

***AN HUMBLE
PROPOSAL TO THE
PEOPLE OF
ENGLAND, FOR THE
INCREASE OF THEIR
TRADE, AND
ENCOURAGEMENT
OF THEIR
MANUFACTURES***

By Daniel Defoe

PREFACE
TO THE
PEOPLE OF ENGLAND.

It deserves some notice, that just at, or soon after writing these sheets, we have an old dispute warmly revived among us, upon the question of our trade being declined, or not declined. I have nothing to do with the parties, nor with the reason of their strife upon that subject; I think they are wrong on both sides, and yet it is hardly worth while to set them to rights, their quarrel being quite of another nature, and the good of our trade little or nothing concerned in it.

Nor do they seem to desire to be set right, but rather to want an occasion to keep up a strife which perhaps serves some other of their wicked purposes, better than peace would do; and indeed, those who seek to quarrel, who can reconcile?

I meddle not with the question, I say, whether trade be declined or not; but I may easily show the people of England, that if they please to concern themselves a little for its prosperity, it will prosper; and on the contrary, if they will sink it and discourage it, it is evidently in their power, and it will sink and decline accordingly.

You have here some popular mistakes with respect to our woollen manufacture fairly stated, our national indolence in that very particular reproved, and the consequence laid before you; if you will not make use of the hints here given, the fault is nobody's but your own.

Never had any nation the power of improving their trade, and of advancing their own manufactures, so entirely in their own hands as we have at this time, and have had for many years past, without troubling the legislature about it at all: and though it is of the last importance to the whole nation, and, I may say, to almost every individual in it; nay, and that it is evident you all know it to be so; yet how next to impossible is it to persuade any one person to set a foot forward towards so great and so good a work; and how much labour has been spent in vain to rouse us up to it?

The following sheets are as one alarm more given to the lethargic age, if possible, to open their eyes to their own prosperity; the author sums up his introduction to it in this short positive assertion, which he is ready to make good, viz., That if the trade of England is not in a flourishing and thriving condition, the fault and only occasion of it is all our own, and is wholly in our own power to mend, whenever we please.

SEASONABLE PROPOSAL, &c.

As by my title I profess to be addressing myself to Englishmen, I think I need not tell them that they live by trade; that their commerce has raised them from what they were to what they are, and may, if cultivated and improved, raise them yet further to what they never were; and this in few words is an index of my present work.

It is worth an Englishman's remark, that we were esteemed as a growing thriving nation in trade as far back as in the reigns of the two last Henries; manufactures were planted, navigation increased, the people began to apply, and trade bringing in wealth, they were greatly encouraged; yet in king Henry VIII.'s reign, and even towards the latter end of it, too, we find several acts of parliament passed for regulating the price of provisions, and particularly that beef and pork should not be sold in the market for more than a halfpenny per pound avoirdupoise, and mutton and veal at three farthings.

As the trading men to whom I write may make some estimate of things by calculating one thing by another, so this leads them to other heads of trade to calculate from; as, first, the value of money, which bore some proportion, though I think not a full and just equality to the provisions, as follows:—silver was at 2s. 4d. per ounce, and gold at 2l. 5s. to 2l. 10s. per ounce; something less in the silver, and more in the gold than half of the present value.

As for the rate of lands and houses, they bore a yet greater distance in value from what they produce now; so that indeed it bears no proportion, for we find the rent of lands so raised, and their value so improved, that there are many examples where the lands, valued even in queen Elizabeth's days at 20l. to 25l. per annum, are now worth from 200l. to 300l. per annum, and in some places much more.

It is true, this advance is to be accounted for by the improvement made of the soil, by manuring, cultivating, and enclosing; by stocks of cattle, by labour, and by the arts of husbandry, which are also improved; and so this part is not so immediately within my present design; it is a large subject, and merits to be spoken of at large by itself; because as the improvement of land has been extraordinary

great, and the landed interest is prodigiously increased by it, so it is capable of much more and greater improvement than has been made for above a hundred years past. But this I say is not my present design; it is too great an article to be couched in a few words.

Yet it requires this notice here; viz., that trade has been a principal agent even in the improvement of our land; as it has furnished the money to the husbandman to stock his land, and to employ servants and labourers in the working part; and as it has found him a market for the consumption of the produce of his land, and at an advanced price too, by which he has received a good return to enable him to go on.

The short inference from these premises is this: as by trade the whole kingdom is thus advanced in wealth, and the value of lands, and of the produce of lands, and of labour, is so remarkably increased, why should we not go on with vigour and spirit in trade, and by all proper and possible methods and endeavours, increase and cultivate our commerce; that we may still increase and improve in wealth, in value of lands, in stock, and in all the arts of trade, such as manufactures, navigation, fishery, husbandry, and, in short, study an improvement of trade in all its branches.

No doubt it would be our wisdom to do thus; and nothing of the kind can be more surprising than that it should not be our practice; and thus I am brought down to the case before me.

If it should be objected that the remark is needless, that we are an industrious and laborious people, that we are the best manufacturers in the world, thoroughly versed in all the methods and arts for that purpose; and that our trade is improved to the utmost in all places, and all cases possible; if it should, I say, be thus argued, for I know some have such a taint of our national vanity that they do talk at this rate, —

My answer is short, and direct in the negative; and I do affirm that we are not that industrious, applying, improving people that we pretend to be, and that we ought to be, and might be. That we are the best manufacturers I deny; and yet at the same time I grant that we make the best manufactures in the world; but the reason of that

is greatly owing not to our own skill exceeding others, so much as to our being furnished from the bounty of Heaven with the best materials and best conveniencies for the work, of any nation in the world, of which I shall take notice in its place.

But not to dwell upon our capacities for improving in trade, I might clear all that part without giving up the least article of my complaint; for it is not our capacity to improve that I call in question, but our application to the right methods; nay, I must add, that while I call upon your diligence, and press you to application, I am supposed to grant your capacities; otherwise I was calling upon you to no purpose, and pressing you to do what at the same time I allowed you had no power to perform.

Without complimenting your national vanity, therefore, I am to grant you have not only the means of improvement in your hands, but the capacity of improving also; and on this account I must add, are the more inexcusable if the thing is not in practice.

Indeed it is something wonderful, and not easy to be accounted for, that a whole nation should, as if they were in a lethargic dream, shut their eyes to the apparent advantages of their commerce; and this just now, when their circumstances seem so evidently to stand in need of encouragement, and that they are more than ordinarily at a kind of stop in their usual progression of trade.

It is debated much among men of business, whether trade is at this time in a prosperous and thriving condition, or in a languishing and declining state; or, in a word, whether we are going backwards or forward. I shall not meddle with that debate here, having no occasion to take up the little space allowed me in anything remote from my design. But I will propose it as I really believe it to be: namely, that we are rather in a state of balance between both, a middle between the extremes; I hope we are not much declined, and I fear we are not much advanced. But I must add, that if we do not immediately set about some new methods for altering this depending condition, we shall soon decline; and on the contrary, if we should exert ourselves, we have before us infinite advantages of improving and advancing our commerce, and that to a great degree.

This is stating it to the meanest understanding; there is no mystery at all in the thing; if you will apply, you will rise; if you will remain indolent and inactive, you will sink and starve. Trade in England, at this time, is like a ship at sea, that has sprung a leak in sight of the shore, or within a few days' sail of it; if the crew will ply their pump and work hard, they may not only keep her above water, but will bring her safe into port; whereas if they neglect the pump, or do not exert their strength, the water grows upon them and they are in apparent danger of sinking before they reach the shore.

