

62-12



0288

*Recommended to the particular Attention of the  
Right Honourable the House of Lords.*

---

A  
**LETTER**

TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
**SPENCER PERCEVAL,**  
*CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER,*

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE  
**DISTILLERY-BILL,**  
NOW PENDING BEFORE PARLIAMENT;

SHewing  
*That Bill to be most Unjust and Impolitic; and, among other Things  
demonstrating*

That no Part of the Revenue of the Kingdom  
is paid by the West-India Planters:

---

*Patriæ amor scribere jussit.*

---

By **J. CRUICKSHANK, A. M.**  
*OF MARISCHALL-COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.*

---

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR **J. M. RICHARDSON, 23, CORNHILL,**  
OPPOSITE THE ROYAL EXCHANGE.  
1811.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORDS OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

IN PARLIAMENT

APPROVED

BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

IN WITNESS WHEREOF

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

DOES HEREBY CERTIFY

THAT THE FOLLOWING IS

A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY

OF THE ORIGINAL

AS THE SAME IS KEPT IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENTS

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

THIS 15th DAY OF APRIL 1811

BY J. CRUICKSHANK A.M. OF MANCHESTER COLLEGE, ABERDEEN

LONDON:

Printed for J. Calabin and Marchant, Printers, in Strand, near St. Martin's Church

BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

1811

TO

THE PARTICULAR ATTENTION

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

THE

FOLLOWING LETTER

IS

RECOMMENDED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

Fyvie, Aberdeenshire,  
April, 1811.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
 THE DISTILLERY BILL  
 THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The following letter was written  
 immediately after the second  
 reading of the Distillery Bill, and  
 was intended to be recommended  
 to the attention of the Members of  
 the Honourable the House of  
 Commons, with a view to prevent  
 the bill from passing that house.  
 The bill, however, having been  
 read a third time, and having  
 passed while this letter was in the

The following letter was written  
 immediately after the second  
 reading of the Distillery Bill, and  
 was intended to be recommended  
 to the attention of the Members of  
 the Honourable the House of  
 Commons, with a view to prevent  
 the bill from passing that house.  
 The bill, however, having been  
 read a third time, and having  
 passed while this letter was in the

**ADVERTISEMENT.**

The following letter was written  
 immediately after the second  
 reading of the Distillery Bill, and  
 was intended to be recommended  
 to the attention of the Members of  
 the Honourable the House of  
 Commons, with a view to prevent  
 the bill from passing that house.  
 The bill, however, having been  
 read a third time, and having  
 passed while this letter was in the

printer's hand, the author, still intent on the publication of it, (conceiving that it will shew the great injustice and impolicy of the bill in question, and that it may therefore be the means of preventing that bill from passing into a law,) has now submitted it to the consideration of the Right Honourable the House of Lords. The only alteration he has made is merely having recommended it to the attention of the one house in place of the other.

13th April, 1811.

TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE

**SPENCER PERCEVAL,**  
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

SIR,

This letter being on the subject of the Distillery-Bill now pending before the honourable the House of Commons, and your being the introducer of that bill, any apology from me for having addressed you in the present public manner is thus rendered unnecessary.

Without stopping to say any thing on that head, therefore, I shall begin with

informing you that the measures proposed in that bill are the most unjust and impolitic of any that ever were attempted to be adopted.

I call the Distillery-Bill, *in toto* as it now stands, sir, most unjust and most impolitic, and I have not the least doubt but I will be able to prove that it is both the one and the other. What has induced you to propose such a bill I can easily foresee; you have been misled and imposed upon, sir, by a sect of men, whom self-interest will prompt to do any thing, however base. Need I adduce any more convincing proof of this than to call to your recollection the *slave-trade*; a trade, sir, which every person possessed of the smallest feeling of humanity must think of with horror!—But to the point.

