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A SHORT
E S S A Y
ON THE
CORN TRADE,
AND THE
CORN LAWS.

CONTAINING

A general Relation of the present Method of carrying on the Corn Trade, and the Purport of the Laws relating thereto in this Kingdom.



L O N D O N:

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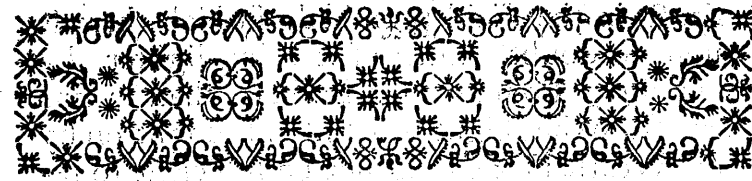


T H E
P R E F A C E.

It may justly be questioned, whether many of the late Writers, who have communicated their Thoughts to the Public concerning the Corn Trade, have not considered the Affair in too restrained a light; as also whether the Alterations they propose in the Method of carrying on this Trade, and the Amendments they would make in the Laws relating thereto, would suit any other than particular Places.

It is a quite different Thing to make Laws for the Regulation of Trade in one particular Town, and to make Laws for Regulating so considerable a Trade as that of Corn is throughout so large a Kingdom as this of Great-Britain; which must be acknowledged by all, who consider how much the annual Produce in many Places falls short of the general Consumption of the Inhabitants, whilst in others it exceeds it.

These Considerations have given rise to the following Essay; wherein is laid down a general, but fair Relation, in what Method the Corn Trade is at present carried on in these Kingdoms; together with the Laws relating thereto: And till the Nature and Method of carrying on this Business in general is well understood, it is hardly possible to make Laws for its Regulation with any Probability of Success.



A SHORT

ESSAY

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ALTHOUGH it be the general Opinion, that the present Dearness of Corn arises principally from the Avarice of the Farmers and Iniquity of the Factors, Merchants, Millers, Bakers and Dealers in Corn; yet there is Cause to believe, that it arises chiefly, if not wholly, from a real Scarcity, occasioned by the short Crops, which for three or four Years past have been in the West and Northwest Parts of the Kingdom, and from the general Shortness of the Crop throughout the whole Kingdom in the Year 1756. For supposing the Crop of the last Year 1757 to have been as good as the fine
Prospect

Prospect in the Field promised, [which there is Reason to doubt, much of it being lighter, by two or three Pounds in a Bushel, than in fine Years, from the Blight or Mildew brought on by the dry Weather] it would not be sufficient to reduce the Price much, or soon, as little or no old Stock was left remaining, and of Course a much larger Quantity of this Year's Growth must be already consumed than is usual at this Time of the Year. To confirm these Observations, if we recur to former Times, we shall find that in the Year 1693. Wheat rose from 2l. 6s. to 3l. 7s. ^{per} Quarter, and was not much under that Price [except in 1695, when it was 2l. 13s.] till 1700, when it came down to 40s. In 1709 Wheat rose from 2l. 1s. 6d. to 3l. 18s. 6d. at which Price, within Sixpence, it continued the next Year, and was not so low as 40s. till 1718. In 1740 Wheat rose to 2l. 15s. from 1l. 17s. 6d. and though the Clamour was at that Time as much against Farmers, &c. as it now is, and the Harvest of 1741 was good, both as to Quantity and Quality, yet Wheat was at 2l. 7s. throughout that Year; though in 1742 it came down to 1l. 12s. and after that continued declining, and was cheap to 1745.

But how reasonable soever this may seem, yet it must be owned that the general Opinion, even amongst many Persons of Rank and Character, appears to be on the opposite Side of the Question. The Dearness of Corn is felt; and how to bring the Corn Trade under such Regulations for the future, as to prevent the like Distress hereafter, is under the Consideration of the Parliament. And we may justly expect from the Integrity and Abilities of the Honourable Persons

Persons to whom this Affair is committed, that the Business of the Corn Trade will be thoroughly examined, from the first throwing of the Seed into the Ground, to the Consumption of the Product in Bread and Drink, or the Exportation of such Part of it as may at any Time be conveniently spared; as also that the several Laws which, since *Edward VI.* have been made in Relation thereto, with the good or bad Effects they have had, and wherein and why the Expectations of them have been answered or failed, will be carefully enquired into and examined, and the Laws themselves in consequence thereof be either confirmed or amended.

Corn is to be considered both as a Food and Merchandize. The providing it either by growing or importing, its Preservation for Use or Sale, the Preparation of it for Food by grinding and baking, the fixing, or rather declaring, the Price of Bread, and what Weight the same should be of according to the Price of Corn, are particulars which have at all times, and in all places, been more or less the Care, and fallen under the Direction of the Civil Magistrates. The Parliaments of this Kingdom, as appears by the Statute Book, have frequently had this matter under their Consideration, and generally treated it in the View we have mentioned above, both as Food and Merchandize. In almost every Statute which attempts any Regulation in this Trade, we may visibly discern they have endeavoured to order it so, that while they were guarding against any thing which might tend to distress the Poor, they have taken care that Tillage should not be discouraged. To this End they have generally fixed the Prices

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Prices at which all Persons might buy and lay up Corn, or export it; and seem to have endeavoured, by all possible Means, to make the People see it in the same Light; having in the Space of Seventy nine Years, beginning with 1548, the 5th of *Edward VI.* and ending with 1627 the 3d. of *Charles I.* passed Eight several Acts, as may be seen below, in which they have increased the Exportation Price from 6s. 8d. [equal to 20s. of our Money] to 32s. the Quarter. How this Trade was managed during the Rebellion doth not appear. But on the Restoration, in 1660, the Exportation Price was immediately set at 40s. the Quarter. In 1663, only three Years after, it was carried to 48s. By this Law, which appears to have answered the Intentions of the Legislature, as Wheat, which for 20 Years before, viz. from 1646 to 1666, had been on the Average 2l. 17s. 5d. $\frac{1}{2}$ q^r Quarter, was for 20 Years after, viz. from 1666 to 1686 only 2l. 6s. 3d. q^r Quarter on the Average, it was enacted, that when Wheat doth not exceed that Price, all and every Person may buy, lay up and keep the same, and sell it again, under such Regulations as by the said Act are laid down. This was a virtual Repeal of the Acts 5 and 6 of *Edward VI.* and 5 *Elizabeth*, so far at least as they regard Licencing till Wheat is 48s. for, doubtless, upon passing this Act, many engaged in the Corn Trade, who were not qualified to take out Licenses by the former Statutes, and if at any Time it happened that out of, or between the Quarter Sessions, Wheat came to exceed 48s. when none could be licensed, it could not be supposed that all buying and selling Corn should cease till Li-

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censes could be granted; nor would it be right to oblige such, who were not qualified to take Licences by the former Acts, and yet had legally, while Wheat was under 48s. by this Act, engaged their Fortunes in this Trade, immediately to leave off; and where would others be found, who had sufficient Knowledge, or were disposed and ready to enter into this Trade, which any might again resume on the Fall of the Prices of Grain.

It might be the Intent of the Proposers, or Makers of this Law [*15 Car. II.*] to leave the Corn Trade, as it hath in Effect been ever since, free and open, and so much did the Desire of making Corn a Merchandize then prevail, that in the Year 1670 an Act was passed allowing Wheat to be exported even after it exceeded 48s. paying the Custom; from which Time till 1688 the Average Price of Wheat was 2l. 6s. a Quarter; in which Year, nevertheless, an Act was passed, repealing all Custom, and giving a Bounty of 5s. q^r Quarter on Exportation, till it should exceed 48s. the Quarter; after which, till 1693, Wheat, on the Average, was 36s. 3d. q^r Quarter only; but growing and continuing dearer till 1698, the Exportation was forbid for one Year, and then, for 9 Months, the Bounty was suspended; from the Expiration of which Term, till 1709, Wheat continued cheap, the Average Price being till 14s. 5d. q^r Quarter; but in that Year it rose to 3l. 18s. 6d. q^r Quarter, and Exportation was again prohibited for one Year; yet Wheat was never under 40s. till 1718; from which Time, till 1725, it continued under that Price; from 1725 to 1730 it was on the Average 2l. 7s. 8d.

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and in the Year 1729 an Act was passed, regarding the Importation, [as also in 1732] and the Method of enquiring into the Price, in order to fix the Duty on Importation, was settled. From 1729 to 1740 the Price was 1l. 15s. 7d. 4th Quarter; in which Year the Price was 2l. 15s. and the Exportation again prohibited for one Year. It continued at 2l. 7s. the following Year; but from thence to 1756 the Price was 1l. 14s. 3d. In the latter End of that Year, and the Beginning of 1757, growing excessive dear, and great Disturbances arising under Pretence of the high Price, the Parliament again took the Affair into Consideration, and passed one Act to stop the Distillery, another to prohibit for a Year the Exportation, and a third to allow the Importation Duty free, for a Time certain; in which Acts, (all which Acts have been revived and continued this present Session) such necessary Clauses were inserted as prove they never forgot or intended to oppress the Farmer, whilst they endeavoured to relieve the Poor.

But Corn is still dear, and the Discontent near the same, and how far the Farmers and others concerned in the Corn Trade may be, or are culpable, or whether all, or any of them, are to blame at all, may in some measure be determined by reflecting on the Nature of, and the manner in which, each branch of this business is transacted, and perhaps, what follows may be of some Use to that End.

