the Publick in their Preservation, but from the Concern I have in one of the Sugar Islands, from whence I formerly used to receive a considerable Income, the Product of a Plantation there; altho' of late Years, by reason of the bad Crops, the low Price of Sugars, and other intervening Accidents, I have had little or no Returns, but sometimes been Money out of Pocket: It being a Fact notoriously known to all who are conversant in the Affairs of the Sugar Colonies, that we now employ more Hands, and are at much more Charge than formerly in raising Sugars, and at the same time raise less in Quantity, which sells at a much lower Price; notwithstanding which, the Taxes there, the Burthens and Restraints on Trade, encrease and multiply daily.

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This indeed does not so nearly affect me, in point of my own private Interest, as it may some others, because I have a Dependence at Home for the Support of my self and Family; but I have so much Humanity as to be sensibly touch'd with the Miseries of many industrious Planters in this Situation, who have no other Support than the Product of their Plantations.

The six Sugar Colonies are, as I am inform'd, computed to make yearly 100000 Hogheads of Sugar, which they export to *Great-Britain*, besides Melasses, from which they make Rum, supposed to amount in value to one fourth part of the Sugars.

In this Trade they employ many thousand Tons of Shipping, who have double Freight out and home by the Returns of our Manufactures, and pay a great Revenue to the Crown; the Article of Sugar only, on a Medium, paying a Duty on Importation in *Great Britain* of near 130000*l.* a Year.

This Project of the Sugar Colonies is the Life and Soul of our Manufactures at Home, in which the Returns are made either directly to the Planter, or to *Africa* and the *Madeiras*, to purchase Slaves and Wines for the Use of the Colonies, whilst, at the same time, we, by exporting to other Nations such Part of their Product as is not wanting for our Home-Consumption, are enabled either to acquire the Balance of Trade in Money, or to lessen their Demands on us for Money where the Balance of Trade is against us.

In a Trade of this Importance, so considerable as to its Bulk, but reduced to the lowest Ebb, as to the Profits of the Planter, who reaps the least Advantage from it, any Hardship or Restraint whatever, whereby the

the Consumption of the Product may be lessen'd or made more expensive or difficult, tends to their immediate Destruction, and becomes a Matter of infinite Consequence to prevent.

Nor is it sufficient in such a Case to say, if such Measures should hereafter appear as fatally pernicious as they are apprehended, the Remedy may be soon had:—Trade and Manufactures are of too delicate a Nature to stand such Shocks, or undergo such Experiments, particularly that Trade which is already so much reduc'd.—Purging and Bleeding may be excellent Prescriptions in many Disorders to People of a vigorous Constitution, but present Death to those who are already exhausted, and in a weak declining Condition. So Laws of this kind I mention may easily compleat the Ruin of the Sugar Colonies; but it is not equally certain, that a future Repeal of such Laws, when the Mischief shall appear, will repair the Injury, especially since we have so near and powerful a Rival in the Sugar Trade as the *French* Colonies, who by a better Regulation in their Establishment, the ease of Duties, and the small Expence of their Governments, with the Freedom of Exportation to foreign Markets, have long since supplanted us in a great part of the Foreign Consumption of Sugars, as well as in part of the Consumption of our own Subjects; and only want to see some further Hardships on our Sugar Colonies, some greater degree of Misery befall the Planters, to rise on their Ruins, and render their Recovery impracticable.

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From these Considerations one would imagine, that the extraordinary Zeal which has lately appear'd against the Use of Spirituous Liquors, would know some Bounds, and be satisfy'd without working the Destruction of our Sugar Colonies, which must be the Consequences of either Prohibition or Restraint laid on the Consumption of any part of their Product, who already sink beneath their own Weight, and have been long in Expectation of Assistance from the Publick, and little expect to meet with new Difficulties.

Of the 100000 Hogsheads of Sugar suppos'd to be imported into *Great-Britain*, about 14000 Hogsheads at least become, or are converted into Melasses, by the Sugar-Bakers, &c. who sell them to the Distillers, and they extract from thence a Spirit much nearer than any other to *French Brandy*, in Flavour and Goodness, and which they can afford to sell at half the Price.

