

CANDID OBSERVATIONS

O N A

PAMPHLET LATELY PUBLISH'D,

ENTITLED,

The Substance of the Evidence

Delivered to a COMMITTEE

OF THE

Honourable House of Commons,

&c. &c.

Printed in the Year 1774.

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The Substance of the Evidence

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OF

Honourable House of Commons

By

Printed in the Year 1774.



TO
SIR THOMAS CLAVERING,
CHAIRMAN of the COMMITTEE
OF THE
Honourable House of Commons,
FOR THE ENQUIRY INTO
THE LINEN TRADE
Of GREAT BRITAIN and IRELAND.

SIR,

WHenever any matter appears in print, it stands open to public disquisition; and therefore the charge of presumption, or busy intermeddling, will never lie against any individual, who, from a regard to truth

and public information, shall attempt to strip arguments, however specious in their appearance, of any gaudy colouring which might dazzle the eye of judgment.

Having heard much of an harangue, said to have been made at the Bar of the House of Commons on Wednesday the 20th of April, I confess, I lamented my inability to attend at that time; as I considered the man, who could dress the Soliloquy of *Leonidas*, on the eve of the action at the Streights of *Thermopylæ*, in so amiable a garb as to give an additional lustre to Virtue, Patriotism, and Public Spirit, must have shined in any matter where the exertion of eloquence and sentiment were to enforce and dignify the subject.

A pamphlet having just appeared, under the title of *The Substance of the Evidence delivered to a Committee of the Honourable House of Commons*, I expected, from that title,

title, to have found a plain recapitulation only of what had been given in evidence at the Bar of the House; but, on a closer examination, I found the greater number of pages filled with declamation, instead of that plain narrative of matter which the title seemed to announce: I sat down then to read it, with avidity, expecting, from the character which the Author had in his younger days in the literary world, to have been well entertained. I have considered this performance without prejudice; and, under the consciousness of my being unbiassed, (a principle upon which a modest confidence may with propriety be grafted) I shall hazard my opinion to the candour of those whose judgment is under the guidance of impartial rectitude.

The Orator seems to introduce his harangue under the auspices of that awful dignity which is, or at least should be, the attendant of any matter of great national concern; and, in order to give im-

portance to his subject, he tells you, that it is the very *basis of the Kingdom's stability*. He sounds the alarm,—people start, — they fear the kingdom is in danger.

Having roused the attention, he proceeds to exhibit the first art which an Advocate wishes to possess—That of preparing his audience to relish what he would propound. His first object is to meliorate the soil, so as that the seed he sows may take root; in our commerce with mankind there is no secret so successful, and therefore none more politic; since experience shews that prepossession often operates as forcibly as the closest reasoning.

Our Orator then mentions a decline in the British and Irish manufacture of Linen, and the numerous emigrations of the people; but he denies the cause to be that which is generally assigned for this affecting calamity. The effect was indeed sensible,
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and became every day alarming; the manufacturers perceived a decrease in their sale, though their skill was improved, and their industry opposing itself to the dangers which stood before them. They were not long at a loss for the cause; they found themselves rivalled by the foreign manufacturer, and the door, which had opened to a chearful and ready demand for their Linens, half barred by the increasing import of Foreign Linen. These circumstances, however obvious and striking, don't seem to have been considered in that light by this Orator; he chooses to account for it in a different manner, and proceeds to give a detail of some recent transactions, to which he attributes the present distressed situation of this important manufacture, which however will, I humbly conceive, be found, on a due investigation, to be very little pertinent to the main object.

It has become a sort of test of Popularity to abuse the Scotch. As I have never been

within fifty miles of the Tweed, have no Scottish connections, nor am in any measure dependent on the wind or tide of favour that may blow or flow from that quarter, I am instructed by that impartiality, which should ever be the associate of integrity, to condemn all illiberal invectives against any nation or any set of people whatever, and therefore I think that the bias which our Orator has shewn in the very exordium, and which has conducted him all along in his declamation, must sap the force of that influence which his eloquence might have otherwise produced.