Or, if you will have a coarser comparison, take the pump room in the rasp-house, or house of correction, at Amsterdam; where the slothful person is put into a good, dry, and wholesome room, with a pump at one side and a spring or water-pipe at the other; if he pleases to work, he may live and keep the water down, but if he sleeps he drowns.

The moral is exactly the same in both cases, and suits with the present circumstances of our trade in England most exactly, only with this difference to the advantage of the latter; namely, that the application which I call upon the people of England to exert themselves in, is not a mere labour of the hand; I do not tax the poor with mere sloth and negligence, idly lying still when they should work, that is not our grievance at present; for though there may be too much of that sort too, among a few of the drunken, loitering part of mankind, and they suffer for it sufficiently in their poverty, yet that, I say, is not the point, idleness is not here a national crime, the English are not naturally a slothful, indolent, or lazy people.

But it is an application proper to the method of business which is wanting among us, and in this we shall find room for reproof on one hand, and direction on the other; and our reader, I dare say, will acknowledge there is reason for both.

It must in the first place be acknowledged, that England has indeed the greatest encouragement for their industry of any nation in Europe; and as therefore their want of improving those advantages and encouragements, lays them more open to our just reproof, than other nation's would be, or can be who want them, so it moves me with the more importunity to press home the argument, which reason and the nature of the thing furnishes, to persuade them.

Reason dictates that no occasion should be let slip by which England above all nations in the world should improve the advantages they have in their hands; not only because they have them, but because their people so universally depend upon them. The manufactures are their bread, the life, the comfort of their poor, and the soul of their trade; nature dictates, that as they are given them to improve, and that by industry and application they are capable of being improved; so they ought to starve if they do not improve them to the utmost.

Let us see in a few words what nature and providence has done for us; nay, what they have done for us exclusive of the rest of the world. The bounty of Heaven has stored us with the principles of commerce, fruitful of a vast variety of things essential to trade, and which call upon us as it were in the voice of nature, bidding us work, and with annexed encouragement to do so from the visible apparent success of industry. Here the voice of the world is plain, like the answer of an oracle; thus, dig and find, plough and reap, fish and take, spin and live; in a word, trade and thrive; and this with such extraordinary circumstances, that it is as if there was a bar upon the neighbouring nations, and it had been spoken from Heaven thus: These are for you only, and not for any other nation; you, my favourites, of England; you, singled out to be great, opulent, powerful, above all your neighbours, and to be made so by your own industry and my bounty.

To explain this, allow me a small digression, to run over the detail of Heaven's bounty, and see what God and nature has done for us beyond what it has done for other nations; nature, as I have said, will dictate to us what Heaven expects from us, for the improving the blessings bestowed, and for making ourselves that rich and powerful people which he has determined us to be.

Our country is furnished, I say, with the principles of commerce in a very extraordinary manner; that is to say, so as no other country in Europe, or perhaps in the world, is supplied with.

I. With the product of the earth. This is of two kinds: 1. That of the inside or bowels of the earth, the same of which, as above, the voice of Heaven to us, is, dig and find, under which article is principally our lead, and tin-coal; I name these only, because of these this island

seems to have an exclusive grant; there being none, or but very small quantities of them, found in any other nation; and it is upon exclusive benefits that I am chiefly speaking. 2. We have besides these, iron, copper, *lapis calaminaris*, vulgarly called callamy, with several other minerals, which may be said to be in common to us and the rest of the world, of which the particulars at large, and the places where they are found, may be fully seen in a late tract, of which I shall have frequently occasion to speak in this work, entitled, A Plan of the Commerce of Great Britain, to which I refer, as indeed to a general index of the trade and produce of this whole island.

II. The product of the surface, which I include in that part, plough and reap; and though this is not indeed an exclusive product, yet I may observe that the extraordinary increase which our lands, under an excellent cultivation, generally yield, as well in corn and cattle, is an uncommon argument for the industry of the husbandmen; and I might enter into a comparison with advantage, against almost any countries in Europe, by comparing the quantity produced on both sides, with the quantity of land which produce those quantities.

You may find some calculations of the produce of our own country in the book above mentioned, viz., The Plan of the Commerce of Great Britain, where the consumption of malt in England is calculated by the value of the duties of excise, and where it appears that there is annually consumed in England, besides what is exported to foreign countries, forty millions of bushels of malt, besides also all the barley, the meal of which is made into bread, which is a very great quantity; most of the northern counties in England feeding very much upon barley bread; and besides all the barley either exported or used at home in the corn unmalted; all which put together, I am assured, amounts to no less than ten millions of bushels more.

The quantity of barley only is so exceeding great, that I am told it bears, in proportion to the land it grows on, an equality to as much land in France, as all the sowed land in the whole kingdom of England; or take it thus, that fifty millions of bushels of barley growing in France, would take up as much ground as all the lands

which are at any time sowed in England with any corn, whether barley, oats, or wheat.

N. B. I do not say all the arable lands of England, because we know there are a very great number of acres of land which every year lie fallow (though in tillage) and unsowed, according to the usage of our husbandry; so they cannot be reckoned to produce any corn at all, otherwise the quantity might be much greater.

This is a testimony of the fertility of our soil; and on the other hand, the fertility is a testimony of the diligence and application of our people, and the success which attends that diligence.

We are told that in some parts of England, especially in the counties of Essex, Hertford, Cambridge, Bedford, Bucks, Oxford, Northampton, Lincoln, and Nottingham, it is very frequent to have the lands produce from seven to ten quarters of barley upon an acre, which is a produce not heard of in the most fruitful of all those we call corn countries abroad, much less in France. On the contrary, if they have a great produce of corn, it is because they have a vast extent of land for it to grow upon, and which land they either have no other use for, or it may be is fit for no other use; whereas our corn grounds are far from being the richest or the best of our lands, the prime of our land being laid up, as the ploughmen call it, to feed upon, that is, to keep dairies of cows, as in Essex, Suffolk, and the fens; or for grazing grounds, for fattening the large mutton and beef, for which England is so particularly famed. These grazing countries are chiefly in Sussex, and in the marshes of Romney, and other parts in Kent; also in the rich vales of Aylesbury, and others in Bucks and Berkshire, the isle of Ely, the bank of Trent, the counties of Lincoln, Leicester and Stafford, Warwick and Chester, as also in the county of Somerset, Lancaster, north riding of Yorkshire, and bank of Tees, in the bishoprick of Durham.

When this product of England is considered, the diligence and success of our husbandry in England will be found to be beyond that of the most industrious people in Europe. But I must not dwell here, my view lies another way; nor do the people of England want so much to be called upon to improve in husbandry, as they do in manufactures and other things; not but that even in this, the lands

not yet cultivated do call aloud upon us too; but I say it is not the present case.

I come in the next article to that yet louder call of the oracle, as above, namely, fish and take. Indeed this is an improvement not fully preserved, or a produce not sufficiently improved; the advantages nature offers here cannot be said to be fully accepted of and embraced.