These 14000 Hogsheads of Melasses contain the Substance of 11000 Hogsheads of Sugar, which is almost a ninth part in Quantity, and about an eighteenth part in Value, of the whole Product of all our Sugar Colonies; and were the Distillers not to purchase them, no other Vent or Consumption could be found: They will not answer the Charge of boiling up again for coarse Sugars; nor is it possible, considering their Bulk and small Value, to export them Abroad, were there any known Market to send them to.

What the Consequence would be in depriving our Colonies of the Consumption of

(19)

a ninth part of the Bulk of their Product, (not accounting coarse or damag'd Sugars, which are sometimes used by the Distiller also) I shall leave it to the Judgment of every unprejudic'd Person. I must confess my own Opinion is very clear in that Matter; this single Article alone, if no Vent is to be had for it, will destroy all our Sugar Colonies at one Stroke, and put a final end to the Manufacture; but if any thing is wanting for so unhappy a Purpose, the Prohibition of Rum, by heavy Duties, will no doubt, compleat the Work; especially considering that Rum is a fourth part in Value of the Product, and that what is exported to *Great-Britain* is chiefly consum'd there only.

It may, indeed, be imagin'd, our Sugar Colonies, from the Encouragement lately given them, may export their Rum to the *Northern Colonies*; but that must be impossible, whilst it is the Interest of the latter to buy Melasses of the *French Colony*, which they take in exchange for Lumber and Provisions; and were that Trade to be totally prohibited, in favour of our Sugar Colonies, it would no ways answer the end design'd. The *French Colonies* used formerly to fling away their Melasses, but they now know better; and the Prohibition I mention would only drive the *French* farther into the Distillery, and ruin the Sugar Colonies and *Northern Colonies* together; they would under-sell the one in Rum, and take no Provisions or Lumber from the other, unless they, in Defiance of the Law, would accept of Rum in return.

(20)

It is well known, that the Advantages of the *French* Colonies I have already mention'd, enabled them to Rival us in Trade, and supplant us in all Foreign Markets, before they knew any Use for their Melasses; and that since they have found the Means of a profitable Consumption for this part of their Product, it has been such an Encouragement as has greatly contributed to their present Strength and Power; and if at the same time our Colonies, labouring under so many other Disadvantages in Comparison to the *French*, are to be depriv'd of the Means of consuming their Rum, which is a fourth part of the Product; or if the Consumption of a ninth part of the remaining three fourths be taken away, by Restraint on the Distillers, the Loss to the Manufacture is doubled, when our Rivals acquire the Liberty our own Colonies are depriv'd of.

The Consequences of Schemes of this Nature are too manifest to need any Arguments to point out; the Injury, no doubt, is not confin'd to rendring useles so great a Proportion of the Product, but the consequential Damage is to be considered; the Manufacture itself must be entirely destroy'd: It can never be presum'd the Planter will continue his Labour and Industry, and employ his Fortune, where he can meet with no Recompence or Return. And I doubt not but in that Case we should soon see those who are now left on the Sugar Islands, follow the Example many have already set them, of abandoning their Settlements, and retreating to other Colonies, to seek Employment for their Support; and what is of
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(21)

most dangerous Consequence, perhaps to foreign Settlements; where not only Land is to be had at easier Rates, but where they can also manufacture their Sugars, and send them to foreign Markets, at twenty *per Cent.* less Cost than in our own Colonies: A serious Consideration for those who have any Regard to the Trade and Manufactures of this Kingdom; and who think the Supporting and Encouraging the Means of Labour and Industry of the common People, a more effectual Method to suppress Vice and Immorality, than Prohibitions or penal Laws, which, as appears from many Instances, were never yet powerful enough to amend and reform the Multitude.

It may indeed be urg'd, that the imposing an additional Duty on Rum may be only what the Commodity will bear, and being laid equally on all other Spirituous Liquors, cannot have the ill Effects I mention. Which I shall in the next place consider.