I will not imitate this great Orator in that which, as a man of humanity, I can never approve of; I mean, the bitterness which seems to be so much the predominant ingredient of his composition: I shall therefore decline expatiating on this elaborate production, as I respect the great Author of *Leonidas*, even in the setting of his Genius. But though he may
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have still an hankering after the flowery paths of Oratory, and that one would incline to indulge him, yet he cannot expect a concession to his propositions, if both facts and reason forbid the assent.

How far our Orator has given a just representation of the Scotch nation, is very little to the present purpose. I have heard, indeed, from many dispassionate, unprejudiced persons, that he has mistaken their genius, and that *Cervantes* would never have sought amongst that people for the Hero of his Romance.—But alas!—What is all this to the point now agitated? which is neither more nor less than this,—whether our Linen Manufactures are worth preserving, or whether they are to strike to a foreign competitor.

This is the point to be investigated, and this investigation does not turn on Scotch Bankers, or Scotch Projects: it matters not whether, on the one hand, our Orator attributes to the inhabitants
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of that country, erudition, science, jurisprudence, theology, history, oratory, &c. or whether, pursuing their plans by supernatural aid, he compares them to the fallen angels, as making *gigantic attempts to the Omnipotence of Creation*—I think this is his expression. — These may be sublime images, and may do very well in an Epic Poem; but the object now under consideration requires no gaudy array. To the august Assembly, who are to deliberate on this matter, Truth will ever find admission, be her dress ever so simple; and with penetration and integrity, plain facts want no ornaments to enforce them.

Much has been said about the stretch of credit: I shall not defend it. That there has been an imprudent circulation, and that credit has been swelled to an enormous size, is too notorious to be controverted; that those irregularities affect commerce is not disputed; but that the decline of the Linen Manufacture is to be attributed to this cause, I deny; for this
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plain simple reason—That the effect can never precede the cause. The distress in the Linen Trade began in Scotland in 1769 and 1770, and in Ireland in 1770 and 1771. Now, in those years credit was high, and in vigour; the stagnation did not take place till 1772: at that time the house of Neale, James, Fordyce, and Down, stopped payment; their engagements being very large, and other houses more or less affected, Credit, the aliment of commerce, felt the effects; its constitution became weak and sickly, though not irrecoverable; and, a gloomy diffidence having superseded that chearful confidence on which Trade so much depends, it might have naturally had an influence on this and every other branch of Trade: but this was not, nor could it have been other than a temporary, transient inconvenience, which a little time and patience would remove, as experience has shewn upon many similar occasions. So that to charge this decline of the Linen Trade to the temporary interruption

tion of Credit, can never be supported, either from reason or from its consequences ; for, as it has been already observed, the decline of the Linen Trade, and the wounds which public Credit had received, don't keep time together, nay, their very order is misplaced, the former being two years earlier than the latter.

The natural deduction then must be,— That our British and Irish Linen had, at the period of their declension, met with a dangerous rival : and this cannot be controverted, when it is in proof, that above twenty-eight millions of yards of Foreign Linen were that year (I mean the year 1771) imported into England.

This importation (meeting, at the same time, with a great importation from Ireland, together with a large supply from Scotland) glutted the market so as to cause that general stagnation which was at that time, and unhappily continues to be severely felt, by the merchant and
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manufacturer in the Linen Trade of Great Britain and Ireland.

Now let us suppose for a moment, that those 28 millions of yards of Foreign Linens had not been brought to the British market; I then appeal to any unprejudiced person, experienced in this department of commerce, whether the quantity of British and Irish Linens, manufactured and sent in that year to this market, would have exceeded the natural demand for them, had they stood unrivalled: I think the Orator himself, notwithstanding his predilection for his foreign Friends and their foreign Manufactures, will assent to this, and will admit, that then every piece of British and Irish Linen would have found a ready sale; the useful consequence of which would have been, the increase of the manufacture the following year, and so successively; by which Great Britain and her colonies would have been fully and amply supplied by our own home Linen-Manufactures: a policy supported by the
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very essence and spirit of all commercial systems, in every country where trade has made any progress.