This is a large field, and much remains to be said and done too in it, for the increase of wealth, and the employment of our people; and though I am not of the opinion which some have carried to an unaccountable length in this case, viz., that we should set up the fishery by companies and societies, which has been often attempted, and has proved abortive and ill-grounded; or that we ought by force, or are able by all our advantages to beat out the Dutch from it; yet we might certainly very much enlarge and increase our own share in it; take greater quantities than we do; cure and pack them better than we do; come sooner to market with them than we do; and consume greater quantities at home than we do; the consequence of which would be that we should breed up and employ more seamen, build and fit out more fishing-vessels and ships for merchandise than we do now, and which we are unaccountably blameable that we do not.

And here I must observe, that the increasing the fishery would even contribute to our vending as well as catching a greater quantity of fish, and to take off the disadvantage which we now lie under with the Dutch, by the consequence of trade in the fishery itself. The case is this: the chief market for white herring, which is the fishery I am speaking of, is the port of Dantzic and Konigsberg, from which ports the whole kingdom of Poland, and great duchy of Lithuania, are supplied with fish by the navigation of the great river of the Vistula, and the smaller rivers of the Prugel and Niemen, &c.

The return brought from thence is in canvass, oak, and spruce, plank and timber, sturgeon, some hemp and flax, pot ashes, &c., but chiefly corn.

Here the Dutch have an infinite advantage of us, which is never to be surmounted or overcome, and for which reason it is impossible

for us ever to beat them out of this trade; viz., the Dutch send yearly a very great number of ships to Dantzic, &c., to fetch corn; some say they send a thousand sail every year; and I believe they do send so many ships, or those ships going so many times, or making so many voyages in the year as amounts to the same number of freights, and so is the same thing.

All these ships going for corn for the Dutch, have their chief supply of corn from that country; it follows, then, that their herrings are carried for nothing, seeing the ships which carry them must go light if they did not carry the fish; whereas, on the other hand, our fish must pay freight in whatever vessel it may go.

When our ships, then, from Scotland, for there the fishery chiefly lies, and from thence the trade must take its rise; I say, when they have carried their fish to the ports above-named, of Dantzic and Konigsberg, how must they come back, and with what shall they be loaded?

The only answer that can be given is, that they must bring back the goods mentioned before, or, in shorter terms, naval stores, though indeed not much of naval stores neither, except timber and plank, for the hemp and tar, which are the main articles, are fetched further; viz., from Riga, Revel, Narva, and Petersburg. But suppose after delivering their fish, some of the ships should go to those ports to seek freight, and load naval stores there, which is the utmost help in the trade that can be expected.

The next question is, whither shall they carry them, and for whose account shall they be laden? To go for Scotland, would not be an answer; for Scotland, having but a few ships, could not take off any quantity proportioned to such a commerce; for if we were to push the Dutch out of the trade, we must be supposed to employ two or three hundred sail of ships at least, to carry herrings to Dantzic, &c.

To say they might take freight at London, and load for England, would be no answer neither; for besides that even England itself would not take off a quantity of those goods equal to the number of ships which would want freight, so if England did, yet those ships would still have one dead freight, for they would be left to go light home at last, to Scotland, otherwise how shall they be at hand to

load next year? And even that one dead freight would abate the profit of the voyage; and so still the Dutch would have the advantage.

Upon the whole, take it how and which way we will, it will for ever be true, that though our fish were every way equal to the Dutch, which yet we cannot affirm, and though it came as soon to market, and carried as good a price there, all which I fear must a little fall short, yet it would still be true that the Dutch would gain and we should lose.

There is yet another addition to the advantage of Holland, viz., in the return of money; that whereas when our fish shall be sold, we shall want to remit back the produce in money; that is to say, so much of it as cannot be brought back in goods. And the difference in the exchange must be against us; but it is in favour of the Dutch; for if they did not send their herrings and other fish to Dantzic, they must remit money to pay for their corn; and even as it is, they are obliged to send other goods, such as whale oil, the produce of their Greenland fishery, English manufactures, and the like; whereas the Scots' merchants, having no market for corn, and not a demand for a sufficient value in naval stores, &c., viz. the product of the country, must bring the overplus by exchange to their loss, the exchange running the other way.

It is true, this is a digression; but it is needful to show how weak those notions are, which prompt us to believe we are able to beat the Dutch out of the fishing trade by increasing our number of busses, and taking a larger quantity of fish.

But this brings me back to the first argument; if you can find a way to enlarge your shipping in the fishery, and send greater quantities of fish to market, and yet sell them to advantage, you would by consequence enlarge your demand for naval stores, and so be able to bring more ships home laden from thence; that is to say, to dispose of more of their freight at home; and indeed nothing else can do it.

N. B. This very difference in the trade is the reason why a greater quantity of English manufactures are not sent from hence to Dantzic, as was formerly done; viz., not that the consumption of those goods is lessened in Poland, or that less woollen manufactures

are demanded at Dantzic or at Konigsberg; but it is that the Dutch carry our manufactures from their own country; this they can do to advantage; besides their costing nothing freight, as above, though they are sold to little or no profit, because they want the value there to pay for their corn, and must otherwise remit money to loss for the payment.

As these things are not touched at before in any discourses on this subject, but we are daily filled with clamours and complaints at the indolence and negligence of our Scots and northern Britons, for not outworking the Dutch in their fishing trade, I think it is not foreign to the purpose to have thus stated the case, and to have shown that it is not indeed a neglect in our management, that the Dutch thrive in the fishing trade, and we sit still, as they call it, and look on, which really is not so in fact, but that the nature of the thing gives the advantage to the Dutch, and throws the trade into their hands, in a manner that no industry or application of ours could or can prevent.

Having thus vindicated our people where they are really not deserving blame, let us look forward from hence and see with the same justice where they are in another case likewise less to blame than is generally imagined; namely, in the white fishing, or the taking of cod-fish in these northern seas, which is also represented as if it was so plentiful of fish that any quantity might be taken and cured, and so the French, the Scots, and the Portuguese, might be supplied from hence much cheaper and more to advantage than by going so long a voyage as to the banks of Newfoundland.

This also is a mistake, and the contrary is evident; that there is a good white fishing upon the coast, as well of the north part of the British coast as on the east side of Scotland, is very true; the Scots, to give them their due, do cure a tolerable quantity of fish, even in or near the frith of Edinburgh; also there is a good fishery for cod on the west side, and among the islands of the Leuze, and the other parts called the western islands of Scotland; but the mistake lies in the quantity, which is not sufficient to supply the demand in those ports mentioned above, nor is it such as makes it by far so easy to load a ship as at Newfoundland, where it is done in the one-fifth

part of the time, and consequently so much cheaper; and the author of this has found this to be so by experience.

Yet it cannot be said with justice that the Scots' fishermen are negligent, and do not improve this fishing to advantage, for that really they do kill and cure as many as can be easily done to make them come within a price, and more cannot be done; that is to say, it would be to no purpose to do it; for it will for ever be true in trade, that what cannot be done to advantage, may be said not to be possible to be done; because gain is the end of commerce, and the merchant cannot do what he cannot get by.

It may be true that in the herring fishery the consumption might be increased at home, and in some places also abroad, and so far that fishery is not so fully pursued; but I do not see that the increase of it can be very considerable, there being already a prodigious quantity cured more than ever in Ireland on every side of that kingdom, and also on the west of England; but if it may be increased, so much the more will be the advantage of the commerce; of which by itself.

But from this I come to the main article of the British trade, I mean our wool, or, as it is generally expressed, the woollen manufacture, and this is what I mean, when I said as above, spin and live.

In this likewise I must take the liberty to say, and insist upon it, that the English people cannot be said to be idle or slothful, or to neglect the advantages which are put into their hands of the greatest manufactures in Europe, if not in the whole world.