In regard to the procuring a sufficient Provision of our own Growth, or by Importation, the Legislature seems to have taken the following Care. First, as much as possible by encouraging

raging the Farmer to till so much Land, that our own Growth may be sufficient, and, in Case it should exceed the Consumption, by making Provision for a Bounty to be paid in order to export the Surplus, whereby the Farmer's Fears of Loss, in that Case, are removed, or rather prevented. Secondly, by a Law empowering the Magistrates every six or three Months to allow of the Importation for six or three Months to come, on a very moderate Duty, after Wheat exceeds 53s. 4d. the Quarter, and by the late Act, for a time certain, Duty free; in all which, as was before observed, the Interest of the Farmer was remembered as well as the Necessities of the Poor.

And here it may not be amiss to consider more at large the Circumstances, and general Method of Marketing, of our present Farmers, or Growers of Corn, and the Merchants, Factors, and others, concerned in this Trade.

Now the Farmers may be divided into four Classes, viz. the poor Farmer, the Farmer in moderate Circumstances, the Farmer in good Circumstances, and the rich Farmer.

1. The poor Farmers, who are very numerous, with great Difficulty and Labour, and seldom without some Credit, as well from the Shopkeepers, as their Landlord, are able to subsist themselves and Families till after Harvest, and their Crops are generally all threshed, sold, and gone before Christmas, or by the Time their Lands are in order and the Seed put into the Ground for the next Year's Crop.

2. The Farmers in moderate Circumstances, whose Necessities, nevertheless, are such, that, as each Seed-time, every Quarter, and Fair

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come round, they are obliged to raise Money to defray the Expence, pay Rent, or buy in live Stock, and, if they have any Corn left in *May*, they think themselves well off.

3. The Farmers in good Circumstances, who generally have it in their Power, after seeding their Lands, paying Rent, purchasing live Stock, and paying all other Expences through the Year, to reserve a few Loads of Wheat to sell in, or after Harvest, in order to bear the Expence thereof, and in Expectation, if the Season should prove bad, to make a better Price than before Harvest.

4. The rich Farmers, who are in a Capacity, as to Fortune, to keep the whole, or the greatest part of their Crops, the Year over, speculate on the Markets, thresh out and sell when they like the Price. These in some measure serve at their own private Expence the same Purpose as public Magazines, and without many ill Consequences which might attend such Magazines, keeping a Quantity of Corn in the Nation, and the Markets from being unreasonably dear; and, whatever may be thought, these Men scarcely ever have it in their Power, however in their Will, to distress the Poor; for their Numbers are but small, comparatively speaking, and the Waste made by Vermin makes their Expence in keeping it very great, and frequently forces them to market sooner, than they might otherwise intend to go.

The next thing to be considered is the Preservation of Corn when grown, both for Use and Sale, and in this regard is to be had both to Quantity and Quality. Such Quantity should

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be always in the Nation as will be sufficient for the Consumption of the current Year, and also to supply any accidental Deficiency in the Crop; and this must be kept, either in public Magazines, or private Hands. How far the Farmers keep, or can keep, may be observed from the Account of their usual Method of Trade, as before related, from which it may be gathered that the Sale in the fore part of the Year, or immediately after Harvest, is more than the Consumption, and if the Excess is not then laid up in Granaries, the same would be, in all Probability exported, and Corn before the next Harvest become scarce, and consequently dear. But this is provided for and prevented by Act 15 *Car.* II. which enables, or impowers, all Persons to buy, and lay it up; in consequence of which many subsist by storing up this Excess at their own Risque, and the Public, or Legislature, have seldom any Necessity to take any care about it, and were never yet (at least since this Act passed) obliged to form Magazines, which, if ever they should be obliged to do, might become a very great Discouragement to Tillage, and the Corn Trade, and in the End make Corn dearer than before, as the Farmer, seeing large Quantities collected together in one View, might imagine Corn would never bear a Price for the future, and the Fear of the Market being spoiled by the Magazines being opened would prevent all private Persons from keeping a sufficient Quantity by them, to carry on their Business with Profit, and consequently the Trade would decline, or be in a manner left off, which might be attended with many other ill Consequences, at present impossible to be known,

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or foreseen. Neither can that Care be taken to preserve the Corn from Corruption, Decay, or being diminished or destroyed by Vermin, in such public Magazines, as in private Hands, and consequently the Goodness of the Quality cannot be so well preserved; for they will seldom be emptied more than once a Year, and all, who know the Corn Trade, know how difficult it is in this Climate to preserve Corn sweet, after it is out of the Straw, for the whole Year round.

But in private Hands, though the Quantity may be, and generally is, as large as it would be in public Magazines, yet it is always circulating, by many shifted once a Month, and by scarcely any less than three Times a Year; in Consequence of which the Corn hath no Time to decay, and the Vermin, such as Rats and Mice, are too well watched to be permitted to destroy it; for were the private Trader to suffer them to make much Waste, or the good Quality of but a small Part of what he circulates in the Year to be spoiled, by the natural Decay of the Corn, which is very apt to heat, and thereby introduce an innumerable Army of Worms, or Weavils, it might bid fair to wipe off all his Profits for that Time.

The Preparation of the Corn for Food, by grinding and baking, is the next Consideration: in regard to both which our Parliaments have very properly and judiciously interfered; where Corn is ground for Hire, punishing the Miller if he takes more than his just Due for Toll, though the grinding being now in most Places paid for in Money, these Laws are but little known; and where Bread is baked for Sale,
fixing

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fixing the Assize, or Weight of the Penny and other Loaves, according to the Price of the Grain, Meal, or Flour, of which the same is made, having regard to the Sort or Fineness of the Bread, by which the Poor are, or ought to be, satisfied. As to the Baker, he hath no more than a reasonable Allowance; and if he attempts any Fraud, the Magistrate has it in his Power to punish him for the same.

It were hard to say which of these Trades lies under the worst Imputations at present; some of them are of a serious Nature, many trifling, and many contrary to common Sense. What Truth there is in any of them, doubtless, the Parliament will enquire, and cause those to be properly punished who have offended against any Law now in being, and provide such Laws as may seem proper to prevent such Male-practices in both Trades for the future, as the present Laws will not reach.

What has been already said might serve to give a general Idea of the Corn Trade; yet it may not be improper to be a little more particular in regard to the Method in which it is carried on by Merchants and Factors, Mealmen and Meal-factors, Millers and Bakers.

Now, Corn may be considered as a Merchandize, not only in regard of the Exportation to, and Importation of it from, foreign Parts, but also in regard to the buying and transporting it from one Part of the same Kingdom to another; since in many Parts much more is grown than the Inhabitants can consume, and in many others enough is not grown for the Use of the People; and Merchants and Factors are employed in this Business, either buying on their

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their own Accounts, or by Commission, as Opportunity offers. And this must always have been the Case, as the Members of Cities and large Towns being employed about other Affairs, and often at a great Distance from the growing Counties, can neither have had Leisure nor Opportunity to fetch it themselves; and those Purveyors, Laders, Badgers, Kidders, & Carriers, mentioned in the old Statutes, must have been Men employed in the same sort of Business as our present Merchants and Factors are; nor was the Statute, 5 and 6 *Edward vi.* made to give rise to, but to regulate, their Method of Trade, some evil Practices having crept in among them, which were rather increased by that Law than removed, as appears by 5 *Eliz.* all which Regulations seem to have been rendered useless, or rather repealed by Statute 15 *Car. ii.* as was before observed, and the Corn Trade left in a Manner free.

It is not to be supposed that these Merchants and Factors are averse to large Profits, or that they will not get what they can for their Trouble; but their Number seems too great for them ever to combine, by refusing to sell at reasonable Prices, to oppress the People. For as the Commodity they deal in is perishable, should they ever have such Thoughts, they might lose more by the Corn growing worse, than gain by the Contrivance, before they could attain their Ends. I say not that it is impossible, that Attempts of this kind may be sometimes made in particular Places, but then they will generally turn out to the Loss of such Schemers, whilst the Post is regular, and the Corn Trade continues free; for Interest never sleeps, and every Ad-

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Advance of Price is quickly known to all Dealers, and a Desire of sharing in the Profit will soon overstock the Market.

Mealmen and Mealfactors are employed in Meal and Flour, as Merchants and Factors are in Corn, and often have Mills of their own, tho' they sometimes hire; but in the last Case the Miller is but a very inconsiderable Person, barely living when Corn is in Plenty round his Mill, and at other Times being greatly distressed; which hath been the Reason that many of them, who could raise a Capital, have engaged in the Meal and Flour Trades, adding to their old Occupation those of Mealmen, and Mealfactors.

Having mentioned the Word Capital, it may not be improper to observe, that to carry on every Branch of the Corn and Flour Trades, a much larger Sum of Money is required than may commonly be imagined, but will easily be believed, when it is remembered, that the whole is paid for in present Money, and though some Part may be returned in a Month, yet the whole, by those who have any considerable Trade, is not returned more than three or four Times in a Year; and he that cannot in plentiful Markets lay in a Stock, but is obliged to buy in Proportion to his Sales in short Markets, will find his Trade turn out to little Account.