It will, I believe, be allow'd by every one, that the lessening the Duties on *French* Brandy, has evidently encreas'd its Consumption, and by Consequence prevented the Increase of the Consumption of Rum, the Duties on which were not lessen'd in Proportion; but the absolute Necessity for those Measures, in order to prevent the pernicious infamous Practice of Smugling, wou'd admit of no other Remedy.

And were the Duty on *French* Brandies to be rais'd in Proportion to the additional Duties some propose to be laid on Rum, supposing the same not so heavy as to amount to an immediate Prohibition, yet the Consequences would be fatal; it would entirely
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defeat the Intentions of the Legislature in the former Acts, and extend the Evil it was calculated to prevent.

In this Case, as Experience shews us has happen'd in all others of the like Nature, high Duties will occasion the Increase of a contraband Trade; and as a worthy Citizen has observ'd on another remarkable Occasion, where the Temptation is great, *the Number of the tempted will increase in Proportion, without regard to the Danger from penal Laws.* And it is obvious, the great Advantage the *French* will have, (by the Situation of their Country, which runs parallel to the Coast of *England* so great a length,) to pour in their *French* Brandies: They have all the Conveniences for Smuggling, high Duties make it their Interest, the Inclination of our own People is strong that way; when at the same time the thing is impossible in respect to the Rum from our Sugar Colonies, as well as a Practice abhorred by those Gentlemen concern'd in the Importation of it. So that a due Proportion of additional Duties on Rum and *French* Brandies, do not preserve the Equality intended, or leave the Balance as it now stands; but for the Reasons before given, the Advantage is wholly in favour of *French* Brandy, to the Destruction of the Consumption of Rum.

These, Sir, are my Thoughts on this Subject, which I know no better way of conveying to the Publick than in your Paper, where I have observ'd things of the like Nature inserted, to the general Satisfaction of your Readers; and as nothing can be of more Importance to the Trade and Navigation of this Kingdom,

Kingdom, and the Hints I have given may be a Motive to those of more Ability and Power to employ their Thoughts usefully on this Subject, for the Preservation of a Body of industrious People, expecting, and justly intitled to our Favour and Protection, I hope you will give them a Place in your Paper the first Opportunity, which will oblige,

Your constant Reader,

A. B.

LETTER IV.

S I R,

I HAVE observ'd several Letters in your Paper relating to the *British* Distillery, particularly one sign'd *A Man of Kent*, shewing the Advantage to the Landed Interest, by the Distillers Consumption of Grain, and claiming the Use of Spirituous Liquors, as a Sort of *Englishman's* Birth-right, on which I desire by your Means to publish some useful Observations.

It's my Happiness to enjoy a moderate Fortune, which is mostly in Land, and therefore I can't be suspected of any Prejudice, either to the Landed Interest or the Farmer; but notwithstanding this, if Malt-Spirits are so pernicious as they are reported to be, and mere Poison in their own Nature, I would heartily rejoice to see an entire Prohibition of that Manufacture, whatever may be the Consequence, that is what I give myself the least Trouble to think about.

But supposing, in such Case, the Farmers should in some Measure be the Loosers, they may easily make up the Loss by Sobriety, and retrenching their expensive way of Living

ing. Their Forefathers us'd to Work as hard as they can pretend to do now, and were strong able bodied Men, though they hardly ever drank any Wine, or so much as saw Punch; good Malt-Liquor was their Entertainment, and Water the usual Drink of the common People, which for ought I know, is much wholesomer than any other: For my own part I can speak by Experience, Water has been my common Drink these twenty Years, and I thank God I find myself in as good Health as any Man in *England*.

This is not a particular Case, go but into the Highlands of *Scotland*, there you will see the Men of a fresh Complexion, nimble and strong, altho' Water is their common Drink, and many times the open Field their Lodging.