On the other hand, the people of England have run up their manufactures to such a prodigy of magnitude, that though it is extended into almost every part of the known world, I mean, the world as it is known in trade; yet even that whole world is scarce equal to its consumption, and is hardly able to take off the quantity; the negligence therefore of the English people is not so much liable to reproof in this part, as some pretend to tell us; the trade of our woollen manufacture being evidently increased within these few years past, far beyond what it ever was before.

I know abundance of our people talk very dismal things of the decay of our woollen manufacture, and that it is declined much they

insist upon it; being prohibited in many places and countries abroad, of their setting up other manufactures of their own in the room of it, of their pretending to mimic and imitate it, and supply themselves with the produce of their own land, and the labour of their own people, and indeed France has for many years gone some length in this method of erecting woollen manufactures in the room of ours, and making their own productions serve instead of our completely finished manufacture: but all these imitations are weak and unperforming, and show abundantly how little reason we have to apprehend their endeavours, or that they will be able to supplant our manufacture there or any where else; for that even in France itself, where the imitation of our manufactures is carried on to the utmost perfection; yet they are obliged to take off great quantities of our finest and best goods; and such is the necessity of their affairs, that they to this day run them in, that is, import them clandestinely at the greatest risk, in spite of the strictest prohibition, and of the severest penalties, death and the galleys excepted; a certain token that their imitation of our manufactures is so far from pleasing and supplying other parts of the world, that they are not sufficient to supply, or good enough to please themselves.

I must confess the imitating our manufactures has been carried further in France than in any other part of the world, and yet we do not see they have been able so to affect the consumption as to have any visible influence upon our trade; or, that we abate the quantity which we usually made, but that if they have checked the export at all, we have still found other channels of trade which have fully carried off our quantity, and shall still do so, though other nations were able to imitate us to, and this is very particularly stated and explained by the author of the book above mentioned, called the Plan of the English Commerce, where the extending our manufactures is handled more at large than I have room for in the narrow compass of this tract, and therefore I again refer my reader thither, as to the fountain head.

But I go on to touch the heads of things. The French do imitate our manufactures in a better manner, and in greater quantity than other nations; and why do we not prevent them? It is a terrible satire upon our vigilance, or upon the method of our custom-house men, that we do not prevent it; seeing the French themselves will not stick to

acknowledge, that without a supply of our wool, which is evident they have now with very small difficulty from Ireland, they could do little in it, and indeed nothing at all to the purpose.

On the other hand, it is not so with France in regard to their silk manufactures, in which although we have not the principles of the work, I mean the silk growing within our dominions, but are obliged to bring it from Italy, yet we have so effectually shut out the French silk manufactures from our market, that in a word we have no occasion at all for them; nay, if you will believe some of our manufacturers, the French buy some of our wrought silks and carry them into France; but whether the particular be so in fact or no, this I can take upon me from good evidence to affirm, that whereas we usually imported in the ordinary course of trade, at least a million to twelve hundred thousand pounds' value a year in wrought silks from France; now we import so little as is not worth naming; and yet it is allowed that we do not wear less silk, or silks of a meaner value, than we usually did before, so that all the difference is clear gain on the English side in the balance of trade.

The contemplation of this very article furnishes a most eminent encouragement to our people, to increase and improve their trade; and especially to gain upon the rest of Europe, in making all the most useful manufactures of other nations their own.

Nor would this increase of our trade be a small article in the balance of business, when we come to calculate the improvement we have made in that particular article, by encroaching upon our neighbours, more than they have been able to make upon us; and this also you will find laid down at large in the account of the improvement of our manufactures in general, calculated in the piece above mentioned.

If then the encroachments of France upon our woollen manufactures are so small, as very little to influence our trade, or lessen the quantity made here, and would be less if due care was taken to keep our wool out of their hands; and that at the same time we have encroached upon their trade in the silk manufactures only, besides others, such as paper, glass, linen, hats, &c., to the value of twelve hundred thousand pounds a year, then France has got little by

prohibiting the English manufactures, and perhaps had much better have let it alone.

However, I must not omit here what is so natural a consequence from these premises, viz., that here lies the first branch of our Humble Proposal to the People of England for Increase of their Commerce, and Improvement of their Manufactures; namely, that they would keep their wool at home.

I know it will be asked immediately how shall it be done? and the answer indeed requires more time and room to debate it, than can be allowed me here. But the general answer must be given; certainly it is practicable to be done, and I am sure it is absolutely necessary. I shall say more to it presently.

But I go on with the discourse of the woollen manufactures in general; nothing is more certain, than that it is the greatest and most extensive branch of our whole trade, and, as the piece above mentioned says positively, is really the greatest manufacture in the world.

Nor can the stop of its vent, in this or that part of the world, greatly affect it; if foreign trade abates its demand in one place, it increases it in another; and it certainly goes on increasing prodigiously every year, in direct confutation of the phlegmatic assertions of those, who, with as much malice as ignorance, endeavour to run it down, and depreciate its worth as well as credit, by their ill-grounded calculations.

We might call for evidence in this cause the vast increase of our exportation in the woollen manufactures only to Portugal; which, for above twenty-five years past, has risen from a very moderate trade to such a magnitude, that we now export more woollen goods in particular yearly to Portugal, than both Spain and Portugal took off before, notwithstanding Spain has been represented as so extraordinary a branch of trade. The occasion of this increase is fully explained, by the said Plan of the English Commerce, to be owing to the increase of the Portuguese colonies in the Brazils, and in the kingdoms of Congo and Angola on the west side of Africa; and of Melinda and the coast of Zanguebar on the east side; in all which the Portuguese have so civilized the natives and black inhabitants of the

country, as to bring them, where they went even stark naked before, to clothe decently and modestly now, and to delight to do so, in such a degree as they will hardly ever be brought to go unclothed again; and all these nations are clothed more or less with our English woollen manufactures, and the same in proportion in their East India factories.

The like growth and increase of our own colonies, is another article to confirm this argument, viz., that the consumption of our manufactures is increased: it is evident that the number of our people, inhabitants of those colonies, visibly increases every day; so must by a natural consequence the consumption of the cloths they wear.

And this increase is so great, and is so demonstrably growing every day greater, that it is more than equal to all the decrease occasioned by the check or prohibitions put upon our manufactures, whether by the imitation of the French or any other European nation.

I might dwell upon this article, and extend the observation to the East Indies, where a remarkable difference is evident between the present and the past times; for whereas a few years past the quantity of European goods, whether of English or other manufactures, was very small, and indeed not worth naming; on the contrary, now the number of European inhabitants in the several factories of the English, Dutch, and Portuguese, is so much increased, and the people who are subject to them also, and who they bring in daily to clothe after the European fashion, especially at Batavia, at Fort St. George, at Surat, Goa, and other principal factories, that the demand for our manufactures is grown very considerable, and daily increasing. This also the said Plan of the Commerce insists much on, and explains in a more particular manner.

But to proceed: not only our English colonies and factories are increased, as also the Portuguese in the Brazils, and in the south part of Africa; not only the factories of the English and Dutch in the East Indies are increased, and the number of Europeans there being increased call for a greater quantity of European goods than ever; but even the Spaniards, and their colonies in the West Indies, I mean in New Spain, and other dominions of the Spaniards in America, are increased in people, and that not so much the Spaniards themselves,

though they too are more numerous than ever, but the civilized free Indians, as they are called, are exceedingly multiplied.