I shall not follow this Advocate for our foreign rivals, through all the mazes of his adorned composition ; I pretend not to have trod in those flowery paths ; it may even happen that I shall not be so methodical and regular in my observations as he might have expected. If this should be the case, the apology I have to offer, is, the difficulty I have been under of removing the many ornaments in which the matter sought for was so much enveloped.

It is urged, that the distresses complained of are the consequences of the shock which public credit had received. I have already shewn that this hypothesis is a false one, as the effect felt was before the cause suggested. But, granting this, what is now to be done ? How is public credit to be recovered and invigorated ?—Policy
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will answer, By œconomy in individuals—by finding full employment to the artizan, the mechanic, and the labourer,—and by some wholesome regulations in regard to provisions ; for it can never be controverted, that the food of the people has the most powerful influence on our manufactures.

If population, and a full employment of the people, be the main riches of a country, the wisdom of every state will adopt, protect, and encourage such manufactures as shall be found to be best suited to the soil and climate of the country, and to the genius of the people; and on the same principle, every State will look with a jealous eye on any attempt of any other State to check the progress of its manufactures; they will guard against every impediment, and they will be forward in giving every encouragement: they will, on the one hand, reward by bounties the labour of their own people; and they will, on the other hand, repress and discourage any foreign competition, by imposing such a
duty

duty on their manufactures, as shall ever prevent their own being affected. This seems to be the great and invariable policy of all States; nor is there any commercial country known, where a foreign rival is countenanced, by the admission of his manufactures, if it appears that they clash with those which are the natural staple of that country.

The first principle in trade is this predilection for our own manufactures; a full employment of the people being at once a creation of riches, a check to the progress of vice, and an improvement of morality. But if we look on, and from false policy or pusillanimity suffer other countries to spoil us of those advantages, it is much to be feared that we shall fall under the unhappy predicament, which the psalmist prayed to be averted from his country; and that, instead of *our garners being full and plenteous with all manner of store*, there will be *decay, leading into captivity, and much complaining in our streets.*

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If the materials of a manufacture, and at the same time the labour of the manufacturer, can be had on more reasonable terms in another country than our own, our skill and industry will little avail us; for the natural, and indeed inevitable, consequence will be, that that manufacture will find its way to us: nor does there seem to be any means of checking this evil, but by the discouragement of this alarming competition, which experience has already shewn, has been fatal to the industry and labour of our own people.

But it has been said, that any discouragement being given to Foreign Linens, will, in the end, bear heavily on the lower class of people; as there is a species of Linen, fit for their use, which the foreigner can supply on cheaper terms than our own manufacturer. This assertion seems to have compassion on its side; but let it be remembered, that compassion is a movement of the mind, which sometimes acts separately from close reasoning, and

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therefore requires to be under a proper direction, and never to be indulged at the expence of strict-justice, where the public as well as individuals is so materially concerned.

But, however humanity may plead for the poor, it will be found, that sound policy forbids their being supplied by foreigners, though on cheaper terms, if the public should suffer by this partiality: but the truth is, that, however specious and captivating this may appear at first view, it will be found in the end, that even the poor will feel the evil; for should foreigners engross this material part of the Linen Manufacture, and that the artizan, the mechanic, and the labourer, are supplied by them, (it shall be admitted even) on cheaper terms—yet is not this saving had by the inaction of thousands, whom this very manufacture, if properly encouraged, would employ? But this appearance of saving would prove a fatal delusion, to which, if we gave way, so as that foreigners

ers should beat our own manufactures out of the market, the natural consequence would be, their raising them, so as to exceed considerably the price at which they now stand, in the present state of competition. This is really the case at present; foreign coarse Linens, having no rivals in this market, are raised more than ten per cent. which is a profit to the foreigner, at the expence of the industrious poor of this country; whereas, were there such a duty laid on those foreign coarse Linens, as would be equal to the difference between the value of the foreign material and the foreign labour, and that of North Britain or Ireland, where both are dearer, this manufacture would be effectually carried on by our home manufacturers; which would certainly be a considerable national saving, and give employment to a numerous people *now standing idle, because no man hath hired them.*

Every wise State will therefore avoid as much as possible the receiving any manu-

facture from any other State, which they can carry on at home—it would be a double-edged sword, which cuts both ways, at one and the same time draining the country of its money, and transferring the labour of the poor to the foreigner; for the former must stand idle if the latter be employed.

