

OBSERVATIONS,

REMARKS, and MEANS,

TO PREVENT

*S M U G G L I N G,*

Humbly submitted to the Consideration of

The Rt. Honorable the HOUSE of PEERS,

A N D

The Honorable HOUSE of COMMONS,

IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED,

By their obedient, humble Servant,

*G E O R G E B I S H O P.*

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MAIDSTONE, MARCH 1783.

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**T**HE practice of smuggling has of late years, made such rapid and gigantic strides from the sea coasts, into the very heart of the country, pervading every city, town, and village, as to have brought universal distress upon the fair traders, from the most opulent and respectable, even to the smallest shopkeeper, and requires the united efforts of every honest man to aim at the suppression of it; foreign states having been enriched at the expence of this country, and the destruction of many fair traders.

There are many thousands of failors employed in this illicit traffick, most of whom are victualled and cloathed, and their vessels repaired in foreign countries, who would otherwise become fishermen, and useful members of the community, thereby greatly enriching the sea coasts, training up a hardy

race of failors and enabling the sea ports, as heretofore, to assist the state in furnishing both ships and men; but so long as that pernicious practice continues, so long will the parish rates remain high and a burthen upon the fair dealer, and the sea ports be unable to afford any real assistance.

The smuggling-cutters, are not only large, full of men and well armed, but so well constructed for sailing, that seldom one of them is captured in a year, and those which are taken are frequently permitted to depart with the loss only of part of their cargoes, as an additional encouragement for them to continue the same trade; this conduct is productive of many inconveniencies, and particularly to the farmer, who in many places near the sea, is unable to find hands to do his work, whilst great numbers are employed in removing smuggled goods from one part of the country to another.

The smugglers pay for the articles which they buy either in cash, or by the illicit exportation of English wool, (no other articles of any consequence being carried abroad by them) an injury to the staple commodity of this kingdom, of so serious a nature, as to call on the united efforts of every well-wisher to his country, to join in the suppression of it.

Smuggling

Smuggling is arrived to a height unprecedented in this or (perhaps) in any other nation in Europe; consequently the quantity and value of different articles thus illicitly imported must be immense; and, as they are paid for either in specie, or by smuggling of wool, which is worse, this traffic must greatly enrich the French, and other nations, and gradually impoverish this; and, while the fair traders are obliged to sustain various taxes to supply so great a deficiency in the revenue, they are deprived of their trade by a banditti, who are become a terror to the king's officers, and a pest to the community; some hundreds of them having (frequently) been seen assembled together on horse-back at one place, a sort of open rebellion highly inconsistent with, and greatly reproachful to, civil government.

From the best accounts, there are employed in smuggling sixty thousand of the youngest men and best able to labour, which we may calculate at 1-25th part of the whole of the labourers in the kingdom; and one hundred thousand women and children in retailing and hawking about the country spirits and tea.

Smuggling is one great cause of the high price of provisions, as 1-5th or 1-6th part of all the horses kept are for smuggling, which  
horses

horses consume more corn than is used in the distillery; if there was no smuggling we should have no occasion for an importation of oats at any time. The charge of maintaining, suppose one hundred thousand horses at one shilling per day each horse, annually amounts to 1,820,000l.

Instead of a contraband let us have a legal trade with all our neighbours, and treat with them, to lower the duties on the manufactures of these kingdoms, by lowering and permitting the manufactures and produce of their countries to be imported here, on paying small duties, which will increase the trade and commerce of this country, employ the poor and lessen the parish rates, to the very great interest of the landed property.

By lowering the duties on tea, coffee, and spirits, the West India trade will be promoted by an increase of the consumption of rum, sugar, and molasses, and in consequence the West Indies will take more goods from hence.

The consumption of rum may be increased to four times the present importation, if the making spirits privately in England and Scotland, and the smuggling of foreign spirits is prevented, and it will greatly promote the use of malt liquors, and of course increase the consumption of malt and hops.