There is no room to doubt, but it was formerly in some measure the same in *England*, where every one below the Degree of Gentry lived hard, preserv'd their Morals and Constitutions at the same time, and of course must save Money: But of late Years, I don't know how, every thing seems to be corrupted. The Farmer truly will breed his eldest Son a Gentleman; and if he happens to have two more, he makes one a Parson, and t'other a Lawyer; they scorn to hold the Plow: His Wife and Daughters wear Silks and Top-knots, drink Tea, and lie on Down Beds: And by Extravagancies of this kind, by Drunkenness, and other Immoralities, their Substance is consum'd, and then they complain of bad Times, low Markets, and the Oppression of their Landlords.

I therefore most heartily wish for a thorough Reformation of these Evils, and that all

all means of Drunkenness, of what Nature soever, was entirely prohibited, as well as Luxury, in Apparel and Diet, which I am sure would be greatly for the Landed Interest; for by teaching the common People Sobriety and Frugality, and to live as becomes their Station, will enable them to raise their Rents, instead of falling them, and greatly advance the Landed Interest, which is the true National Strength, and what has born the Burthen of Taxes, both in War and Peace.

If these Observations are contested, I shall give you the Trouble of my further Thoughts on this Subject, and am your humble Servant,
Jeremiah Blackacre.

LETTER V.

S I R,

I TROUBLED you some Time since with my Thoughts about the Distillers, and the great Benefit their Consumption of Grain is to the Landed Interest, in Answer to a Book said to be wrote by a mad Parson, which I hope has had the good Effect upon him I design'd, because I have not since heard any thing farther of his Projects.

However this be, something has lately fallen in my way which gives me strange Uneasiness, and I must needs tell you freely my Mind on that Subject.

You must know, Sir, I have always thought myself happy in a good Landlord; upon all Occasions he seem'd willing to encourage an industrious Tenant, and would rejoice at any account of his Success or Prosperity.

Coming to Town this Week to enquire how Markets went at *Bear-Key*, I received a

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Sum of Money for Grain sold there, and went to my Landlord to clear my *Christmas* Rent. I was strangely surpriz'd to see such an Alteration in his Behaviour from what I had before observ'd; he took my Money, and instead of sending a small Token to my Wife, or Children, as usual, he put on a grave Face, and fell a Preaching, What, says he, did the Furniture of your House cost you? How many Children have you? What do you breed them to? What Liquors do you drink at Home? I am afraid you live extravagantly, and not in the sober way becoming labouring People, if you did, you might afford to pay me more Rent; and many other Things of the like Nature. I look'd hard at my Landlord, and thought his Head turn'd; I could not imagine what had wrought so sudden a Change in him; but the Mystery was soon discover'd, he had lying before him one of your Papers, in which was a Letter from one *Jeremiah Blackacre*, abusing the Farmer, and from which he was furnish'd with these out-of-the-way Questions.

I promis'd my Landlord to take the Paper home, and after some Consideration, to send him an Answer, which I take the Opportunity of doing by the following Letter, which I desire you to print in your next, so that he may satisfy his Curiosity by reading it if he pleases, for he shall have no other Answer from me.

Master Blackacre,

I read your fine Project for improving the Landed Interest, first by destroying the Consumption of our Product, and secondly, by new-dieting the Farmer and his Family, which occasions my troubling you with this Answer.

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I wish you had told us what County your Land lies in, for I fancy your Tenants have a rare Time of it. It is not my Fortune indeed to be a Scholar, I wish I was, but simple and Ignorant as I am, I think I can turn your Project topsy-turvy, and make it as plain as the Sun at Noon-Day, that you neither understand our Interest or your own; and it's very well for the People of *England*, that wiser Heads than Master *Blackacre's* rule the Roast.

You say we claim the use of spirituous Liquors as our Birth-Right; what use of them you mean I know not; we don't drink Brandy to make Beasts of ourselves, but use it moderately for our Refreshment; we are up early and late; for my part I often go nine Mile to Market with Corn before it's Day, in the depth of Winter, in Frost and Snow, and when I return Home, I finish my Labour with a Bout at Ploughing, or other necessary Work, and find a Dram of Brandy very necessary to keep out the Cold; and when my Work is done, I often sit down with my Family, or at a Neighbour's, where we enjoy our selves with a Bowl of good Punch; and this, Master *Blackacre*, we do indeed call the Birth-Right of *Englishmen*, and hope we shall never be depriv'd of the innocent Use of it. What is the Case of those who live an idle Life, and drink Brandy and Spirits in a disorderly scandalous way, we neither know nor care; let them tell their own Story and speak for themselves.