The emigrations, both in Scotland and Ireland, are an alarming evidence of the decline of the Linen Manufactures.—I know that these emigrations are attributed to a different cause. Those who seem to have a repugnance to the relieving the Linen Trade, treat these emigrators as an oppressed, and consequently a provoked people, who fly from hard landlords, and from rents too weighty for their industry to struggle with.

Where thousands act in one certain way, they in general act upon the same principle, and are actuated by the same motives. However, it is hardly possible
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that a multitude should be all equally under the same predicament, and it may therefore happen, that a spirit of novelty may induce some to expatriate; the delusive phantom of ambition may influence others; and some may indeed wish to avoid an hard inconvenient tenure.—But these are rather contingent events—The great cause of emigration is the poverty of the people—And the poverty of the people, is not from the want of industry, but the want of employment. It has been urged, that those emigrants are rather husbandmen or labourers, than manufacturers, but the fact is otherwise: of 1800 who had emigrated from Scotland at one time, it can, as I am informed, be proved, there were 600 spinners, and the rest weavers; and that another emigration from that country was on some religious scruples. I have never been in Scotland, so this, I own, is no other than hear-say evidence; but I well know, that there never was any complaint, from any part of Scotland or Ireland, about the rise of lands, until the Linen

Manufacture began to decline ; which, I think, is a striking proof of the great importance of that Manufacture to these kingdoms.

I shall not, Sir, enter into any critical examination of the calculations which make part of the pamphlet now before me. The material and affecting matter does not now depend so much on the investigation of the cause, or on any sublime representation of the effects, as on providing the Remedy.—This is the great object of wisdom, of justice, and of humanity. Gentlemen will inform themselves whether the Linen Manufacture is in a declining state or not ; if it be, and that the effects of this decline threaten one kingdom with little short of a general Bankruptcy, and seem to press hard on the other ; if the rents are not to be had in Ireland, without exposing the industrious tenant to ruin ; if thousands are idle for want of employment ; if provisions, whether moderate or otherwise,

wife, are not within their reach ; shall it be said that such a country is not distressed ? and will not humanity promote the investigation of the causes of the distress, in order to apply the remedies ?

But it has been industriously propagated, that the giving of any encouragement to the Linen Manufacture will sensibly affect the Woollen Manufacture, of this country. Whether the Agents for the Foreign Manufacturers of Linen have devised, abetted, or promulgated this idea, they know best ; a kind of panic has certainly spread, and its influence seems already to operate. The Woollen Counties and Towns are alarmed, and have called on their Members to watch the motions of the friends to the Linen Manufacture. It is well known that there is no article of trade which the English have ever looked upon with a more jealous eye than that of their Woollen Manufactures ; indeed, there is no object of their attention more just, or more praise-worthy.

It furnishes employment, in a pleasing, as well as profitable variety, to thousands, and it is the great source of the riches of the country. — Could the friends to the Linen Trade of Great Britain or Ireland—could the very sufferers under the present circumstances of that languishing Manufacture, once suppose they were to be relieved by the smallest deduction from the importance, the success, or the well-being of the Woollen Trade of Great Britain, they would then, indeed, be more fitted to the character of Cervantes's Hero, than the Scotch Banker, whom our Orator would have appointed to it.

But that the Linen and Woollen Manufactures should be placed in an hostile opposition to each other, is something so contrary to reason, to prudence, propriety, or even common decency, as that we must suppose the very idea to be rejected with scorn by the patrons even of the Woollen Manufacture, as an affront to their understanding and judgment.

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In what can the relief of the Linen Trade affect the Woollen Manufacture? It does not appear, upon the most deliberate, cool, and impartial investigation of this matter, that the Woollen Trade is in any sort concerned in the event.—Retaliation has indeed been mentioned, but surely no stress can be laid on that phantom:—a scare-crow! more to be laughed at than treated seriously: a principle not known in Commerce.—It is interest, not resentment, or partial liking, which directs the System of Trade. A man will buy from his enemy, if he sells to him cheap; he will not deal with his friend, if he finds his goods too dear.