I presume that smuggling is so much increased, the revenue will lose this year full three millions, which renders the taxes very unequal and more burthensome to the inland parts of the kingdom, as the inhabitants on the sea coast have their tea, spirits, wine, currants, raisins, starch, soap, china, glass, and tobacco, mostly smuggled, they contribute nothing to the public for those articles, and of course all the inland counties must be taxed double in order to raise the taxes, which is a very great hardship. If all his Majesty's subjects were taxed alike it would make their burthens much lighter.

The smugglers are taking every method to increase their trade, and convey immense quantities of spirits into London with permits they get with spirits bought at the custom-house sales, or permits bought in London for that purpose; they have warehouses at proper distances on the roads, the more easy to convey it forwards, as is best suitable to their purpose.

The smugglers are a very powerful body, and can raise considerable sums of money on any occasion that offers to promote their interest; they boast of having disposed of large sums in order to prevent any hurt being done to their trade, at one time 3,000l. was disposed of. So little care is taken to  
 prevent

prevent smuggling that there is not one excise-officer at Sheerness, where, and in the river Medway the revenue loses 50,000l. per annum, and has done for many years back, which trade has so far increased, as nearly all the spirits, wine, tea, tobacco, raisins, &c. consumed in that neighbourhood are smuggled, and his Majesty's ships that lay there for break-waters are made use of for storehouses, and the people of the dock-yard are the smugglers.

The town of Deal at present is a free port for this pernicious trade, great part of which might be prevented with ease, and the smugglers sent on board the king's ships. They are very seldom imprest, if they are, by contriving to get on shore, the whole body make a point to get a brother off.

At a sessions held at Maidstone in Kent (a little time ago) seven of them, able young men, were convicted and ordered to serve his Majesty as sailors; by seeing the lieutenant procured their enlargement, and are now employed following this illicit trade as before.

There are more sailors that have been smugglers in the service of France than England, so that this contraband trade is a nursery for French privateers; the French could do nothing a privateering in the North sea without

out English failors, as they are acquainted very little with the coast to the Eastward of Dunkirk. So long as smuggling continues to flourish, so long will the Dutch and French catch fish on our coast, the Dutch have caught in one season to the amount of a million sterling, which we can do much better than they, if we get some persons from Holland to instruct our people in curing the herrings.

If the fisheries were encouraged, nature has been very bountiful to Great Britain, as no other part of the globe has such quantities of fish on their coast, and yet she profits but little of that blessing; the people on the Western isles want to be assisted with salt, casks, and small boats, and they would take immense quantities of herrings; the Orkneys abound with lobsters enough to serve all the markets in Europe, but have not boats to catch them, a little assistance would enable them to establish a considerable fishery; if carried on as it might be, we should have such a numerous race of hardy failors as would make us superior to all the world by sea, and our poor be better fed, clothed, and employed in carrying fish to foreign markets, which would be a great encouragement to trade, no other employ whatsoever would so much support the coarse

woollen manufactory as the fishery, and of consequence the graziers of Lincolnshire and Romney Marsh would find a good market for their coarse wool. Remember fishing and smuggling will never flourish together.

Both in England and Scotland smuggling is now carried on to a considerable extent, greatly promoted by the high duties on British spirits; in London and Bristol are many private distillers who make large quantities of spirits without paying any duties, and in Scotland there are upwards of ten thousand private stills which make and send immense quantities of spirits to London with some other that have paid the duties, to the very great hurt of the honest trader, by which practice the revenue has been defrauded of upwards of 100,000*l.* this year; if some mode is not found to put a stop to this illicit trade the duties on spirits will come very short.