These are Indians in blood, but being native subjects of Spain, know no other nation, nor do they speak any other language than Spanish, being born and educated among them. They are tradesmen, handicrafts, and bred to all kinds of business, and even merchants too, as the Spaniards are, and some of them exceeding rich; of these they tell us there are thirty thousand families in the city of Lima only, and doubtless the numbers of these increase daily.

As all these go clothed like Spaniards, as well themselves as their wives, children, and servants, of which they have likewise a great many, so it necessarily follows that they greatly increase the consumption of European goods, and that the demand of English manufactures in particular increases in proportion, these manufactures being more than two-thirds of the ordinary habit or dress of those people, as it is also of the furniture of their houses; all which they take from their first patrons, the Spaniards.

It will seem a very natural inquiry here, how I can pretend to charge the English nation with indolence or negligence in their labouring or working their woollen manufactures; when it is apparent they work up all the wool which their whole nation produces, that the whole growth and produce of their sheep is wrought up by them, and that they buy a prodigious quantity from Ireland and Scotland, and work up all that too, and that with this they make such an infinite quantity of goods, that they, as it were, glut and gorge the whole world with their manufactures.

My answer is positive and direct, viz., that notwithstanding all this, they are chargeable with an unaccountable, unjustifiable, and, I had almost said, a most scandalous indolence and neglect, and that in respect to this woollen manufacture in particular; a neglect so gross, that by it they suffer a manifest injury in trade. This neglect consists of three heads:

1. They do not work up all the wool which they might come at, and which they ought to work up, and about which they have still spare hands enough to set to work.

2. They with difficulty sell off or consume the quantity of goods they make; whereas they might otherwise vend a much greater quantity, both abroad and at home.

3. They do not sufficiently apply themselves to the improving and enlarging their colonies abroad, which, as they are already increased, and have increased the consumption of the manufactures, so they are capable of being much further improved, and would thereby still further improve and increase the manufactures. By so much as they do not work up the wool, by so much they neglect the advantage put into their hands; for the wool of Great Britain and Ireland is certainly a singular and exclusive gift from Heaven, for the advantage of this great and opulent nation. If Heaven has given the wool, and we do not improve the gift by manufacturing it all up, so far we are to be reproached with indolence and neglect; and no wonder if the wool goes from Ireland to France by whole shiploads at a time; for what must the poor Irish do with their wool? If they manufacture it we will not let them trade with those manufactures, or export them beyond sea. Our reasons for that prohibition are indeed very good, though too long to debate in this place: but no reason can be alleged that can in any sense of the thing be justifiable, why we should not either give leave to export the manufactures, or take the wool.

But to speak of the reason to ourselves, for the other is a reason to them (I mean the Irish). The reason to ourselves is this: we ought to take the wool ourselves, that the French might not have it to erect and imitate our own manufactures in France, and so supplant our trade.

Certainly, if we could take the whole quantity of the Irish wool off their hands, we might with ease prevent it being carried to France; for much of it goes that way, merely because they cannot get money for it at home.

This I charge therefore as a neglect, and an evident proof of indolence; namely, that we do not take effectual care to secure all the wool in Ireland; give the Irish money for it at a reasonable market price, and then cause it to be brought to England as to the general market.

I know it will be objected, that England does already take off as much as they can, and as much as they want; and to bring over more than they can use, will sink the market, and be an injury to ourselves; but I am prepared to answer this directly and effectually, and you shall have a full reply to it immediately.

But, in the mean time, this is a proof of the first proposition; namely, that we do not work up all our own wool, for the Irish wool is, and ought to be, esteemed as our own, in the present debate about trade; for that it is carried away from our own dominions, and is made use of by those that rival our manufactures to the ruin of our own trade.

That the Irish are prohibited exporting their wool, is true; but it seems a little severe to prohibit them exporting their wool, and their manufactures too, and then not to buy the wool of them neither.

It is alleged by some, that we do take off all the wool they bring us, and that we could and would take it all, if they would bring it all. To this I answer; if the Irish people do not bring it all to us, it is either that it is too far for the poor people who own the wool to bring it to the south and east coast of Ireland, there being no markets in the west and north-west parts of that island, where they could sell it; and the farmers and sheep-breeders are no merchants, nor have they carriage for so long a journey; but either the public ought to appoint proper places whether it shall be carried, and where they would receive money for it at a certain rate; or erect markets where those who deal in wool might come to buy, and where those who have it to sell would find buyers.

No doubt but the want of buyers is the reason why so much of the Irish wool is carried over to France; besides, if markets were appointed where the poor farmers could always find buyers at one price or another, there would be then no pretence for them to carry it away in the dark, and by stealth, to the sea side, as is now the case; and the justice of prohibitions and seizures would be more easily to be defended; indeed there would be no excuse for the running it off, nor would there want any excuse for seizing it, if they attempted to run it off.

But I am called upon to answer the objection mentioned above; namely, that the manufactures in England do indeed already take

off a very great quantity of the Irish wool, as much as they have occasion for; nay, they condescend so far to the Irish, as to allow them to manufacture a great deal of that wool which they take off; that is to say, to spin it into yarn, of which yarn so great a quantity is brought into England yearly, as they assure us amounts to sixty thousand packs of wool; as may be seen by a fair calculation in the book above mentioned, called the Plan; in a word, that the English are not in a condition to take off any more. Now this is that which leads me directly to the question in hand; whether the English are able to take off any more of the Irish wool and yarn, or no. I do not affirm, that, as the trade in England is now carried on, they are able, perhaps they are not; but I insist, that if we were thoroughly resolved in England to take such wise measures as we ought to take, and as we are well able to do, for the improvement and increase of our manufactures, we might and should be able to take off, and work up the whole growth of the wool of Ireland; and this I shall presently demonstrate, as I think, past doubt.

But before I come to the scheme for the performance of this, give me leave to lay down some particulars of the advantage this would be to our country, and to our commerce, supposing the thing could be brought to pass; and then I shall show how easily it might be brought to pass.

1. By taking off this great quantity of wool and yarn, supposing one half of the quantity to be spun, many thousands of the poor people of Ireland who are now in a starving condition for want of employment, would be set immediately to work, and be put in a condition to get their bread; so that it would be a present advantage to the Irish themselves, and that far greater than it can be now, their wool which goes away to France being all carried off unwrought.

2. Due care being then taken to prevent any exportation of wool to France, as, I take it for granted, might be done with much more ease when the Irish had encouragement to sell their wool at home, we should soon find a difference in the expense of wool, by the French being disabled from imitating our manufactures abroad, and the consumption of our own would naturally increase in proportion. First, they would not be able to thrust their manufactures into foreign markets as they now do, by which the

sale of our manufactures must necessarily be abated; and, secondly, they would want supplies at home, and consequently our manufactures would be more called for, even in France itself, and that in spite of penalties and prohibitions.

Thus by our taking off the Irish wool, we should in time prevent its exportation to France; and by preventing its going to France, we should disable the French, and increase the consumption of our own manufactures in all the ports whither they now send them, and even in France itself.

I have met with some people who have made calculations of the quantity of wool which is sent annually from Ireland to France, and they have done it by calculating, first how many packs of wool the whole kingdom of Ireland may produce; and this they do again from the number of sheep which they say are fed in Ireland in the whole. How right this calculation may be I will not determine.