We are informed, indeed, of the Prussian Hero; we are told that he has the command of five rivers, and we are therefore advised to be very cautious how we act, and not dare to lay any tax on Foreign Linens, lest the Prussian Monarch, with his forts, his rivers, &c. should retaliate, and in the paroxysm of his

his resentment to the want of submission in the British Legislature, should lay an heavy duty on our Woollen Manufactures imported into his country.—However, in this I shall, I hope, have the pleasing reflection of having calmed the apprehension of the British Manufacturer, when I assure him he has nothing to apprehend from that quarter, for his Woollen goods, as well as many other Manufactures, find no access there:—in a word, they are prohibited.—Is this then the man who is held out to influence the deliberations of the greatest Assembly in the world?—Is he to regulate our Commerce?—Were this to be! Farewell then to British Trade!—Farewell to British Spirit!

I am further to observe, that the principal Powers from whose countries we import almost all our Foreign Linens, have laid very high duties on our Woollen Manufactures, and some, as well as the King of Prussia, have prohibited them;
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particularly the Elector of Bavaria ; who, however, is so far polite as to give you his reason, being, he says, to encourage the Woollen Manufactures in the Upper Palatinate ; so we have nothing to fear from them.—It is unnecessary to pursue this phantom of Retaliation ; it must vanish, like a ghost at the appearance of day, at the light of reason.

As then there is nothing in Policy which opposes the relief of the Linen Manufacturers, let us consider, for a moment, how far Ireland has a claim on the kindness, as well as the protection of the English Legislature.

The exports from Great Britain to Ireland are immense, near two millions sterling.—How do they stand in respect to Germany and Russia, from whence England takes so much Linen ? It appears that the exports to Ireland exceed those to Germany and Russia, on a medium of ten years, from 1763 to 1773,
£ 255,825.

£255,825 per annum. — Some plea, surely, for the aid and protection of Great Britain ! To which may be humbly added a consideration of equity ; as it may appear upon the Journals of the Lords and Commons of England, that an application was made to King William, to interpose, and to stop the progress of the Woollen Trade in Ireland, and, in return, to grant them all countenance, favour, and protection, for the encouragement and promoting the Linen Manufacture *to all the advantage and profit that Kingdom can be capable of.* To which his Majesty was pleased to answer, That he would do all that in him lay to discourage the Woollen Manufacture in Ireland, and to encourage the Linen Manufacture there.

Accordingly an Act passed in Ireland, 10th William, amounting in effect to a prohibition of the exports of Woollen Manufactures from that country : but I may be permitted to observe, that at the
time

time of this Composition or Compact, the whole export of Linens from Ireland, in the year 1700, amounted only to 14,112 Pounds, while the Woollen Manufacture, then given up by the Irish in exchange, was the principal and staple trade of their whole kingdom, giving employment to many thousands of their inhabitants.

On the whole, the Linen Manufacturers rely on the justice, and wisdom, and on the humanity and tenderness of the British Legislature, for some alleviation of their sufferings, in which thousands are involved with them.—They hope, nay, they cannot doubt of the loyal kingdom of Ireland meeting, in her elder sister, that affection and support which are the object of her hopes under so close a connection; that the happiness of one Kingdom as well as the other will be their care; that they will encourage the Manufactures of both, and will attend to the great importance of the Loom, whether the Shuttle guides the Woollen or the Linen

Linen thread, and whether the Linen is more peculiarly the Manufacture of one or other of His Majesty's dominions. Their justice and their benevolence will comprehend indiscriminately all His Majesty's loyal subjects; and, while they consider that Retaliation is no principle in Commerce, neither will they suppose that the passage of the *Rhine*, the *Wefer*, the *Elbe*, the *Oder*, the *Vistula*, &c. &c. &c. will be barred against the English, because they, like the Prussian Monarch, think it their duty to encourage their own Manufactures.

I am,

Sir,

With all possible respect for you, and the Honourable Committee,

Your most obedient

humble servant, and

*A REAL FRIEND to the
Constitution and Well-
being of His Majesty's
Kingdoms of Great Bri-
tain and Ireland.*