The revenue suffers great losses by seizures, as the low spirits bought at the customhouses are sold again without the permits, and stronger and better spirits sent into the inland counties with the permits got at the customhouses. If some steps are not taken to prevent smuggling the West India planters will be much injured, the price of rum very  
low

low, and they will not be able to find a market in England, unless sent to Ostend or Dunkirk to be smuggled into Great Britain. In the year 1777 there were smuggled from Dunkirk 2,500,000 gallons of geneva, about which time there were established at Gottenburg, Newport, Ostend, Dunkirk, and Calais distilleries for making geneva to supply our smugglers with. Geneva is prohibited to be used in the French dominions in favour of their brandies. Upwards of 4,000,000 gallons of geneva are annually smuggled, and about half the quantity of brandy, besides rum and other spirits; there were employed twelve ships of 200 tons burthen each, to fetch rum from the Danish West India islands for Guernsey to smuggle into England.

There are in the county of Kent 1607 public houses, licenced to sell spirituous liquors by retail, 4821 unlicenced, where are sold smuggled spirits in small quantities, and the poor labouring people assemble to drink without being seen by their masters or the parish officers.

In the parishes of Barming, East and West Farleigh, Loose, Boughton, Linton, and Hunton, (near Maidstone,) there are eleven licenced public houses, and forty-one private retailers of smuggled spirits; the

greatest quantity of which are sold by the unlicenced houses.

If publicans entice people to drunkenness and debauchery, how much more do the private retailers.

According to the best accounts from all parts of the kingdom, the maritime counties have about the same proportion of licenced to unlicenced houses as the county of Kent.

Country gentlemen and farmers have their spirits, teas, wines, &c. much cheaper from the smuggler than they can of the fair trader; the poor rates being so much advanced by this nefarious commerce, their spirits, &c. come very dear to them in the end; which commerce is likely to increase (if means be not taken to prevent it); and in consequence the poor rates.

Can there exist an honest considerate person in Great Britain, who upon perusing the case is not alarmed with the melancholy scene, and does not wish by all possible means to strike at the root of this infamous pernicious traffic.

It is proposed more effectually to impede the excessive use of spirituous liquors, by preventing their being made in Great Britain, without paying the legal duties, or smuggled from foreign parts, to lower the duties of British spirits at the still head, and  
foreign

foreign spirits, on importation, and to lay the duties on retailers.

The practice of defrauding the revenue has of late years made a rapid increase in the distillery at some places in England, by which means many traders have made considerable fortunes; the revenue officers that survey them must be privy, as it is not possible for any entered distiller to defraud the duty without the knowledge of the officers, the distillers taking part of a back and distilling it without paying any duty, and sometimes taking a whole back and charge it again; I am informed a back has been distilled three or four times, and the officer only charged it once; the backs and stills are hurried on, in order to appear right in the officers books, by which means they make very bad spirits; but as they pay but little duty they can afford to under sell the London distillery, and pay fourteen per cent land carriage. It is mostly in distilling molasses that the frauds are practiced, and not so easily done in a corn distillery, as the making spirits from corn is a longer process in preparing the wash than from molasses. A molasses back may be pitched in a few minutes when a fraud is intended.

THE PRESENT DUTIES ON SPIRITS, PAYABLE  
AT THE STILL HEAD.

	From Corn.		From Molasses	
	L.	W.	L.	W.
	s.	d.	s.	d.
1 By 12 Car. 2. c. 23. f. 7.	0	0	0	1
2 By 12 Car. 2. c. 24. f. 21.	0	0	0	1
3 By 12, 13 W. 3. c. 1. f. 1.	0	1	0	0
4 By 4 Ann. c. 11. f. 2.	0	0	0	0
5 By 8 Ann. c. 7. f. 1.	0	0	0	1
6 By 16 Ge. 2. c. 8. f. 2 } not paid in Scotland }	0	1	0	3
7 By 19 G. 2. c. 12. f. 24.	0	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
8 By 24 G. 2. c. 40. f. 1. } not paid in Scotland }	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
9 By 33 Geo. 2. c. 9. f. 1.	0	5	1	3
10 By 2 Geo. 3. c. 5. f. 1.	0	1	0	3
11 By 20 Geo. 3.	0	1	0	3
And three five per cents	0	11	2	9

Rum pays 6s. 11d.  $\frac{1}{2} \frac{3}{5}$  per gallon on importation.  
French brandy and all other spirits 9s. 6d.  $\frac{1}{4} \frac{2}{5}$  per  
gallon.