First, they tell us, there are fed in Ireland thirty millions of sheep, and as all these sheep are supposed be sheared once every year, they must produce exactly thirty millions of fleeces, allowing the fell wool in proportion to the number of sheep killed.

It is observable, by a very critical account of the wool produced annually in Romney marsh, in the county of Kent, and published in the said Plan of the English Commerce, that the fleeces of wool of those large sheep, generally weigh above four pounds and a half each. It is computed thus; first he tells us that Romney marsh contains 47,110 acres of land, that they feed 141,330 sheep, whose wool being shorn, makes up 2,523 packs of wool, the sum of which is, that every acre feeds three sheep, every sheep yields one fleece, and 56 fleeces make one pack of wool, all which comes out to 2,523 packs of wool, twenty-three fleeces over, every pack weighing two hundred and forty pounds of wool. Vide Plan, &c. p. 259.

I need not observe here, that the sheep in Ireland are not near so large as the sheep in Romney marsh, these last being generally the largest breed of sheep in England, except a few on the bank of the river Tees in the bishoprick of Durham. Now if these large sheep yield fleeces of four pounds and a half of wool, we may be supposed to allow the Irish sheep, take them one with another, to yield three

pounds of wool to a fleece, or to a sheep, out of which must be deducted the fell wool, most of which is of a shorter growth, and therefore cannot be reckoned so much by at least a pound to a sheep. Begin then to account for the wool, and we may make some calculation from thence of the number of sheep.

1. If of the Romney marsh fleeces, weighing four pounds and a half each, fifty-six fleeces make one pack of wool; then seventy fleeces Irish wool, weighing three pounds each fleece, make a pack.

2. If we import from Ireland one hundred thousand packs of wool, as well in the fleece as in the yarn, then we import the wool of seven millions of sheep fed in Ireland every year.

Come we next to the gross quantity of wool; as the Irish make all their own manufactures, that is to say, all the woollen manufactures, needful for their own use, such as for wearing apparel, house furniture, &c., we cannot suppose but that they use much more than the quantity exported to England, besides that, it is too well known, that notwithstanding the prohibition of exportation, they do daily ship off great quantities of woollen goods, not only to the West Indies, but also to France, to Spain, and Italy; and we have had frequent complaints of our merchants from Lisbon and Oporto, of the great quantity of Irish woollen manufactures that are brought thither, as well broadcloth as serges, druggets, duroys, frieze, long-ells, and all the other sorts of goods which are usually exported from England; add these clandestine exportations to the necessary clothing, furniture, and equipages, of that whole nation, in which are reckoned two millions and a half of people, and we cannot suppose they make use of less than two hundred thousand packs of wool yearly among themselves, which is the wool of fourteen millions of sheep more.

We must, then, allow all the rest of the wool to be run or smuggled, call it what you please, to France, which must be at least a hundred to a hundred and twenty thousand packs more: for it seems the Irish tell us that they feed thirty millions of sheep in the whole kingdom of Ireland.

If, then, they run over to France a hundred thousand packs of wool yearly, which I take to be the least, all this amounts to twenty-eight

millions of fleeces together; the other two millions of fleeces may justly be deducted for the difference between the quantity of wool taken from the sheep that are killed, which we call fell wool, and the fleece wool shorn.

Upon the foot of this calculation, there are a hundred thousand packs of wool produced in Ireland every year, which we ought to take off, and which, for want of our taking it off, is carried away to France, where it is wholly employed to mimick our manufactures and abuse our trade; lessening thereby the demand of our own goods abroad, and even in France itself. This, therefore, is a just reproach to our nation, and they are certainly guilty of a great neglect in not taking off that wool, and more effectually preventing it being carried away to France.

It must be confessed, that unless we do find some way to take off this wool from the Irish, we cannot so reasonably blame them for selling it to the French, or to anybody else that will buy, for what else can they do with it, seeing you shut up all their ports against the manufacturers; at least you shut them up as far as you are able; and if you will neither let them manufacture it, for not letting them transport the manufacture when made is in effect forbidding to make them; I say, if you will neither let them manufacture their wool nor take it off their hands, what must they do with it?

But I come next to the grand objection; namely, that we cannot take it off, that we do take off as much as we can use, and a very great quantity it is too; that we are not able to take more, that is to say, we know not what to do with it if we take it; that we cannot manufacture it, or if we do, we cannot sell the goods; and so, according to the known rule in trade, that what cannot be done with profit or without loss, we may say of it that it cannot be done; so in the sense of trade, we cannot take their wool off, and if they must run it over to France, they must, we cannot help it.

This, I say, is a very great mistake; and I do affirm, that as we ought to take off the whole quantity of the Irish wool, so we may and are able to do it. That our manufacture is capable of being so increased, and the consumption of it increased also, as well at home as abroad; that it would in the ordinary course of trade call for all the wool of Ireland, if it were much more than it is, and employ it profitably;

besides employing many thousands of poor people more than are now employed, and who indeed want employment.

Upon this foundation, and to bring this to be true, as I shall presently make appear, I must add, that a just reproach lies upon us for indolence, and an unaccountable neglect of our national interests, in not sufficiently exerting ourselves to improve our trade and increase our manufactures; which is the title, as it is the true design, of this whole work.

The affirming, as above, that we are able to increase our manufacture, and by that increase to take off more wool, may, perhaps, be thought an arrogance too great to be justified, and would be a begging the question in an egregious manner, if I were not in a condition to prove what I say; I shall therefore apply myself directly to evidence, and to put it out of doubt: —

By increasing our manufacture, I am content to be understood to mean the increasing the consumption, otherwise, to increase quantity only, would be to ruin the manufacturers, not improve the trade. This increasing the consumption is to be considered under two generals.

1. The consumption at home.
2. The exportation, or consumption abroad.

I begin with the last; namely, the consumption abroad. This is too wide a field to enter upon in particular here, I refer it to be treated at large by itself; but as far as it serves to prove what I have affirmed above, namely, that the consumption of our manufactures may be improved abroad, so far it is needful to speak of it here; I shall confine it to the English colonies and factories abroad.

It is evident, that by the increase of our colonies, the consumption of our manufactures has been exceedingly increased; not only experience proves it, but the nature of the thing makes it impossible to be otherwise; the island of St. Christopher, is a demonstration beyond all argument; that island is increased in its product and people, by the French giving it up to us at the treaty of Utrecht. Its product of sugar is almost equal to that of Barbadoes, and will in a very few years exceed it; the exports from hence to that island are

increased in proportion; why then do we not increase our possessions, plant new colonies, and better people our old ones? Both might be done to infinite advantage, as might be made out, had we room for it, past contradiction.

We talk of, and expect a war with Spain; were the advantages which new settlements in the abandoned countries of America, as well the island as the continent considered, we should all wish for such a war, that the English might by their superiority at sea, get and maintain a firm footing, as well on the continent as the islands of America: there the Spaniards, like the fable of the dog in the manger, neither improve it themselves, nor will admit others to improve; I mean in all the south continent of America, from Buenos Ayres to port St. Julien, a country fruitful, a climate healthful, able to maintain plentifully any numbers, even to millions of people, with an uninterrupted communication within the land, as far as to the golden mountain of the Andes or Cordilleras, where the Chilians, unsubdued by any European power, a docible, civilized people, but abhorring the Spaniards, would not fail to establish a commerce infinitely profitable, exchanging gold for all your English manufactures, to an inexpressible advantage.