The following general Calculation may serve to illustrate this still more. Suppose the whole Number of the People to be six Millions, and that they each eat one Quarter of Bread Corn yearly of thirty Shillings Value; that they each drink the Produce of four Bushels, in the same Time, of the Value of Ten Shillings; that the whole Quantity of Oats, Beans and other Corn, given to and consumed by Hor-

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ses, Hogs, Oxen, other Cattle and Poultry, in the same Time, is equal in Number of Quarters to half the Quantity consumed in Bread only; each Quarter of which may be valued on the Average at sixteen Shillings: And lastly, suppose the annual Quantity exported (though this seems most liable to be doubted) is equal in Value to one Sixteenth Part of the Home Consumption, and that the Account stands thus, viz.

	Quarters	£.	s.	d.
Bread Corn — — —	6,000,000 at 30s.	9,000,000	0	0
Corn made into Drink — —	3,000,000 at 20s.	3,000,000	0	0
Oats, &c. for Cattle & Poultry	3,000,000 at 16s.	2,400,000	0	0
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Total of the Home Consumption, Value		£. 14,400,000	0	0
Add the Value of $\frac{1}{16}$ thereof for the Export		£. 900,000	0	0
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Total Value of Corn consumed and exported		£. 15,300,000	0	0
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Suppose the Money returned 4 Times a Year, $\frac{1}{4}$ is		£. 3,825,000	0	0

Now let us consider, that though some few concerned in the Export may have larger Dealings, yet he is reckoned no small Trader who returns one hundred Quarters weekly, and Multitudes do not return forty Quarters in that Time; and at the same Time let us reflect on the Number of Persons who must be employed in the Corn Trade, (to which may be added the Farmers and Growers, who probably are ten Times more in Number than the others) and it may then be easy to judge how far it may be like y they should all combine to inhanche the Price, more than the Smallness of the Quantity may require; as the least of them all, in such

such Cases, who should sell through Fear, Necessity, or Inclination, would break the Knot. It is true, an Opinion or Prepossession that Things are scarce may sometimes accidentally run through the Body, and raise the Price, but nothing but a real Scarcity can support it; and though perhaps, the Steadiness in the Price of Corn may be deemed a certain Proof of its being in Plenty; yet this Steadiness may, in a great Measure, be preserved, if not sometimes procured, by the Magistrates, as will be explained below.

And here it may not be amiss to take Notice, how much the Generality of People differ in Opinion, in regard to the whole Quantity grown, and the Proportion which the annual Produce of Corn in this Kingdom bears to the Consumption, or rather what the latter bears to the former; it being very common to hear Men of good Capacities and Understanding assert, that we commonly grow enough in one Year to serve two, often three, nay some do not scruple to advance, that in one good Year we grow enough to serve seven Years. In some particular Parishes this possibly may be true, but it is very far from being the Case throughout the whole Kingdom. Let us only suppose we grow enough to serve fifteen Months, Now, to make the Thing plain, we say, that in twelve Months we consume twelve Quarters, and we suppose, that the Export and Distiller together take off one Quarter and half more, which is beyond the Truth; in this Case the whole, used and exported, will amount to thirteen Months and a half, and we have one Month and a half left; which, even supposing our Account in

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regard to the Consumption as above, to exceed the Truth, one sixth Part will in ten Years amount to twelve Millions of Quarters, and be worth as many Pounds at least. Now, we had ten as good Years as ever were known in Succession from 1741 to 1751; nay, if the common Opinion is right, we have had sixteen. But where was the Corn seen in 1751? Or what is become of it now? Let us reflect on the Appearance of Stacks and Fulness of Barns after Harvest in every Year, and then say where such a Quantity could lie concealed, either in the Straw, or out. It could not be hid. Corn, even, when threshed, is a very bulky Commodity, and requires much Room to be properly preserved; and when lately it happened that a great Quantity of Wheat was imported into *London* at once, which could not be above forty thousand Quarters, the whole Importation not amounting to Seventy, and the Merchants, who could not meet with Sales, were obliged to lay it up, they found it extremely difficult to get sufficient Granaries for that purpose; and yet a Gentleman in Appearance took the Liberty to say, and that too in a public Inn, that, of his own Knowledge, one Man had engrossed and laid up Wheat enough to serve the City of *London* and Suburbs three Months; which is at least 150,000 Quarters, and was worth at that Time near £.400,000. So apt are Men to talk freely of what they have so little Knowledge.

The forementioned Calculations are exclusive of the Seed, which is at least equal to one tenth Part of the Growth, and, almost every Year, whilst it is putting into the Ground, occasions some small Rise in the Markets; and the
Mouths

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Mouths of the clamorous are then open against the Engrossers; but they don't consider, that, at that Time, the Demand is more than double to what it is at other Times; neither need the Quantity used for Seed be taken Notice of, when we consider how much more the annual Produce is lessened by a Failure in the Crop, of only one sixth Part, than is taken off, on an Average, by both Distiller and Exporter.

In the first Calculation we supposed the Quantity used by the Distiller to be comprehended in that used for Drink, and in the same Account the Export is reckoned at only one Sixteenth of the Consumption. In the last we reckoned both together to amount to one Eighth of the Consumption. Both these Estimations were so made in order to give the greater Face of Probability to the Argument.

Now, suppose the annual Produce of an Acre in common, besides Seed for the next Year, is three Quarters, and that one Eighth, in common, is taken off by the Distiller and Exporter, that is, three Bushels; and then, suppose the Crops fall short one sixth Part, amounting to four Bushels; by this Means there will be a Diminution of one Third more than the whole Quantity taken off by the Distiller and Exporter, on the Average, which, perhaps, may not have been enough considered.

Let us make one short Reflection, and then return to our Subject. The Exporter and Distiller, whether they take off one Eighth, or only one Sixteenth of the Produce, are large Customers, and give great Encouragement to Tillage; for whatever may be thought to the contrary, the Quantity sown will bear a Proportion to the Demand; and if one Eighth, or one Sixteenth

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teenth, of the Demand is taken away, the Farmer finding his Stock too large, will contrive to lessen it, by growing less; as, on the contrary, he will endeavour to grow more, when the Demand increases; and for this Reason in dear Years, the Demand being, at least in Appearance, increased, a much larger Quantity is always sown; and though this for the present still helps to increase the Scarcity, it nevertheless makes Provision for greater Plenty the ensuing Year. The Quantity of Corn in plentiful Years † exported and distilled may be compared to the Expences of a Man of Fortune in Diversions and Amusements, for which he takes Care to provide the proper Funds, as well as for Necessaries; but these increasing, he is content to forego his Pleasures, and applies what was provided for them, to supply his Wants, and by that Means finds Comfort, when otherwise he would have been in Distress.

But to return to our Subject.

The Method in which Bakers carry on their Trade is different, according to their different Situations. Many, in Country Places, buy all in Corn, and have it ground, either on Hire, or at Mills of their own: Some buy only Part in Corn, and Part in Flour, or Meal, as Opportunity offers; whilst others buy all they Use, in *London* more particularly, in Flour of the Mealmen.

† If these Reflections are right, neither Exporter or Distiller should be too much discouraged, and the Distiller [while Spirits are used] should have the Preference in Point of Policy; since, it is said, he pays sixteen Shillings and upwards for Liberty to use what the Exporter hath large Sums for taking away.

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Mealmen, or Mealfactor; and these last are most capable to make good Bread for a Constancy; for the Mealmen buying larger Quantities, and the Mealfactor having many Sorts to sell, they scarcely ever use the Flour of one Sort of Wheat alone; and the Advantage this gives them, is inconceivable; for a Number of Sorts judiciously mixed, by the mutual Assistance of their different Qualities, arising from the various Soils on which they grow, will do much better than almost any one Sort alone. Whereas the Baker, who buys Corn for himself, is always obliged to use what he hath bought, tho' his Judgment may have deceived him in the buying, for the Market may not have enabled him to provide himself with such as in Quality he may have desired, or having been bought good it may be by Accident debased in grinding, each of which Circumstances will at different Times be the Case; and when any of them happen to the Mealman, he will have better Opportunities of helping himself, by selling such Meal for a Coarser Use.

When the Bakers have provided the Wheat, Meal, or Flour, to make Bread, they are, or may be, bound to make it of such Weight, or sell it at such Price as the Magistrates shall order, who are authorised by Law to set the same, according to the Price which the Grain, Meal, or Flour, whereof it is made, bears in the Market, common or reasonable Allowance being made them for their Labour; and this Power of the Magistrate, discreetly exercised, may be of great Use in checking the too great Fluctuations in the Market.

Wheat

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Wheat must alter four Shillings in the Quarter for the Price of the Peck Loaf to vary two Pence; and the Price of the Peck Loaf being generally between 18 Pence and 3 Shillings, every such Variation may be called $8\frac{1}{2}$ Cent, or $\frac{1}{2}$ of the whole Value, which is a great Deal.

Now, suppose that Wheat should vary in one Week eight Shillings per Quarter, it might be proper for the Magistrates to raise or lower the Weight and Price of Bread, as if it had varied only four Shillings; always remembering to ballance the Account, which they will scarcely miss an Opportunity of doing within the Space of three Months, by giving the Baker, when he hath suffered, for the like Time that he hath suffered, as much more than the common Allowance, as will make up the Difference to him; and, on the contrary, taking from him when the Public hath suffered.

It is true the Table of Assize hath provided for an Alteration of one Penny the Peck, which is two Shillings in the Quarter of Corn; in regard to which the Magistrates may sometimes proceed in a discretionary Manner, as before hinted in regard to four Shillings. But they will find it impossible, many Times for a long while together, to raise and fall no more than one Penny in the Peck at a Time; and it may sometimes happen, though it is presumed very seldom, that they will be obliged to vary more than two Pence.