But I find, Master *Blackacre*, because some idle People drink more than is becoming them, you have got a Notion in your Head that nobody is to drink at all for fear of
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(28)

being poison'd ; this is a strange Fancy indeed, I am sure in our Country we use a great deal of *English* Brandy, and we are mightily pleas'd to think our own Corn will make it, and starve the *Frenchman*, who takes away our Ready Money, and all our young People a Smugling. But if this Liquor moderately used by Working Men, is, as you say, mere Poison, it's very strange we should never find any Body die of it : No, no, Sir, we know better Things, and are not to be talk'd out of our Senses at that Rate.

As to your Contrivance of helping us to Sobriety, and retrenching our Expences, we thank you kindly for your Love ; I think we are sober enough already ; we slave like Horses in the Field early and late, to make up your Rents, and cannot understand how it comes to be your Business to direct how we shall spend what we can save by the Fruits of our Labour.

You talk much of our Forefathers, and tell us much of their drinking Water : I believe if we were to enquire how all our Forefathers liv'd, it might be found very different from what it is now ; when our Forefathers drank Water, yours drank no Wine : but why one shall be an Example to govern Posterity, and not the other, is past my Understanding. In former Days they were not to compare with us for Labour or Industry, nor was the Nation any ways equal in Strength or Riches to what they are at present ; Knowledge and Learning of all kinds, Arts, Manufactures, Wealth, Labour and Industry were almost unknown, and therefore the Expences of Living at this Time may be easily accounted for, As

(29)

As to your Project of Water-Drinking, you would do better to carry it over to the Blacks, it will do well enough for Slaves, but will not suit the laborious, industrious People of *England*.

The Example you give of the Highlands of *Scotland*, is what I am incapable of making a right Judgment of ; but I have enquir'd of the Exciseman of our Town, who is a great Traveller, and he says you have told but half your Story, for that the ruddy Complexion, Nimbleness, and Strength of those People, is not owing to the Water-drinking, but to the *Aqua Vitæ*, a Malt Spirit which is commonly used in that Country, which serves both for Victuals and Drink ; you don't pretend to say they are poison'd by it, and yet you have got a Notion in your Head, that Malt Spirits are Poison here for us to drink ; but I hope you don't think us such Fools as to believe it, because you are pleas'd to tell us so.

You have made such a Noise about this Poison, that I have made some enquiry of my Factor, who by the bye, is as knowing a Man, and as good a Scholar as the best of you ; and what do you think he says ? — What, that it is all a Bugbear ? He says, how comes it the *Dutch* are not poison'd, who make as much Malt Spirits in a Year in two Towns in *Holland*, as we make in all *England*. I wish, Master *Blackacre*, you would give an Answer to that, and you would say something to the Purpose.

But to return to our Forefathers, whose Example I believe may be as useful to you as to us. They did not pay 20 s. an Acre for Land, and maintain their Landlords at the Expence

Expence ours live at. The Farmer in these Days did not perhaps breed his Son to any Thing more than holding the Plough, a Thing Gentlemen were not ashamed of; and if the great Increase of People affords sufficient Numbers for those laborious Employments, and the Encouragement now a Days attending Labour and Industry, shall enable a Farmer to put his Children forward in the World, I don't know whose Business it is to find Fault with it.

Silks, Topknots, and Tea, are, I believe, new Fashions among us all; but *Win Gold and wear it*, Master *Blackacre*, is the Case with Old *England*; however it is in foreign Countries, I know not, but I have heard say, in *Turky* and *France* the working Men are all Slaves, and that they have not such a Thing among them as a good Yeoman of *Kent*.