TEA SOLD BY THE INDIA COMPANY FROM MARCH  
1778 TO SEPTEMBER 1782 INCLUSIVE.

Month.	Year.	lb of Tea.	Total.
March	1778	2,453,000	} 4,690,000
September	1778	2,237,000	
March	1779	3,140,000	} 6,612,000
September	1779	3,472,000	
March	1780	3,937,000	} 7,482,000
September	1780	3,545,000	
March	1781	2,181,000	} 4,912,000.
September	1781	2,731,000	
March	1782	2,810,000	} 6,170,000
September	1782	3,360,000	

Average price of tea, as sold at the East India house, and duty charged on each sort for eleven years. In twenty-two sales, March sale 1769 to September sale 1779 inclusive, discount deducted. Average prices of tea received by the East India company, out of which they pay prime cost, custom, freight, and charges on merchandize:

Bohea.	Congou.	Hyscn.	Pekoe.	Singlo.	Souchong
Per lb net.					
2s 4d $\frac{1}{2}$	4s 2d $\frac{1}{4}$	9s 0d $\frac{7}{8}$	4s 6d $\frac{1}{4}$	4s 6d $\frac{1}{4}$	5s 4d $\frac{7}{8}$ .

The public revenue received for tea at the abovementioned prices, consumed in Great Britain the following sums per lb gross, out of which only clerks wages are to be paid.

Bohea.	Congou.	Hyscn.	Pekoe.	Singlo.	Souchong.
Per lb gross.					
2s 4d $\frac{1}{4}$	3s 4d $\frac{1}{4}$	6s 0d $\frac{1}{10}$	3s 7d $\frac{1}{2}$	3s 6d $\frac{1}{2}$	3s 1d $\frac{1}{10}$ .

The king's duties on tea have amounted to 700,000l. per annum, in future the king's duties will be for custom on tea 25l. 16s. 3d. per cent. on the gross amount; excise on ditto 27l. 10s. per cent. and 1s. 1d.  $\frac{1}{2}$  per lb gross

ACCOUNT OF THE TEA IMPORTED IN THE YEAR  
1766 BY THE FOLLOWING NATIONS.

Nations.	lb. of Tea.	Total.
English	6,000,000	} 17,400,000
Dutch	4,500,000	
Swedes	2,400,000	
Danes	2,400,000	
French	2,100,000	
Consumed by the English	12,000,000	
rest of Europe	5,400,000	
Consumption in Britain	} 13,190,993	
was increased in the year 1778 to		
Whereof was smuggled	10,738,155	
In 1769 were sold at our East India House	} 9,384,522	
In 1777 — — —		
In 1769 were imported by the Dutch, Danes, Swedes, and French	} 5,504,733	
Which increased in the year 1777 to		
	} 16,138,155	
	lb. of Tea	
Of which was imported by the Dutch	3,997,948	
French	6,274,846	
Dane	2,967,867	
Swede	2,897,494	

N. B. The net duties in 1769 was 1,392,156l. and in 1777 was 904,449l.—Decrease of the sales at the India House in 1777 of 3,838,770, consequently a decrease in duty of 487,707l.

By

By this account the increase is in favour of the French, to keeping up their East India trade, and the very great loss of our company, with the outfit of the profits to the nation in general.\* If there was no smuggling our East India company would employ twenty-eight ships to China instead of nine, maned with three thousand three hundred sailors, exclusive of the private trade in teas brought legally and illegally into Europe; the English ships have often brought from 1000 to 3000 chests of unregistered tea each; foreign captains bring large quantities, which they either smuggle on our coast or throw into the sea, their punishment being severe to carry any home. If this part of smuggling was prevented would it be of any advantage to the French, Swedes, Dutch, or Danes to continue a traffic to China?