If, from any accidental Glut in the Market, an extraordinary Fall in the Price should happen, and the Magistrates should exercise their Power with too much Exactness in fixing the Assize of Bread, it may deter those who have

Goods

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Goods, preparing or prepared, from bringing them to Market, and make as sudden and considerable an Alteration the other Way, which it might be equally imprudent in them to follow in fixing the Price of Bread, as it might tend to alarm the Farmer, and make him for a Time withhold his Corn. Complaints against the Farmers for withholding in Times of Scarcity are never wanting, and yet our Parliaments have not, as we know of, thought proper to make any Laws to compel them to sell; for which doubtless they had good Reasons. And Laws of this sort seem needless, since the Farmers are obliged to contrive the Matter so, that their whole Stock may be sold by Harvest to make Room for the growing Crop; and the returning Demands they all, except a very few, have for Money, cause some of them every Market Day to sell some Species of Corn or other, and thereby as regular and continual supply in general is found, as could possibly be dealt out under the Direction of any Law. And, from some Years Observation, we are persuaded, that if the Stock in the Farmers Hands had been annually taken Account of at *Christmas, Easter,* or any other Time, nearly the same Quantity of the Crop would have been found exhausted each Year at the same Time; and perhaps more would have been found exhausted, both in very plentiful Years and very scarce Years, than in those of moderate Plenty. In the first Case more Corn must be sold to raise the like Sum, and in the last the Increase of Money seldom equals the Shortness of the Crop, and many Farmers find their Barns empty before they have raised the necessary Sums. But

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let us suppose the Farmer in Times of Scarcity doth not bring his Corn to Market in due Proportion according to the Time of the Year, it is possible, though he regards only himself, this Conduct may be of public Utility; for was he to supply the Market in the Beginning of the Year with as much as in good Years, too great a Quantity might be exported, and Famine stare us in the Face before next Harvest. It will be replied, a reasonable withholding may be right, but they always carry it to a wicked Excess. We allow this Case possible, but hardly probable. The Hopes of Gain are always attended by Fears of Loss; and Fear being the stronger Passion of the two, and backed, in regard to most of them, with their returning Necessities, though some few may be carried by Avarice so far as to withhold unreasonably, yet much the greater Part, pressed by Necessity, and urged by Fear, will act otherwise; and, upon the whole, the Quantity sold will be generally found, even in scarce Times, in Proportion to the Time of the Year; and though upon any accidental Rise, as above observed, they might withhold for a Time, they could not continue to do it long, since in a very short Time Corn would be brought from more distant Parts, and spoil their Sales.

The Power of the Magistrates, in regard to the Assize, seems declaratory, and if they take Care that the Baker hath, one Time with another, the common, or reasonable Allowance, and no more, neither the People nor he are injured; and if the Magistrates can [in which however they should act upon good Information, and with great Caution] by sometimes giving more,

more, and sometimes less to the Baker, keep the Markets tolerably steady, the Places where they preside will hardly ever fail of a regular supply; and, perhaps, Cases may have happened within Memory, which, upon Reflection, may justify this Way of thinking.

The Assize Table seems to want some Enlargements, no Notice being therein taken what Price Flour should be esteemed to bear in Proportion to Wheat; and, when this is done, it might not be amiss to explain the Method which should be taken in setting the Assize out of Corporations, which is now seldom done, and in many Places neglected only because the Law seems not explicit enough on that Head; though it may require great Care in appointing for what District the same should be set; possibly every Hundred may do; but, it seems, a certain Distance round every Corporation [in regard to London it would be best if it were ten or twelve Miles] should be obliged to follow the Assize set, and Orders made, by the Magistrate thereof; otherwise, as Bread may, and will, often be different in its Price in the Town and its Neighbourhood, a continual Discontent, on Account thereof, will be kept up amongst the Poor, which may, by the foregoing Method of making certain Distances round Corporations follow the Assize thereof, be prevented; and that without departing from the Rules of Justice, since, one Time with another, the Neighbourhoods of Cities and great Towns are served much on the same Terms as they are.

Thus have we in general considered the Corn Trade and Laws, endeavouring to shew in what Methods

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Methods the Trade is carried on, from the Farmer to the Consumer; and in what Light it hath, or seems to have, been regarded by several Parliaments from *Ed. vi.* to this Day, wherein we could not forbear to intermix a few Reflections; and, if our Account is generally true, most of those who have wrote upon this Subject have been mistaken; probably, from considering the Corn Trade and Laws as they regard or affect particular Places, or Parts of the Kingdom only; whereas all Laws, made for the use of the whole Nation, should be considered in a more enlarged View.

It is not intended to insinuate, that the Corn Trade wants no Regulation, or the Laws relating thereto no Explanation or Amendment, and that the Dealers in Corn are a sort of righteous Men, who want no Restraint or looking after. All that is aimed at is only to shew, that this Trade is at present under better Regulations, and the present Corn-Laws, tho' they may want some Amendments, much better adapted to the intended purpose, than is commonly imagined; and that, whatever may be in the Will of particular Persons, Providence, by the Nature of the Commodity, the large Sums necessary, and the Number of People required to carry on this Trade, hath put it out of the Power of the Corn-factors, and all others concerned therein, in any considerable degree to oppress the People, more especially whilst the present Laws are in force; and, we are fully persuaded, no better Laws in general for the conducting this Affair can be delivered, how much soever, in particular instances, they may be improved. Let us reflect once more upon what they say.

To

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To the Farmer—Till your Land, and fear not having so great a Plenty as to be a Burthen and loss to you, for we will give a Bounty for the Exportation* of what can be spared.

To the People—Be not uneasy at the Exportation of Corn, for when it begins to grow dear, the Bounty shall cease*, and when it is dear, it shall be imported at such a moderate and proper duty, as whilst it adds so little to the Price†, as not to distress you, shall yet prevent so great a quantity being thrown in, as may deter our own Farmers from Tillage‡, nay, even when it becomes necessary, it shall be imported Duty free.

To

* 1 *William and Mary.* † 2 and 5 *George II.*

‡ How far the Farmer may by Exportation, for which we give a Bounty, be prompted to till, or by the Prohibition thereof generally, or absolutely, or by the Fear of large Importations, be discouraged from Tillage, our Legislators know; and the following short Piece of History, communicated to me by a Gentleman, who was an Eye-witness of the Fact, may serve to shew their Wisdom and Foresight in making the Laws which are provided for that Purpose.

In *Turkey*, the Grand Vizir [between twenty and thirty Years ago] suffered a more general Exportation of Corn to be carried on, and more openly, than any of his Predecessors had done, insomuch that three hundred *French* Vessels, from twenty to two hundred Tons, were, on one Day, seen to enter *Smyna* Bay to load Corn, and Wheat was then sold for less than Seventeen Pence *English* a Bushel, with all the Expences in putting the same on Board included.

From these open Proceedings, the Janizaries and People took the Alarm, pretended that all the Corn was going to be exported, and that they, in consequence, must be starved; and in *Constantinople*, grew so mutinous, that they could not be appeased till the Vizir was strangled, and his Body thrown out to them.

His Successor took particular care not to split on the same Rock, and would suffer no Exportation at all; many of the Farmers,

Farmers,

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To the Corn Merchants, Factors, Mealmen, Mealfactors, and all concerned and employed in transporting Corn and Flour from the growing Counties, to such Parts where the Consumption exceeds the Growth, and collecting it for Exportation when allowed.—Proceed freely in your Business, for if the false Notions, which the Populace may of themselves conceive, or wicked Men for bad Purposes, or for want of better Information, may possess themselves with, should make them interrupt you, and forcibly take away, or spoil your Property, the Place *, where such Interruption happens, shall pay the Damage, or those who do it shall be punished. But let not this promise of protection and recompense be so

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Farmers, who looked on the Exportation as their greatest Demand, neglected Tillage, to save their Rents, which in that Country are paid either in Kind, or in Proportion to their Crops, to such a Degree, that in less than three Years, the same Quantity of Corn, which, in time of Export, sold for not quite Seventeen Pence, was worth more than Six Shillings, and the Distresses of the People in *Smyna* were such, that every Bakehouse, and Magazine of Corn, was obliged to have a military Guard, which took care that no one Person should have more than a fixed Quantity; and so strictly was this Order observed, that an *English* Ship, in the *Turkey* Trade, was detained from sailing some time for want of Bread.

The ill Consequences of these Proceedings were not removed in many Years, and to this Day, the Fate of the *Vizir*, as an unfortunate good Man, is lamented.

While we have a Parliament, we need not fear such ill Consequences from the mistaken Notions of the People, or the Farmer, but, within Memory, the People, in more Parts of *Great-Britain* than one, have proceeded to Extremities upon as mistaken Principles, as the People at *Constantinople* did in the Case above related, and which, if they had not been timely checked, might have proved as much to their own Disadvantage.

* 11 *George* 11.