Among the islands, why should not we, as well as the French, plant upon the fruitful countries of Cuba and Hispaniola, as rich and capable of raising sugars, cocoa, ginger, pimento, indigo, cotton, and all the other productions usual in that latitude, as either the Barbadoes or Jamaica.

Our factories, for they cannot yet be called colonies, on the coast of Africa, offer us the like advantages. Why are they not turned into populous and powerful colonies, as they might be? Why not encouraged from hence? And why is not their trade espoused and protected as our other colonies and factories? but left to be ravaged by the naked and contemptible negroes; plundered, and their trade ravished by the more unjust and more merciless interlopers, who, instead of thieves, for they are no better, would be called separate traders only, though they break in by violence and fraud upon the property of an established company, and rob them of their commerce, even under the protection of their own forts and castles, which these paid nothing towards the cost of.

Why does not England enlarge and encourage the commerce of the coast of Guinea? plant and fortify, and establish such possessions there as other nations, the Portuguese for example, in the opposite coast on the same latitude? Is it not all owing to the most unaccountable indolence and neglect? What hinders but that we might ere now have had strong towns and an inhabited district round them, and a hundred thousand Christians dwelling at large in that country, as the Portuguese have now at Melinda, in the same latitude, on the eastern coast?

And what hinders, but that same indolence and neglect, that they have not there growing at this time, the coffee of Mocha, as the Dutch have at Batavia; the tea of China, the cocoa of the Caraccas, the spices of the Moluccas, and all the other productions of the remotest Indies, which grow now in the same latitude, and which cost us so much treasure yearly to purchase, and which, as has been tried, would prosper here as well as in the countries from which we fetch them?

What a consumption of English manufacture would follow such a plantation? and what an increase of trade would necessarily attend an increase of people there?

I have not room to enlarge here upon these heads; they are fully stated in the said Plan of English Commerce, and in several other tracts of trade lately published by the same author, and to that I refer.

I come next to the consumption at home, and here indeed the proof lies heavy upon ourselves; nothing but an unaccountable supreme negligence of our own apparent advantages can be the cause of the whole grievance; such a negligence, as I think, no nation but the English are, or can be guilty of; I mean no nation that has the like advantage of a manufacture, and that has a hundred thousand packs of wool every year unwrought up, and a million of people unemployed.

N. B. All our manufactures, whether of wool, silk, or thread, and all other wares, hard or soft, though we have a very great variety, yet do not employ all our people, by a great many; nay, we have some whole counties into which the woollen, or silk, or linen

manufacture, may be said never to have set their feet, I mean as to the working part; or so little as not to be worth naming; such in particular as Cambridge, Huntingdon, Hertford, Bedford; the first three are of late indeed come into the spinning part a little, but it is but very little; the like may be said of the counties of Cheshire, Stafford, Derby, and Lincoln, in all which very little, if any, manufactures are carried on; neither are the counties of Kent, Sussex, Surry, or Hampshire, employed in any of the woollen manufactures worth mentioning; the last indeed on the side about Alton and Alresford, may be said to do a little; and the first just at Canterbury and Cranbrook. But what is all they do compared to the extent of four counties so populous that it is thought there are near a million of people in them?

Seeing then, I say, there are yet so many people want employ, and so much wool unwrought up, and which for want of being thus wrought up, is carried away by a clandestine, smuggling, pernicious trade, to employ our enemies in trade, the French, and to endanger our manufactures at foreign markets, how great is our negligence, and how much to the reproach of our country is it, that we do not improve this trade, and increase the consumption of the manufactures as we ought to do? I mean the consumption at home, for of the foreign consumption I have spoken already.

It seems to follow here as a natural inquiry, after what has been said, that we should ask, How is this to be done, and by what method can the people of England increase the home consumption of their woollen manufactures?

I cannot give a more direct answer to this question, or introduce what follows in a better manner, than in the very words of the author of the book so often mentioned above, as follows, speaking of this very thing, thus: —

“The next branch of complaint,” says this author, “is, that the consumption of our woollen manufacture is lessened at home.

“This, indeed,” continues he, “though least regarded, has the most truth and reason in it, and merits to be more particularly inquired into; but supposing the fact to be true, let me ask the complainer this question, viz., why do we not mend it? and that without laws,

without teasing the parliament and our sovereign, for what they find difficult enough to effect even by law? The remedy is our own, and in our own power. I say, why do not the people of Great Britain, by general custom and by universal consent, increase the consumption of their own manufacture by rejecting the trifles and toys of foreigners?

“Why do we not appear dressed in the growth of our own country, and made fine by the labour of our own hands?” Vide Plan of the English Commerce, p. 252.

And again, p. 254; “We must turn the complaints of the people upon themselves, and entreat them to encourage the manufactures of England by a more general use and wearing of them. This alone would increase the consumption, as that alone would increase the manufacture itself.”

I cannot put this into a plainer or better way of arguing, or in words more intelligible to every capacity.

Did ever any nation but ours complain of the declining of their trade and at the same time discourage it among themselves? Complain that foreigners prohibit our manufactures, and at the same time prohibit it themselves? for refusing to wear it is the worst and severest way of prohibiting it.

We do indeed put a prohibition upon our trade when we stop up the stream, and dam up the channel of its consumption, by putting a slight upon the wearing it, and, as it were, voting it out of fashion; for if you once vote your goods out of wear, you vote them out of the market, and you had as good vote them contraband.

With what an impetuous gust of the fancy did we run into the product of the East Indies for some years ago? How did we patiently look on and see the looms empty, the workmen fled, the wives and children starve and beg, the parishes loaded, and the poor's rates rise to a surprising height, while the ladies flourished in fine Massulapatam, chints, Indian damasks, China atlases, and an innumerable number of rich silks, the product of the coast of Malabar, Coromandel, and the Bay of Bengal, and the poorer sort with calicoes? And with what infinite difficulty was a remedy

obtained, and with what regret did the ladies part with that foreign pageantry, and stoop to wear the richest silks of their own manufacture, though these were the life of their country's prosperity, and those the ruin of it?

When this was the case, how fared our trade? The state of it was thus, in a few words: —

The poor, as above, wanted bread; the wool lay on hand, sunk in price, and wanted a market; the manufacturers wanted orders, and when they made goods, knew not where to sell them; all was melancholy and dismal on that side; nothing but the East India trade could be said to thrive; their ships went out full of money and came home full of poison; for it was all poison to our trade. The immense sums of ready money that went abroad to India impoverished our trade, and indeed bid fair to starve it, and, in a word, to beggar the nation.

At home we were so far from working up the whole quantity or growth of our wool, that three or four years' growth lay on hand in the poor tenants' houses, for want of which they could not pay their rent.

The wool from Scotland, which comes all to us now, went another way, viz., to France, for the Union was not then made, and yet we had too much at home. Nor was the quantity brought from Ireland half so much as it is now.

Was all this difference from our own wearing, or not wearing the produce of our own manufacture? How unaccountably stupid then are we to run still retrograde to the public good of our country, and ruin our own commerce, by rejecting our own manufacture, setting our people to furnish other nations with cloths, and recommending the manufacture to other countries, and rejecting them ourselves?

If the difference was small, and the clothing of our own people was a thing of small moment, that it made no impression on the commerce, or the manufacture in general, it might be said to be too little to take notice of.