My reasons for calling the bill in question unjust and impolitic, I shall state to you sir, as briefly as I can; and I beg that you will take the trouble particularly to examine them. Nay, sir, I not only beg, but I even request that you will do so. And, sir, it is not I alone,—it is not one farmer only, but it is every farmer in Britain that calls upon you to do so.

In the first place then, sir, I shall lay it down as an axiom, that, under whatever restrictions sugar is admitted into our distilleries, if it is admitted at all, the price which the farmer receives for his productions must be less than it would be if grain was allowed to be the only subject of distillation. If one or two millions (no matter whatever sum) is paid by our distillers to the West India planters for sugar, instead of being

paid by them to our farmers for barley, (a part of their produce,) the sum which the farmers receive for their productions must evidently be less by the amount of the sum which is thus paid to the West-India planters. Therefore, I say, sir, it is an axiom,—a thing which is undeniable, that, under whatever restrictions sugar may be admitted into our distilleries, if it is admitted at all, the price which the farmer receives for his productions is less than it would be if grain was allowed to be the only subject of distillation.

In the Distillery-Bill, sir, the interests of two sects of men are clearly involved; that of the farmers,—and that of the West-India planters. But, sir, as the farmers do and must receive less for their produce when sugar is admitted into our distilleries, under whatever re-

strictions it may be admitted; unless therefore it can be shewn, sir, that the farmers are relieved by the West-India planters from the payment of a proportion of their taxes, corresponding to the sum they receive less for their produce; I say, sir, unless this can be shewn, it is most unjust to allow sugar to come into our distilleries at all; because, if this cannot be shewn, by the admission of sugar into our distilleries, so much money is in a manner taken out of the farmer's pocket to be put into the pocket of a West-India planter.

I know, sir, it will be said that the farmers are relieved from a great part of the taxes by the West-India planters. It has, indeed, sir, been stated to the house that the West-India planters contribute largely to the annual

revenue of the state; for, in the discussion which took place regarding this bill, on Tuesday, the 2d current, it was stated, sir, by an honourable member of the house, that, among other benefits which arise to this country from our West-India colonies, they contribute "five millions to the annual revenue of the state."

Could either you, sir, or the honourable gentleman who made the above assertion, prove to me, that our West-India colonies did really add five millions to the annual revenue of the state, I should consider the West-India planters justly entitled to every possible encouragement that could be given them:—and, sir, I should be extremely happy if a few more colonies could be added to the British dominions; for then, doubtless, the whole amount of

the taxes would be paid by them, and you might throw your budget in the fire, sir; or, at any rate, there would be no necessity for your opening it upon any other persons than upon our colonists.

But, sir, you must allow me to express my doubts with regard to the reality of the above circumstance, of our West-India colonies contributing five millions to the annual revenue of the state,\* and not merely to express my doubts as to its reality, but directly to contradict it as a gross falsehood. For, sir, our West-India or any other of our colonies neither ever did, nor ever

\* Had the gentleman said that, instead of contributing five millions to the annual revenue of the state, our West-India colonies contributed five millions to its annual expenditure, he would have been much nearer the truth.

can, contribute one farthing, to the annual revenue of the state.

Pray, sir, are not the duties that are laid upon the sugar which our West India planters furnish us with, as well as those that are laid upon the spirits which are distilled from sugar, when it is allowed to be the subject of distillation,—added to the price of these articles? Who are these duties paid by, sir? Unquestionably by the persons who purchase these articles. Then, sir, I next ask you who are the purchasers of these articles? or it perhaps may be as well to ask you what is the purchase-money of these articles? This question can admit of only one answer, sir, and it is this,—the produce of the soil of every country is the fund which must supply it both with the necessities and conveniences of life; con-

sequently, the produce of the soil is the purchase-money of the above as well as of every other article, and the farmers or rearers of that produce must give that purchase-money in some one way or other, or, in other words, they must be the purchasers; hence must all taxes therefore be paid by them. On whatever article therefore, sir, or on whomsoever a tax in the first instance may be laid, that tax must at last find its way to the produce of the soil,—to the agriculturist, and be paid by him.