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ill received, and ungratefully returned by you, as to induce you to endeavour to get an unreasonable Gain, and to oppress the Poor; for, in that Case, we will set a price on your Commodity *, and punish you, if you do not comply with our Orders; yet this shall be done, not by any inferior Magistrates, who by their Connections may, however well they intend, be byassed either for or against you, or for Want of proper Information may give improper Orders, but by the Kings Privy Council, and great Officers of State, or any Seven of them, of which the Lord Chancellor, Lord Treasurer, Lord President, or Lord Privy Seal, shall be one, who being best apprised of what is fit to be done throughout the whole Realm, and in every Part thereof, are, for that reason, the most capable to judge, and the only proper Persons to be trusted in what is fit to be done in this affair.

In regard to the Bakers, it is true, we have trusted them to Magistrates of Corporations and Justices of the Peace, who have a clear Rule for their Conduct. But while the Bakers act uprightly, they may proceed with the same Freedom and Safety, as all others may, in the carrying on their Branch of the Corn Trade.

In this small Compass may be seen a general View and Purport of most of our Laws relating to the Corn Trade, [except those regarding Malt, Markets, and Measures] and which it might be possible to reduce (except the Baking Act, which seems necessary to be kept apart) into one plain Act of Parliament; in which, though some Amendments may be made, we

are

* 25 *Henry* VIII.

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are bold to say, the general Plan cannot be improved.

Here a Question naturally arises, how, and in what Respects, can those Amendments in our Corn Laws be made? To this, of myself I presume to say little, but what I have heard from some able Men, who seem to understand the Affair, I shall take the Liberty to put down.

Let the Bounty on Wheat be reduced to 4s. per Quarter, and on other Grain in Proportion, and payable on Wheat to 40s. Rye to 26s. Barley and Malt to 20s. yet when they exceed these Prices, and do not exceed the old Exportation Prices, let them be freely exported; and when they exceed those Prices, let Exportation cease, except as ought to be excepted, and then let Corn be imported, at the present low Duties, till it shall have risen, Wheat to 54s. and other Grain in Proportion; and, after that, Duty free, taking Care not to make the Law so positive, but that the King, by the Advice of his Council, when he shall think proper, tho' Corn may be under the Exportation Prices, may forbid the Exportation of every, or any Species thereof, for a Time to be limited: And, to prevent Confusion, let the Justices of Peace, in each Quarter Sessions, and the Privy Council at all Times, have Power to enquire into the Prices of Corn in each Port, and certify the same to the Customer thereof, and let such Prices, as they shall certify, for three Months after, be his Guide, except the King in Council shall order otherwise, in regard to paying the Bounty, [the present Method of obtaining which by Affidavit, in regard to the Market Price,

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Price, when no such Certificate is in Force in any Port, being still observed] permitting the Export without Bounty, stopping the Exportation, and permitting the Importation at the low Duty, or Duty free.

Two Things, they pretend, ought to be taken especial Care of, viz. to guard against the Bounty being paid for Corn not exported, which they affirm formerly to have been the Case, and to protect, at all Times, Persons who may be engaged in carrying Corn, or Flour, from one Part of the Kingdom to another, that the whole may have, as near as may be, an equal Share of the Blessings of Providence; otherwise, whilst a Bounty may be paying in one Place for the Exportation of Corn, another Part of the Kingdom may almost suffer Famine. So much for the general Laws about Corn.

As to the Laws about Malt, it would be needless to mention them here, since they, in their Execution, are under the Commissioners of Excise.

In regard to the Laws about Markets, they seem not full or explicit enough, or to be grown by the Alterations of Times in a manner useless, or rather impossible to be used; besides, the Statute 5 and 6 of *Edward* v1. as far as relates to *Westmoreland, Cumberland, Chester, Lancaster and York*, and all foreign Victuals imported, except Fish and Salt, is by 5 and 13 of *Elizabeth* altered, or repealed; by Statutes 21 of *James* 1. and 3 of *Car.* 1. till Wheat is 32s. any Person may buy it in Market or out of Market; and by 15 of *Car.*

And yet *Howell*, afterwards Clerk of the Council, in a Letter from *Rouen*, dated *Sept. 7, 1619*, says "Tis true *England* hath a good Repute abroad, for her Fertility,

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Car. 11. this Act is further altered, as hath been before observed.

A Notion hath some Time prevailed, that buying Corn by Sample is Forestalling, and contrary to Law, which seems to be a Mistake. The Statute of *Edward* VI. says so plainly what Forestalling is, that it may be wondered how such a Notion could prevail. It is buying any Thing *coming*, or making a Bargain for any Thing *coming*, before the *same* shall be in the Market, or persuading Persons *coming* to abstain. Now what hath this to do with Samples? In many Places it is not practicable to bring all into the Market; or, if it were, would it be reasonable? Or could it ever be intended, that in such Towns, and many such there are, where from 500 to 2000 Quarters are sold every Market Day, and whose Inhabitants do not consume 2000 Quarters of Bread-Corn in a whole Year, every Part of the Quantity sold should be pitched in the Market, after having been drawn many Miles, and that, perhaps, thro' very bad Roads, to be drawn afterwards possibly another Way as many Miles more, nay sometimes directly back again by the Farmer's own Door, to be ground, or put on Ship-board, either for the Use of distant Parts of the Kingdom, or foreign Parts.

The Custom, which is still retained in *London*, of not suffering any Corn to be measured till

“ Fertility, yet be our Harvests never so kindly, and our
“ Crops never so plentiful, we have every Year commonly
“ some Grain from thence, (*France*) or from *Dantzic*,
“ and other Places imported by the Merchant.” The Al-
teration or different Situation, between these Times and
those in regard to our Plenty need not be mentioned.

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till a Sample is carried to the Lord Mayor, [who is thereby not only apprized of its Arrival himself, but also of its *Fitness for Man's Use*, and hath, by his Crier, an Opportunity to give Notice to the whole City of its Arrival, and then grants his Permit to the Person requesting to measure and take up his Corn, either for Sale, or to put in Grainaries] seems to explain this affair, and to have been at first introduced to prevent forestalling.

Regrating is selling things bought in the same Market, or within four Miles thereof, again, except to each Person for his Family, which, however, by Stat. 15 *Car.* 11. may now be done after three Months.

Now, however necessary it may be to prevent those who, [knowing the particular Sort of Corn that their Neighbours may want, or taking advantage of ignorant, or idle People, which come late to market] engross what they can early in the Morning, and then, out of pure Friendship, spare it again on the same Day; yet the general and strict Execution of this Clause would be hurtful; for who would venture, in *London* more particularly, to buy and lay up any Corn when the Market is overflocked, if he was obliged, either not to sell it in the same Market again at all, or not till after three Months; or how would that Market be supplied [most certainly very sparingly] where any the least Surplus must either be laid up at the Expence of the Importer, who generally wants the Money, or else sold for next to nothing. So sensible were our Forefathers of this, that when Corn was imported, if the Importer could not sell it but to Loss, it might be re-exported,

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paying a small Duty, or Custom; and during Times of Importation at this Day, if the Merchant takes the Precaution to report his Ship for Exportation, and keep her without the Port, he may, if he dislikes the Price, go where he pleases.

Ingrossing of Corn, is getting it into Possession with intent to sell it again, except by Persons properly qualified, or lawfully authorized, which every Man now is, till Wheat is 48s. by Statute 15 Car. II. in regard to which enough hath been said before.

In this, as was before observed in Relation to the Corn-Laws, it is not intended to insinuate, that no Laws can be enacted for the better Regulation of the Markets (for there certainly may) but only to shew, at least, that we think, that the old Laws could not have the Intention, in their first Institution, which some Men may imagine; and that, till every Market in the Kingdom is exactly, or at least nearly, in the same Circumstances, or the Growth of Corn is nearly the same throughout the whole Nation, no one general Law seems possible to be made, which will properly, at all Times, and in all Cases, regulate them all; yet, it may be presumed, that, upon Application from any particular Place, the Parliament would pass a temporary Act to regulate their Markets, and their Experience might be of great Use in serving to shew, how far it would be proper to put other Places in the same, or like, Circumstances on the same Footing. That which bids the fairest to suit them all is, to cause a certain Hour for the opening of each Market to be fixed, and to make it penal to sell any Corn before Notice is given

given by a Bell, or otherwise, and then those, who are not in Time, may blame themselves.

Measures have been attempted to be regulated to no Purpose, as appears by many Acts since *Magna Charta*, which is now 500 Years ago, by obliging all Persons to use the like; and, it may be feared, there are Difficulties to be surmounted, which may retard their Regulation as yet for a long while. In the mean time, if it were enacted, that in every Market-house in *Great-Britain*, or some more conspicuous Place in every Market-Town, the Contents of the Bushel, and other Measures, in *Winchester* Quarts and Pints, should be wrote up, and kept continually legible, and every Person, selling Corn there, should be bound, without express mention being made thereof, and in Case no express mention be made at the Bargain-making to the contrary, to deliver the Person to whom he sells the Quantity for the Bushel, or other Measure, as so wrote up, and at the same time it should be prohibited to depart from the Use of the customary Measure to any other but the legal, or *Winchester* Measure.

Many good Ends might be answered by this Regulation; every Stranger coming into the Market would know what Measure he is to expect; and, if Certificates of the Measures used in each Market were transmitted to the Excise, the whole might be made into a kind of Alphabet, by which every Person would be enabled to find the various Measures used in every Part of the Nation.

The Statute 15 Car. II. fixes the Prices at which all other Sorts of Grain may be laid up, as well as Wheat, and Stat. 1 Will. and Mary gives

gives a Bounty on the Exportation of Rye, Barley, and Wheat Meal, as well as Wheat, but it was thought proper to take Notice of that only in this Essay in order to avoid Prolixity.