The loss to the public on 1000 chests of hyson tea smuggled is above 20,000l. Although only 13,190,993 lbs of real tea appears to be consumed annually in Great Britain, &c. exclusive of private trade, yet it is calculated that upwards of 24,000,000 lbs of tea are consumed in Great Britain and her dependencies, consequently the rest must

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\* The French drink very little tea, upwards of six millions of this quantity was intended to serve our smugglers.

be ash, floe, and other leaves, dyed to represent it.

The fair traders are burthened with high duties and obliged to be under very troublesome excise laws; they humbly hope for protection which they have a right to expect, that they may have liberty to maintain their families, and means may be thought of to prevent a lawless banditti overrunning the kingdom, as they are enemies within ourselves, ready on every occasion to carry intelligence to foreign ones, and who contribute nothing to the public, but are a means to increase the parish rates and debauch the lower order of the people. So little care is taken to prevent this traffic that the risk is not equal to the honest traders, who are obliged to maintain the poor, whilst they in general pay no poor rates.

If the 160,000 that now carry on this trade were employed in fishing, agriculture, &c. the labour of 60,000 men at one shilling and sixpence per day, and the women and children at sixpence per day each, amount to 2,464,000l. annually, what an emolument to the trade and commerce of the kingdom! from those who are now supported in drunkenness, rioting, and debauchery by this iniquitous traffic, obviously productive of so numerous a train of evils,

evils, that prudence, common honesty, decency, order, and civil government united, cry loudly for redress.

I am of opinion, after thirty years remarks on this trade, the best, and most certain method to prevent it, and to increase the revenue, is to lower the duties, and, if necessary, to pass some of the following, or nearly similar clauses into a law.

1st. As all smuggling vessels are known when they are in any port, they are to be stoped, the master and crew to give security or be committed, to be discharged only by a legal trial.

2d. Vessels with East India goods in small packages, or spirits in casks, under one hundred gallons, of whatsoever tonnage, or wherever found to be forfeited. Under the present law they are not forfeited, unless found within two leagues of our shore.

3d. Persons conveying smuggled goods to be stoped and committed, and, if found guilty, to be imprisoned or sent abroad; persons conducting others with contraband goods, or making any signals, to be deemed smugglers, and suffer accordingly.

N. B. The act of the 19th of George III, says, two or more going armed or disguised.

4th. Persons assembled at any public or private houses, or shall be on any road or other place, having load saddles, large whips or sticks, to be taken up and carried before a justice of the peace, and if they cannot give a satisfactory account of some lawful employment, to be sent to serve his majesty.

5th. Persons making signals by any sort of fire by night, or smoak, or otherways in the day on the sea coast, to be fined and imprisoned.

6th. Farmers suffering any engine on their land to assist in smuggling, or harbouring smugglers, permitting them to put their horses in their stables or fields, or shall suffer them to conceal their goods on any part of their premises, to be fined.

7th. Officers put on board of a vessel, suffering any goods to go out of the vessel, to be fined and imprisoned with the master and sailors concerned, and if the master has any share in the vessel, to forfeit it.

8th. Officers not taking vessels or boats that they have seized goods out of, or apprehending and securing the master and men, to be cashiered and imprisoned.

9th. No vessels to import foreign spirits from any part of Europe, without first taking out a licence and giving bond to pay the duties.

10th. Officers not prosecuting the vessel, master, and sailors, or seizing the horses and men from whom they have taken any goods, to be cashiered and imprisoned.

11th. Officers that shall neglect to take up and prosecute any person or persons they shall have seized goods from, or any horses that have carried smuggled goods, to be cashiered and imprisoned.

12th. Officers to be intitled to the whole of the vessels and cargoes, provided they bring in the master and crew.

13th. That no ship or vessel be permitted to receive any goods from foreign vessels at sea, or to land any goods but at the lawful places.

14th. A general pardon for all offences committed against the laws of excise and customs, by unlawful importations.