I have now shewn, sir, that the West-India planters pay no part whatever of the taxes, and that the amount of taxes which the farmer has to pay is made no less by the admission of sugar into our distilleries. Who then can deny, sir,—if the farmer receives



less for his produce, which he must do when sugar is allowed to be the subject of distillation;—that the taxes are not a greater burden upon him when that article is admitted into our distilleries? And who can deny, sir, that it is not unjust to impose such a burden upon the farmer, for the mere purpose of favouring the interest of individuals.— To impose such a burden upon the farmer is unjust,—most unjust, sir.— It is taking so much money out of the pocket of the farmer, as I already said, to put into the pocket of the West-India planter; and, if that is not injustice, sir, I do not know what can be called injustice.

You took occasion to observe, sir, during the discussion that took place on this bill, which I before alluded to, that agriculture had flourished more

during the time sugar had been the subject of distillation than ever it had done before, and therefore that there was no occasion for the farmers saying that their interest was in danger.

Whether agriculture has flourished, or whether it has not flourished during the period you allude to, I shall not call in question. One thing I shall here observe, that if it has flourished, the country has to thank the exertions of private individuals for it, sir, more than they have to thank his majesty's ministers for the encouragement they have given to it. But, sir, though it should be shewn,— nay, though it should be proved, that the farmers are in a more flourishing condition than even they were before, ought a burden on that account to be placed on their shoulders, for the mere purpose of putting money in the pockets

of the West-India planters, who, instead of contributing any thing to the annual revenue of the state, contribute immensely to its expenditure? No, sir, surely not. Such a measure would not be founded on any principle of equity or justice; and surely such a measure ought not to be adopted.

Viewing the Distillery-Bill merely as it involves the interests of the farmers and that of the West-India planters, the opinion which every person must form regarding it, if their opinion is formed according to conscience, must be, that it is most unjust. And, sir, as that bill clearly renders those who have to pay the taxes of this country,—who have to support this nation,—less able to pay their taxes, less able to support the nation, it must be concluded that that bill is also most impolitic.

Having now seen what conclusion ought to be formed regarding this bill, sir, in as far as it respects the interests of the farmers and that of the West-India planters, let me next direct your attention to it, in so far as the interest of the community at large is involved in it: and here, sir, its impolicy will appear in a still greater degree.

The West-India planters, on what is the same thing, sir, those in their interest, will say, that it is much for the good of the community, and particularly for the labouring classes of it, that sugar should be admitted into the distilleries, as the price of one of the principal necessaries of life, viz. bread, is by this means kept lower than it would be if grain was allowed to be the only subject of distillation.

In answer to this, sir, I shall observe

that barley, the species of grain which is most used for distillation is but very little used for the purpose of making bread; so that, whatever was the price of the former, it could make little difference to the price of the latter; and any difference that it might make in this respect would be more, I imagine, than fully compensated by the reduction which would take place in the price of butcher meat, if grain was allowed to supply the place of sugar in our distilleries, owing to the great quantity of food fitting for the cattle-feeder, which the distilleries would then produce.—But even if the price of bread did really become higher, as the price of labour would also become higher, instead of being hurtful, there would be no difficulty in shewing, sir, that this circumstance, if it really were to take place, would be highly in favour of the community.

The West-India planters, sir, will next say, that this country does not produce a sufficient quantity of grain for its own consumption, and therefore that it is better for the public to buy sugar for their distilleries, and pay their money to them, than to pay it to a foreigner for grain.