The Prices of Wheat mentioned herein are taken from the Register of Eton College, an Abstract of which from 1646 here follows; and we will close the whole with a List of the Statutes above referred to.

	£	s.	d.
From 1646 to 1666 the Average Price of the Qur of Wheat	2	17	5½
1666 to 1686	—	—	—
1686 to 1706	—	—	—
1706 to 1726	—	—	—
1726 to 1746	—	—	—
1746 to 1756	—	—	—

Note, These are the Prices of the very best Wheat; besides the Measure there is full nine Gallons; so that, allowing 2s for the Fineness, and one Ninth for the Measure, the Prices will stand thus, viz.

	£	s.	d.	
From 1646 to 1686	—	—	—	Winchester Measure.
1686 to 1756	—	—	—	Ditto.

For the last 70 Years—Wheat hath }
been cheaper — — — — — 9 3 per Quarter.

In 1688, the Bounty on Exportation was first given, and Wheat having on the Average been so much cheaper ever since shews, that the Law then made was a good Law, as well as 15 Car. II. for, if only two Thirds of the Corn consumed in Bread hath been Wheat, and the above Register is true, the Money, which hath been saved annually in that Article only, amounts to above a Million and half of

of Money; an almost incredible Sum, and more than four Times the Sum paid for Bounty on the Exportation of all Sorts of Corn in the Year of the greatest Export ever known; besides the ready Money which hath been brought into the Nation for the Corn exported.

LIST of the STATUTES above referred to.

- Years when passed.
- 1534 ——— 25 Hen. VIII. Cap. 2. About regulating the Price of Victuals.
 - 1548 ——— 5 and 6 Edward VI. Cap. 14. Against Ingrossers, &c.
 - 1553 ——— 1 and 2 Phil. and Mary, Cap. 5. Licensing for Exportation.
 - 1563 ——— 5 Eliz. Cap. 12. Alters 5 and 6 Edward VI. In Regard to Buyers.
 - 1571 ——— 13 Eliz. Cap. 13. Regulates the Exportation, &c.
 - 1603 ——— 1 Jac. I. Cap. 13. Ditto.
 - 1624 ——— 21 Jac. I. Cap. 28. Ditto, and alters 5 and 6 Edward VI. still more.
 - 1627 ——— 3 Car. I. Cap. 4. Nearly the last Act repeated.
 - 1660 ——— 12 Car. II. Cap. 4. Relates to Exportation.
 - 1663 ——— 15 Car. II. Cap. 7. Ditto, and alters, or suspends, 5 and 6 Edward VI. till Wheat is 48s.
 - 1670 ——— 22 Car. II. Cap. 13. Allows the Exportation after 48s. paying Custom, and regulates the Measures.

1668

- 1688 ——— 1 *William and Mary*, Cap. 12. Gives a Bounty to 48s. Repeals all Custom on Exportation.
- 1698 ——— 10 *William III.* Cap. 3. From February 10, no Export for one Year.
- 1699 ——— 11 *William III.* Cap. 3. From February 12 no Bounty for 9 Months.
- 1706 ——— 5 *Anne*, Cap. 29. Grants a Bounty on Wheat Malt.
- 1709 ——— 8 *Anne*, Cap. 2. No Exportation for one Year.
- 1729 ——— 2 *George II.* Cap. 18. Regards the Importation.
- 1732 ——— 5 *George II.* Cap. 12. Ditto.
- 1738 ——— 11 *George II.* Cap. Made Felony to hinder Exportation.
- 1740 ——— 14 *Geo. II.* Cap. } No Exportat.
- 1741 ——— 15 *Geo. II.* Cap. } for 1 Year.

There may have been many more Statutes passed about Corn, but these seem to be most material.

The following Papers having fallen into my Hands, I take the Liberty to add them as a proper Appendix.



MEMORIAL



January 19, 1757.

MEMORIAL

FOR THE

ROYAL BOROUGHS of Scotland.

IT is now past all Doubt with the discerning Part of this Nation, that the present high Prices of Grain proceed from the great Deficiencies that happened in the two last Crops. The first was almost entirely consumed before the last was got well off the Ground; and the last proves extremely deficient, both in Quantity and Quality.

It is therefore perfectly evident, that an Addition to the Quantity can alone relieve the Distresses of the Poor and labouring People. It is this, and this only, which will reduce the present exorbitant Price of Grain in the populous, grazing, and manufacturing Counties, which never yield Grain sufficient for their own Subsistence, where the Poor presently labour under extreme Distress, and which, it is too greatly to be feared, must even increase, if some effectual Measures be not immediately taken for their Relief.

It would be highly proper to suspend the Duties on the Importation of all kinds of Grain

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for a limited Time, in order to encourage the bringing Corn from abroad to supply the Wants of the Poor, and thereby to support the Trade and Manufactures of the Nation, which otherwise must suffer in a very high Degree. But at the same Time that the Legislature should be attentive to such Measures as will not only reduce the present Prices, and prevent their going higher, they should also be careful to prevent any unnecessary Consumption of foreign Grain; as that must drain the Island of so much of her Treasure, and in some Degree discourage her Agriculture, and abate her Strength.

To this End it is of high Importance, that the Communication be rendered as free and easy as possible, from the growing Counties to those who never produce enough for their own Consumption. The Legislature ought therefore to consider, how to prevent the present riotous Proceedings of the common People, their seizing on the Rivers and High-roads the Corn going to or coming from the public Markets or Shipping Ports, and selling it off, or otherwise distributing it as they please, in open Defiance of the Laws.

It is to be observed too, that these Proceedings demand the stricter Attention, that they prevail chiefly in the growing Counties, thereby preventing the Supplies from going to the populous manufacturing Districts, which are in real Want. The least Evil that ensues from such Abuses, is enhancing the Price in a great Degree, by increasing the Risk and Charge of the Adventurer.

The old Laws which were made before Commerce was well understood, those, to wit, of the

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the 5th and 6th *Edward VI.* and of the 5th of *Elizabeth*, seem to have a considerable Tendency to increase the Prices to the manufacturing Counties. They lay many Restraints upon the Purchasers of Corn, and subject them to heavy Penalties, which they are liable to incur by very innocent Mistakes. Hence Persons of Character and Substance in many Places now decline all Concern or Adventure in Grain, to the great Detriment and Distress of the Districts distant from the Places of Growth, which were in use to be supplied by their Means, and can hardly indeed be supplied otherwise. It is true, that, in order to abate the Rigour of these Statutes, there was a Law passed in the 15th of *Charles II.* whereby it was enacted, *cap. 7. §. 4.*

“ That when the Prices of Corn or Grain,
 “ *Winchester* Measure, do not exceed the Rates
 “ following at the Markets, Havens, or Places
 “ where the same shall be bought, *v.z.* the
 “ Quarter of Wheat 48s. the Quarter of Rye
 “ 32s. the Quarter of Barley or Malt 28s. the
 “ Qr. of Buck Wheat 28s. the Qr. of Oats 13s.
 “ and 4d. the Qr. of Pease or Beans 32s. that
 “ then it shall be lawful for all and every Per-
 “ son and Persons (not forestalling nor selling
 “ the same in the same Market within three
 “ Months after the buying thereof) to buy in
 “ open Markets, and to lay up and keep in
 “ his or their Granaries or Houses, and to sell
 “ again such Corn or Grain of the Kinds afore-
 “ said, as without Fraud or Covin, shall have
 “ been bought at or under the Prices before
 “ expressed, without incurring any Penalty;
 “ any Law Statute or Usage to the contrary
 “ notwithstanding.”

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This Act, it must be acknowledged, does in some Degree mitigate the Acts of *Edward* and *Elizabeth*. But it is to be observed, that the Prices therein specified bear no just Proportion to each other, especially those of Wheat, Barley, and Oats; the first being rated at 48s. the next at 28s. and the last at 13s. 4d. per Quarter. It is well known, that Wheat and Barley seldom now reach these Prices, but that good Oats exceed the Price at which they are rated almost as often as they fall short of it.

The Proportion may have been very just at the Time this Law was made; but the Alteration in Consumption, Produce, or Quality, has put those Articles on a very different Footing; so that now, when Wheat bears the Price of 48s. the Quarter, and Barley 28s. Oats cannot well be under 20 or 21s.

Mr. *King*, a very ingenious and accurate Calculator, in his Computation of the Land-product of *England* given by Dr. *Davenant*, estimates, that, in a Year of moderate Plenty, the Wheat sells at 28s. the Quarter, Rye at 20s. Barley at 16s. Oats at 12s. and Pease and Beans at 20s. He likewise tells us, that one tenth of Defect in the Harvest, will raise the Price of Corn about three tenths above the common Rate; that two tenths of Defect will advance the Price eight tenths, and three tenths Deficiency will advance it about one and $\frac{6}{10}$. If we suppose his Computation any Thing nearly just, and that the Price of Oats, in ordinary Years of Plenty, may be rated at 12s. a Quarter, surely their advancing above 13s. 4d. must very frequently happen. To lay any Restraint therefore upon the purchasing of Oats when at that Rate, is doing great Injustice to the Farmers

mers and Landholders of the growing Counties, as well as to those which always stand in need of Supply; preventing the first from obtaining so good Prices as they might and ought to obtain, and the others from being supplied so freely, and on such easy Terms, as they would if they were relieved from such Restrictions.