If our consumption at home is thus considerable, and the clothing of our own people does consume the wool of many millions of sheep; if the silk trade employs many thousands of families; if there is an absolute necessity of working up if possible all the growth of our wool, as well of Ireland as of England, or that else it would be run over to France, to the encouragement of rival manufactures, and the ruin of our own; in a word, if our own people, falling into a general use of our own manufacture, would effectually do this, and their continuing to neglect it would effectually throw our manufacture into convulsions, and stagnate the whole trade of the kingdom; if our wearing foreign silk manufactures did annually carry out 1,200,000*l.* sterling per annum for silks, to France and Italy, and above 600,000*l.* per annum for the like to India, all in spices, to the impoverishing our trade, by emptying us of all our ready money, as well as starving our poor for want of employment.

Again, if these grievances were very much abated, and indeed almost remedied by the several acts of parliament, first to prohibit East India silks, then to lay high duties, equal to prohibition, upon French silks; and, in the last place, an act to prohibit the use and wearing of printed calicoes; I say, if these acts have gone so far in the retrieving the dying condition of our woollen manufacture, and encouraging the silk manufacture; that in the first, we have wrought up all the English growth of wool, and that of Scotland too, which was never done before; and in the last have improved so remarkably in the silk manufacture, that all that vast sum of 1,800,000*l.* per annum, expended before in French and Indian silks, is now turned into the pockets of our own poor, and kept all at home, and the silks become a mere English manufacture as was before a foreign.

If all this is true, as it is most certainly, what witchcraft must it be that has seized upon the fancy of this nation? What spirit of blindness and infatuation must have possessed us? that we are in all haste running back into the old, stupid, and dull unthinking state, and growing fond of anything, nay of everything that is injurious to our own commerce, and be it as ruinous as it will to our own poor, and to our own manufactures; nay, though we see our trade sick and languishing, and our poor starving before our eyes; and know that we ourselves are the only cause of it, are yet so obstinately and unalterable averse to our own manufacture, and fond of novelties

and trifles, that we will not wear our own goods, but will at any hazard make use of things foreign to us, the labour and advantage of strangers, pagans, negroes, or any kind of people, rather than our own.

Unhappy temper, unknown in any nation but ours! The wiser pagans and Mahometans, natives of India, Persia, China, Japan, Siam, Pegu, act otherwise; wherever we find any people in these parts, we find them clothed with their own manufacture, whether of silk, cotton, herba, or of whatever other materials they were made; nor to this day have our nicest or finest manufactures, though perfectly new to them, (and novelties we see take with us to a frenzy and distraction) touched their fancies, or so much as tempted them to wear them; all our endeavours to persuade them have been in vain; but with us, any new fancy, any far-fetched novelty, however antick, however extravagant in price, nay the dearer the more prevailing, presently touches our wandering fancy, and makes us cast off our finest and most agreeable produce, the fruit of our own industry, and the labour of our own poor, making a mode of the foreign gewgaw, let it be as wild and barbarous as it will.

But I meet with an objection in my way here, which is insisted upon with the utmost warmth; namely:—

Objection: you seem to acknowledge that the prohibition of India silks and the duties upon French silks, have effectually answered the end as to silks; and that the late act against the use and wearing of printed or painted calicoes has likewise had its effect on the woollen manufacture. There is nothing now left to support your complaint but the printed linen; which, though it is become a general wear, yet is our own product and growth, and the labour of our own poor; for the Scots and Irish, by whom the linen is manufactured, are our own subjects, and ought as much to be in our concern as any of the rest, and that linen is as much our own manufacture as the silk and the wool.

Nothing could, in my opinion, be more surprising of its kind, than to hear with what warmth this very argument was urged to the parliament, and to the public, by not the Scots and Irish only, but even by some of our own people, possessed and persuaded by the other, at the time the act against the printed calicoes was depending

before the parliament; as if an upstart, and in itself trifling manufacture, however increased by the corruption of our people's humour and fancy, could be an equivalent to the grand manufacture of wool in England, which is the fund of our whole commerce, and has been the spring and fountain of our wealth and prosperity for above three hundred years; a manufacture which employs millions of our people, which has raised the wealth of the whole nation from what it then was to what it now is; a manufacture that has made us the greatest trading nation in the world, and upon which all our wealth and commerce still depends.

I insist upon it that no novelty is to be encouraged among us to the prejudice of this chief and main support of our country, let it be of what kind it will; nor is it at all to the purpose to say such or such a novelty is made at home, and is the work of our own people; it is to say nothing at all, for we ought no more to set up particular manufactures to the prejudice of the woollen trade in general, which is the grand product of the whole nation, and on which our whole prosperity depends, than we would spread an universal infection among us, on pretence that the vegetable or plant from whence the destructive effluvia proceeded, was the growth of our own land; or than we should publish the Alcoran and the most heretical, blasphemous, or immodest books, to taint the morals and principles of the people, on pretence that the paper and print were our own manufactures.

I am for encouraging all manufactures that can be invented and set up among us, and that may tend to the employment of the poor and improvement of our produce; such things having a national tendency to raising the rent of our lands, assisting the consumption of our growth, and, in a word, increasing trade in general; I say I am for encouraging new manufactures of all sorts, with this one exception only, namely, that they do not interfere with, and tend to the prejudice of the woollen manufacture, which is the main and essential manufacture of England.

But the woollen manufacture is the life and blood of the whole nation, the soul of our trade, the top of all manufactures, and nothing can be erected that either rivals it or any way lessens it or

interferes with it, without wounding us in the more noble and vital part, and, in effect, endangering the whole.

To set up a manufacture of painted linen, which, touching the particular pride and gay humour of the ordinary sort of people, intercepts the woollen manufacture, which they would otherwise be clothed with, is so far wounding and supplanting the woollen manufacture for a paltry trifle, and though it is indeed in itself but a trifle, yet as the poorer sort of people, the servants, and the wives and children of the farmers and country people, and of the labouring poor, who wear this new fangle, are a vast multitude, the wound strikes deeper into the quantity than most people imagine, makes a large abatement of the consumption of wool, lessening the labour of the poor manufacturers very considerably; and on this account, I say, it ought not to be encouraged, though it be our own manufacture.

Do we not, from this very principle, prohibit the planting tobacco in England, though our own land would produce it? Do we not know there are coals in Blackheath, Muzzle-hill, and other places, but that we must not work them that we may not hurt the navigation? The reason is exactly the same here.

This consideration is so pungent in itself, and so naturally touches every Englishman that has the good of his country at heart, that one would think there should be no occasion for an act of parliament to oblige them to it; but they should be moved by a mere concern of mind, and generous endeavour for the public prosperity, not to fall in with or encourage any new project, any new custom or fashion, without first inquiring particularly whether it would not be injurious to the prosperity of the main and grand article of the English Commerce, the woollen manufacture.

Were this public spirit among us, we need fear no upstart manufacture breaking in upon us, whether printed linen or anything else; for no people of sense, having the good of their country at heart, would touch it, much less make it a general fashion. But, as the Plan of English Commerce observes, our people, the ladies especially, have such a passion for the fashion, that they have been the greatest enemies to our woollen manufacture; and I must add that this passion for the fashion of printed linens at this

time is a greater blow to the woollen manufacture of England than all the prohibitions in Germany and Italy, of which we may have formed such frightful ideas in our minds; or even than all the imitation of our manufactures abroad, whether in France, or any other part of Europe.

And yet, to conclude all,

How easy, how very easy is it for us to prevent it; which, by the way, deserves a whole book by itself.

FINIS.

Freeeditorial 