With regard to this, sir, I shall observe what I already observed,—That barley, the species of grain which is principally used for distillation, is but little used for the purpose of making bread; therefore, no great additional importation of grain, at any rate, could be occasioned by using grain instead of sugar in our distilleries. But I deny, sir, that the quantity of grain which the public would require to import *would be any increased* by making grain the *only* subject of distillation: for, in the latter case, as the encouragement to raise grain would be greater, instead of being in-

creased, there is no doubt but the quantity of grain which it would be necessary to import would be diminished. Indeed, sir, allowing sugar to come into our distilleries is one great cause of our needing to import any grain at all. Since sugar was admitted into the distilleries, the quantity of grain which Britain has required to import, has increased very much; and, as a proof of this, sir, let the quantity of grain that was imported during the years that grain was allowed to be the subject of distillation, and the quantity which has been imported during the two preceding years, when sugar has been used for that purpose, be compared together, and it will be seen that our importation of grain has increased.

But, sir, could it even be proved that making grain the only subject of distillation, instead of diminishing would in-

crease the quantity of grain which the public would require to import; I say, sir, the preference ought, notwithstanding, to be given to distillation from grain. The difference which it makes to the British farmer, when this preference is given to his produce, is very great indeed; and the public wealth is not reduced one farthing more by importing grain than it is by importing sugar. Indeed, sir, I am very much mistaken, if our sugar colonies do not occasion as great, if not a greater, reduction in the wealth of Britain, annually, (to say nothing of the reduction in the strength of our country, which this sugar trade occasions to us), than the greatest annual importation of grain that either now is or could be wanted, would occasion. It may not cost us so much in gold and silver, but it does so in goods, and the latter are evidently as much a part of our wealth, as the former are so.

Let the cause, sir, of our being under the necessity of making an annual importation of grain be properly ascertained, and if it is not found to proceed entirely from the encouragement that is given to distillation from sugar, it will at least be found to proceed entirely from that cause joined to two others, viz. the impolicy of the now existing corn-laws, and the little encouragement which is given by the legislature to agriculture in general.

Have we not many thousands of acres of land in the country totally unproductive, or have we one acre in the country that may not, with proper attention, be made more productive? No one can deny, that we have not both the one and the other. Are the farmers, sir, to blame for the circumstance of the country's being under the necessity of importing grain? No, sir, it is the bad

system of politics which this country has long been governed by, that the blame ought to be put upon. And should a burden be thrown upon the farmers shoulders, though this country is under the necessity of importing grain; a circumstance which the farmer is in no respect whatever to blame for: here, sir, reason and justice both dictate an answer, and that answer is, no!

Let, sir, a little of that encouragement, which has been so long and so largely bestowed on our colonists be now extended to our farmers; and, in particular, let sugar be wholly excluded from our distilleries: and then no one will have long in his power to throw in our teeth, that this country does not produce a sufficiency of grain for its own consumption. Let proper encouragement be given to our farmers, sir, and

not only a sufficiency of grain for the consumption of the country will be produced by them, but they will produce a sufficiency of sugar also, for the consumption of the country: and then, the public, in my opinion, will have very little occasion for the services of the West-India planter at all.

I hope, sir, I have now sufficiently shewn that the Distillery-Bill, as it now stands, is most unjust and most impolitic in every respect; and that sugar ought not be allowed to come into our distilleries under any restriction or regulation whatever.

I shall therefore conclude, with hoping that this letter will be sufficient to convince you of the injustice and impolicy of that bill, and that you will therefore insist no farther in it. If you should be

inclined still to persist, this letter will, at any rate, be sufficient to shew the representatives of the people how far they are doing justice either to their constituents or to their own consciences when they give their support to that bill.

Sir, I have the honour to be,

your most obedient

humble servant,

JAS. CRUICKSHANK.

Sir, I have the honour to be  
 informed that the bill  
 which they give their support to that  
 of their own consciences  
 are doing justice either to their con-  
 sciences of the people how far they  
 any rate, be sufficient to show the re-  
 inclined still to persist, this letter will, at

Your most obedient

humble servant,

JAS. CRICKSHANK.