It would be proper therefore, that a Review was made of this Law; that the buying of Oats was relieved from any Restraint, except when they shall exceed 20s. to 21s. the Quarter, which will bring them on a par with other Grain contained in the Act of *Charles II.* It is surely for the Advantage of the whole Nation, that no Part of it should enjoy a Monopoly against another; and that every Part should be cultivated to the greatest Advantage. Some Districts are found most proper for Tillage, others for Grazing; the Produce of both is equally necessary for the Support of the People. The Legislature ought therefore, at all Times, to have in view the rendering the Circulation of the different Products into all Quarters of the Kingdom as easy and free from Restraint as possible: For every Restraint must lessen the Value to the Grower, and enhance the Price to the Consumer; especially when the Article consumed is to be brought from Places that are distant. The immediate revising of this Statute becomes the more necessary, that the Justices of the Peace, in the Counties of *Northumberland* and *Durham*, have refused to give Licences for the buying of Corn in the Terms pointed out by Law, though the Price of Oats is far from being high in those Counties; and it is well known, that Agriculture has,

has, within thirty Years past, so increased in the first of them, that the People cannot even in the very worst Year, consume near the Produce of that County: So if some Method is not taken, to check the increasing riotous Disposition of the People there, and to relieve all Doubts and Difficulties which the Justices may have in regard to the Laws, the Corn there may be coopt up in the Hands of the Farmers without Sale, to the Detriment of the landed Interest, and Distress of the manufacturing Counties, which consume Oats in Bread, and demand immediate Supplies. It may also occasion an unnecessary Exportation of the Nation's Substance, by creating greater Demand from abroad for that Article, than would be requisite, if the Communication between the growing and manufacturing Counties was rendered free, open, and safe. Therefore, if any Measure should be taken for suspending the Duties on Importation of Grain, it is of great Importance, that something effectual should, in the first place, be done towards quelling the present riotous Spirit that too much prevails; and rendering the purchasing and Transportation of Oats, from the growing Counties to the distant Markets, as safe and easy as that of any other Grain.

To those who have Occasion to know the Situation of the Kingdom in regard to that Article, the suspending the Duties upon the Importation of Grain appears every Day more and more requisite, to preserve the Lives of many of his Majesty's Subjects. It is, however, a Measure that ought to be conducted with great Delicacy, lest the landed Interest

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and Agriculture of the Nation should suffer by too large Importation.

The Duties ought therefore to be taken off only for a limited Time, with Power to his Majesty and Council to prolong the Time, as they see Cause. On the other hand, Supplies from abroad are absolutely necessary, and this Nation can only have them from Countries that lie very distant; therefore the Time of Suspension should not be too much limited, lest it frustrate the Intention, by preventing many Persons from adventuring upon such Uncertainty as they must be under, whether they shall be allowed to import the Corn after it shall arrive; the Duties upon every kind of Grain, except Oats, being equal to a Prohibition, unless the Prices should go so high as can happen only from the most dismal Famine.

As the Culture of Land is of the highest Importance to this Nation, every Way of encouraging Agriculture ought to be carefully sought after and cherished; and every visible Obstruction to its Improvement, and whatever tends to lessen the Value of its Product, ought to be removed. It were a Pity an Opportunity of doing any Thing to answer these Ends should be lost; and none can offer more favourable than the present, when the Scarcity of Corn has occasioned a Bill on that Subject to be brought into Parliament.

One great Hindrance, and needless Load, upon carrying the Produce of the Lands of *Britain* to the proper Markets within the Island, is that of exacting Coast-Cockets, and Bonds under high Penalties, for all Corn that may be transported coastwise, from one Place of *Britain*

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to another, without the Bounds of any navigable River. This Method is attended not only with very great Delay and Charge to all Persons concerned in the shipping of Corn, but also with the greatest Trouble and Hindrance to the Navigation; and there have been Instances, wherein, by Neglect of sending the proper Certificates for relieving these Bonds, that some Mariners and others have been ruined by Prosecutions following thereupon, though there is not the least Necessity for any such Securities being granted; and it might be shewn, that, in many Cases, the taking of them may be even hurtful to his Majesty's Revenue.

By the Act 13th and 14th of Charles II. intitled, *An Act for preventing Frauds and Abuses in his Majesty's Customs*, it is enacted, "That
 " if any Goods, Wares, or Merchandises shall
 " be shipped, or put aboard, to be carried forth
 " to the open Sea, from any Port, Creek, or
 " Member, &c. to be landed at any other
 " Place of this Realm, without a Sufferance or
 " Warrant first had and obtained from the Managers of his Majesty's Customs; all such
 " Wares and Merchandise shall be forfeited,
 " and the Master enjoined, before the Ship be
 " removed out of the Port, to take out a
 " Cocket, and become bound for Delivery
 " and Discharge thereof in the Port for which
 " the same shall be entered, or some other
 " Port within the Realm, and to return a Certificate of the Goods being so landed and
 " discharged."

Upon this Law is founded the Practice of taking Bond, &c. But it is evident by the very Title and Nature of the Statute, that it was

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was intended to prevent Frauds and Abuses in his Majesty's Customs, and to prevent Corn shipped coastwise in any Part of the Kingdom, from being fraudulently carried out of it † to Parts beyond the Seas. There were considerable Duties at that Time upon the Exportation thereof, which made these Bonds and Cockets necessary. But by the subsequent wise Laws, encouraging the Exportation of Corn of all sorts, and giving of large Bounties on particular kinds thereof, the Necessity of these Securities was entirely taken away; nay, the Continuation of them rendered altogether absurd; for no Man will clear Corn coastwise which he intends to export, as by this he would lose the Bounty. But after Corn is shipped coastwise, and the Vessel has perhaps proceeded partly on her Voyage, if any sudden Advance at a foreign Market should induce the Owner to dispatch his Cargo abroad, with such Expedition as not to suffer the Delay and Charge of re-landing and shipping, new Entries, &c. to intitle him to the Bounty, he is totally cut off from this Measure, by the Impossibility of getting his Coast-bond relieved by a proper Certificate of the Corn being landed in *Britain*. Such Circumstances have happened, and will frequently happen in the Corn Trade; and it may be prudent for the Merchant to take this Course, especially when the Corn on board is of the kind whereon the smallest Bounties

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† *Being fraudulently carried out of it, [the Kingdom]* Possibly no Law is more rigorously carried, at all Times, into Execution than the above; how then can there be any of those illegal Exports, which were said lately, in Print, to be so notorious, as to need no Proof.

are allowed. In this View of the Thing, the Practice of Bonds, is hurtful to the Revenue, as well as the Merchant. And no doubt many Cargoes in this Situation would have gone abroad, without the Bounty, if the Coast-security had not stood in the Way.

These Securities therefore for Corn carried coastwise, serve no End but to raise high Fees to Custom House Officers, to delay and retard Navigation; especially when the Cargoes may be loaded at Creeks perhaps ten or twenty Miles distant from the Customhouse, they often occasion Vessels to lose their Passage, or come too late to Market, and put the Shipmasters to considerable Charges, in travelling so far to give their Securities, and to Trouble, in finding Bondsmen to join them; besides the great Trouble and Expence that is incurred afterwards, by procuring Certificates, and transmitting them to the different Customhouses for cancelling the Bonds.

It is evident, that all this Charge and Trouble may be considered as a needless Burden on carrying the Produce of the Lands of *Great Britain* to Market.

And it is not to be doubted, that the Custom of taking Bonds and Cockets for home Corn carried coastwise would have been abolished, when that valuable Law was made for giving Bounties on Corn exported, if the above Observations had then occurred to the Legislature.

If it should seem hard to risk hurting so valuable an Object as the Culture of Land in *Britain*, by suspending, even at such a Juncture as this is, the Duties on foreign Corn imported;

imported; why allow that Land to continue loaded with a Tax on its Produce, when carried coastwise, which answers no good Purpose, and which in itself is oppressive and absurd?

The City of *London* got free of this oppressive Custom, by Statute, *1mo Annae, cap. 26.* for the whole River *Thames*, and the Coast between the Promontory called the *North-Foreland* on the South, and the Promontory called the *Nase* on the North.

The Preamble of this Statute declares how grievous a Thing it was at that Time; and that the Officers taking Cockets and Bonds, and exacting Fees for the same, was oppressive and illegal.

Ought not therefore the whole Kingdom to be freed now in the same Manner, by a Clause inserted in the Corn Bill now depending, **DECLARING**, That, for the future, Permits or Transfers only shall be necessary for Grain carried coastwise from one Part of the Kingdom of *Britain* to another, at all Times while that Commodity may be lawfully exported upon Bounty, or without Payment of Duties; and that while Corn is prohibited to be exported, as at present, Bonds and Cockets should be exacted as formerly.

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OBSERVATIONS

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Present High Prices of CORN.

THE Crops in *Britain* and *Ireland* in the Year 1755 were very scanty; and it is certain, that, on the Approach of the last Harvest, which proved late, seldom, in the Memory of Man, has a smaller Stock of old Grain been known in these Islands.