I am sorry to think you are uneasy at our having a Bed to lie on: I don't know what Whims you have got, but remember what I tell you, when the Farmer wants a Bed, is Landlord is in great Danger; if we cannot be happy and easy, it will not be in your Power to be so either.

As to Drunkenness and Immorality, I believe working People are the least guilty of one or the other, they have no Time to spare for such Uses. If there are any who are guilty of it, we shall be glad to see a Reformation, and if the Landlords would take my Advice, the likeliest way to succeed would be by beginning with themselves first, I warrant you it will be thought a mighty Crime for a poor labouring Man to take a cheerful Glass his own way, but a Harmless thing to be drunk with *French* Claret, and spend the Rent of two or three Acres of Land for an Evening's Diversion of your *Italian* Geldings.

Don't talk to us Master *Blackacre*, of Luxury and Extravagance, lest we give you a *Rowland* for your *Oliver*.

As to your Project of hindering us to sell our Grain, to make us sober, it's a like thing enough, and I believe it will succeed to your Mind, it will make us all sober in good earnest; but that it will raise our Rents, is what you will find your self woundily mistaken in. It would have been but kind if you had told

told us who should buy our Corn in these sober Times, and how the Price would be kept up when so great a Part of our Consumption is taken away.

I know many Landlords have got a Notion in their Heads, that if a Tenant does not pay his Rent honestly, and live decently, he is too Rich, they want us to live like a Parcel of Negroes. But I wish you would remember one Piece of Advice from a Farmer, which is, that the Tenant must grow rich first, and his Landlord after.

It is well known that our Landlords are ready enough to take the Advantage of our Labours, and raise our Rents; one would wonder how any Tenant can afford to pay 20 s. an Acre for plough'd Ground, which is done in some Places; but I believe no where in the World but in Old *England*; and do you think this Rent can be rais'd out of an Acre of Ground if our Markets are spoil'd.

We have had many Hardships upon us of late Years, in the Consumption of our Grain, though I never could find our Landlords would bate us a Shilling of our Rent, we must pay or go to Goal, make it or not out of our Farm.

I have had a good deal of Discourse with my Factor about this Matter, and enquir'd of him what is the Cause of the falling of our Markets, He tells me, that the People of *Ireland* did not use to raise Grain enough for their own Use, but took very considerable Quantities from *England*; but that of late they have bent their Minds towards Tillage, and got several Acts of Parliament for encouraging of it, so that they do not require the same Quantity from *England* as usual.

He also informs me, that they increase in Tillage very much in *Scotland*, and even send greater Quantities than formerly to Market in *England*, even at *Bear-Key*.

And that they raise of late great Quantities of Corn in some of the Plantations, which they send to *Portugal*, and other foreign Markets, where they greatly undersell us; so that if the late War had not happen'd in the two great Corn Countries Abroad, *Poland* and *Sicily*, we should have had Grain of all
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forts at so low a Price, as would hardly have paid the Farmer for his Season ; and who do you think in such Case must pay the Rent ?

If this be true, as I believe my Factor is an honest Man, and would not deceive me ; suppose we were to have a plentiful Crop this Year, and the Distilling Trade should be put down, What will become of the Markets at *Bear-Key* ? What Price will Grain yield ? And how will your Rents be paid ? You may think what you please of your Leases and your Covenants, we shall not much matter them ; if we are ruin'd, what we begin you will follow : And if it is worth the while to try such Experiments, to prevent the Debauchery of a few idle Gin-drinkers, who may easily be cur'd by the House of Correction, and the Gentlemen in the Commission of Peace, and Constables doing their Duty in Town as well as they do in the Country ; If this, I say, is what you are determin'd to try, you will soon compleat the Ruin of the Country Farmer, and bring them in good earnest to your Water-Diet ; what you will have to lie on yourselves, I leave it to your own Consideration ; I believe we can bear with Starving as well as the best of you.

Thus, Master *Blackacre*, your Project has been consider'd, and you have the true Thoughts of

A Man of KENT.

F I N I S.