The last Season of 1756, from its Beginning, was extremely unfavourable; Thousands of Acres remained unfown; and the bad Condition in which many more were fown, rendered them incapable of producing a good Crop, altho' favourable Weather had followed. It is certain, that the Weather during the Spring, Summer and Harvest, was generally unfavourable; great Quantities of Grain perished by the Rains and Winds, and most of what remained proved defective, both in Quantity and Substance, by its not duly ripening; and, whatever People prejudiced or ignorant of the general State of these Matters may affirm, it is a melancholy Truth, that the Crops, tho' middling, or even good, for some Kinds of Grain, in particular Counties, have at no Time, during thirty Years past, thro' *Britain* and *Ireland*, proved more scanty upon the whole.

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In this Situation, it is the Duty of every one who wishes well to his Country, to suggest all reasonable Methods by which the present Exorbitancy in the Price of Grain may be corrected, and the destructive Consequences of another backward Season or bad Crop may be prevented. This is in all Respects the more necessary, as the Effects of the last bad Season have been almost equally felt over the greatest Part of the Northern Continent of *Europe*, and as a Scarcity in any one Country must necessarily affect the Prices of Grain in every neighbouring Country.

The Legislature has wisely prohibited all Exportation of Grain; but it may be doubted whether this prudent Precaution will of itself be sufficient for preventing the Calamities which another bad Season may produce.

Experience has shewn, that the Price of no sort of Grain has been reduced by this Measure, though, at this Time of the Year, Corn is generally brought most plentifully by the Farmers to Market. This also affords a strong Proof, that, without the seasonable Prohibition of Export, the Prices would have run higher, and that there is a real Defect in the Quantity of Corn in both Islands.

To prevent the Forestalling and ingrossing of Corn, especially in the Neighbourhood of a great City or Town, where the Millers, Bakers, Maltsters, &c. may themselves purchase from the Growers directly, and take off all the Produce, is most necessary, and strict Attention ought to be given to the Execution of this Measure; but it may be doubted how far the Prices of Grain will be lowered, by renewing the

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the antient Laws against Forefallers and Ingrossers, in their full Latitude; and many are of Opinion, that the late well intended Proclamation has rather been hurtful, as otherwise, in that Respect.

The Counties which are most populous, and where Manufactures chiefly flourish in both Islands, generally grow less Corn, than the other Counties less populous and less Manufacturing. Thus many Countries on the East Coast generally supply others on their own Side, but particularly the West Coast of the Island, even in Times of Plenty.

It is natural, and indeed reasonable, at first View, for People to think, that in Times of Scarcity there should be no Interposition, if possible, between the Grower and the Consumer, or at least the Manufacturer of Grain; but this, in fact, is generally impracticable, unless so far as the Produce in the Neighbourhood of a great City or Town will go.

The Corn therefore necessary for supplying distant Places or Counties has always, and generally must be bought and transported to the Places where the Demand is, by Merchants, or others of Substance and Knowledge in that Branch of Business.

It is obvious the Growers and Manufacturers of Grain, and far less the Consumers, cannot engage in such Purchases and Transportation of Corn to or from distant Places. It is also obvious, that the Contractors for the Sale of such Corn, or the Agents who may be employed for the Purchase of it in the growing Counties, must collect great Quantities at different places, until Opportunities of Shipping can be obtained for

for carrying it off; and this Practice, however necessary for the Supply of distant Places of the Island, comes under the Letter of the old Statutes against forestalling and ingrossing of Corn.

This is more particularly so in the Case of Oats or Oat-Meal, which by the Statute *Ch. 11. Chap. 15.* cannot be bought without Licences, &c. when Oats are above 13s. 4d. per Quarter. Now, as this Price bears no Proportion to that of other Grain mentioned in that Act, the Regulation is hurtful in many Parts of the Island, especially those the most remote from the Capital; and it is inconceivable, how such a Disproportion should have been established between the Price of Oats and other Grain in that Act.

The Consequence of the late Proclamation has been, in many growing or shipping Counties, to make the common People riotous, and to prevent the buying or shipping of Corn even in such Quarters of the Country where it can be spared, and where the Prices are moderate. It being natural for the common People, in such Times, to wish for Corn still cheaper, and to prevent any Thing being shipped or going out of their Bounds, especially if the Letter of the Law gives the least Countenance to such a Procedure.

The Effect of this is, immediately to stop all Purchases, and to distress the distant and populous Places, which depend on their Supplies Coast-ways, even in Time of Plenty. Many such Places are in the Kingdom, which might be enumerated if the Fact were not well known; and they begin already to feel this Inconveniency, it having gone to such a Height, that the Transportation of Corn from one Place

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Place to another at the Distance of a few Miles to and even from the Sea Coast, has been violently interrupted by the Populace.

Dr. *Davenant*, a judicious Writer, has observed fifty Years ago, That a Review of our antient Laws concerning Corn was necessary, for they were in no ways suited to the State of the Kingdom, Increase of People, and other Circumstances of the then Times. The Observation will more forcibly apply to the present Times.

This Author's Thoughts on this Subject are worthy of Perusal at present, as he points out some Methods for preventing Dearth for the future, though not indeed applicable in a scarce Year. He exposes in the clearest Light the fatal Consequences of a Dearth, especially to a Trading Nation; such Consequences indeed as he mentions are not to be dreaded in our Times. Our Agriculture has been so immensely improved by the wise Institutions of Bounties on Corn exported; Commerce is more practised and better understood; and it may also be reasonably supposed, that our Merchants having both more Knowledge and Capital than in former Times, will, by Importations from one Quarter of the World or another, always prevent a Scarcity from becoming intolerable.

But whatever is done by the Legislature for regulating the Inland Commerce of Corn, if no other Measures are taken, it will be only festering the Wound, and in no sort remove the growing Evil; it may indeed make Corn cheaper for a Time in such Counties where it can be spared, and where it is already moderate, but it

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it will doubly distress the distant and manufacturing Places.

Quantity is wanted; and nothing but an additional Quantity brought to Market can effectuate the good End proposed, and enable the Poor to purchase at an easy Rate.

This may be done in two Ways; and both will be necessary at present; first, by prohibiting for a limited Time the Distillery from Wheat in *Britain*, which will add immensely to the Quantity for Bread; and, secondly, by suspending the Duties on all Corn that may be imported, at least for some Months, or while the Prices keep high at Home.

As to the first, without entering into the Arguments for or against Distillery in general, it seems natural and absolutely necessary to prohibit Distillers the Use of Wheat, at least for a Time; if that be true which is asserted with great Appearance of Reason, that half the Wheat that comes to the Market of *London* at present is bought by Distillers; that more of that Grain is consumed by them alone within *England* in a Year than would maintain 500,000 Persons*, or than the whole Quantity of Wheat which is consumed in this Island northward of *York*. Certainly the saving such a Quantity of Corn at this Juncture is very desirable and necessary.

As to any Encroachment on the Revenue thereby, without question, in our present Situation, that is a tender Point; but it is supposed the Wheat so used pays little if any Thing of

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* The Observator was greatly imposed on in this; I am credibly informed they never used near one sixth Part of a Quantity sufficient for that Purpose.

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the Malt Tax, and any Deficiency sustained thereby may be more than compensated by the Increase of Duties on Spirits made from Barley-Malt, by the saving of the whole Bounties on Corn and Malt exported this Year, and by the additional Duties † on foreign and *American* Spirits that may be imported to supply the Want of our own made from Wheat.

As to the second Part, *viz.* The encouraging of Importations from abroad, there is no doubt, if we are not too dilatory in our Resolutions, but we can have Corn from *America*, the Southern Parts of *Europe*, *Barbary*, and possibly some Places nearer Home. But the present Duties on most Grain, especially Wheat, Rye, and Pease, are in effect equal to a Prohibition. The Duty on Oats is indeed low, but it would still be a sufficient Profit to the Importer, and consequently an Encouragement to bring them into the Kingdom,

Why then may not all Duties on Corn imported be suspended for some Months, until the Appearance of next Crop be seen, or until Prices at home become moderate? The Interest of the public Revenue will not be affected by this, it being indeed our Happiness, that, for nineteen years in twenty, these Duties produce little or nothing: And as to any Objections from the Landholders and Farmers, or the Dealers in home Corn, whose Gains may be lessened by this Measure, they ought to be disregarded at a Time when the Condition of the Poor is so distressful.

If these Methods are pursued, large additional Quantities will come to Market. The very Apprehension of a free Import of foreign Grain,

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† The Author means Increase.

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or the Appearance of a few Cargoes thereof in our Ports, will induce all the Hoarders of Home-Grain, whether Farmers or Dealers, to bring it out to Market, and the Prices will of course be lowered for the Poor.

QUANTITY, and that alone can frustrate all Attempts to ingross or forestall. If there be a good Crop, or a proper Quantity of Grain, either at home or from abroad, to be got for the Market, no Art or Scheme can inance the Price of Grain, whatever speculative Persons may fancy to themselves; and if there be a bad Crop, and the Quantities of Grain be scanty, no Art or Regulation of Government will keep the Prices low.

These Methods will, it is hoped, serve our Purpose, if the next Season should prove early and favourable; but if these Methods should fail, or the Season in any degree appear backward, a total Prohibition of Distillery; and perhaps even of Malting, may be necessary. But it would seem that a small Bounty upon all Corn imported for a limited Time, over and above the Suspension of the Duties, might answer the end better, and with less real Loss or Inconvenience to the Revenue or Kingdom.

These two Papers appear to have been printed about a Year, and are here copied exactly, except the Quotation out of *15 Car. II.* in the first, which is copied from the Statute.

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