

EX LIBRIS UNIVERSITATIS Middelburg

A TREATISE
OF COMMERCE,
WHEREIN ARE SHEW-
ED THE COMMODIES
ARISING BY A WEL ORDE-
RED, AND RVLED
TRADE,

Such as that of the Societic of Merchantes Ad-
venturers is proved to bee, written principallie for the
better information of those who doubt of the
*Necessaries of the said Societic in the
State of the Realme of
Englande,*

BY JOHN WHEELER, Secre-
tarie to the said Societic.



MIDDELBURG.
By Richard Schilders, Printer to the States of Zeland.
1601.



TO THE RIGHT HO-
NORABLE SIR ROBERT
CECILL KNIGHT, PRIN-
cipall Secretarie to her
Maiestie, &c.

THOSE which here-
tofore (Right Honorable)
haue written of anie mat-
ter, and had opinion, that
the publishinge thereof
might doe good vnto o-
thers, haue vsed to Dedicate their Labours
to some one, or other, vnder whose coun-
tenance, and protection the same might go
foorth, and bee the better lyked, and recey-
ued of all men: Whiche is the cause that I
haue made bolde to inscribe this TREATISE,

A 3 such

THE EPISTLE.

such as it is, vnto your Honour, vpon hope of fauourable allowance, and Patronage, whiche I instantlie craue, and entreat, and with all, that in the readinge thereof, your Honour would vouchsafe to remember, that it concerneth those men, and that olde and auncientlie renoumpned Companie of **MERCHAUNTES ADVENTVRERS**, which was so well esteemed of, and highlie fauoured by your late right Honorable Father, of woorthie memorie, vnto whome as God hath appointed your Honour to be a Successour in manie excellent thinges of this life, whether wee regarde the Honorable Places, wherevnto you are called in the Gouvernement of the State, or the vertues, and qualities fitt for so waightie a callinge, wherewith you are endewed, So it may please your Honour to take vnto you this Succession also, to witte, the dewtifull Observancie, and Promptitude, which the said Companie alwayes shewed towardes your said right Honourable Fathers seruice, and

THE EPISTLE.

and which they also stande readie, and desirous to present, & performe vnto your Honour to their best power, and abilitie.

I am not ignorant also, that it is the manner of Writers, to fill vp the greatest parte of their Praefaces with the praises, and comendations of those, to whome they Dedicate their Trauailes, and surelie this Reward seemeth to bee dew vnto true Vertue, that the Memorie thereof should bee consecrated to Posteritie, which can not be performed by anie Monument better, then by Bookes: And albeit, without all Glosinge, or counterfeyting, I haue heere in verie deed a large field of your Honours prayses offered vnto mee, yet because my simplicitie not onelie abhorreth all Adulation, but with all kinde of Fawninge, or flatteringe speeche, and that your Honours singulare Modestie, is wonte, not to abide anie thing lesse, then euen the modestest commendations, I will lett passe the same, and come vnto the handlinge of the ensuing Treatice, which with
my

THE EPISTLE.

my selfe I humblye recommende vnto your
Honours good fauour, and so beseeche the
Almightie to blesse, and keepe your Honor.
Middelbrough the vith of Iune 1601.

Your Honors with his
seruice at commandment,

John Wheeler.



A Treatise of Commerce, where-
in are shewed the commodities arising by
a well-ordred and ruled Trade, such as that of the
Societe of *MERCHANTS ADVENTURERS* is
prooued to bee, Written principallie for the better
information of those who doubt of the Necessarienes
of the said Societe in the state of the Realme
of England. By *JOHN WHEELER,*
Secretarie to the saide Socie-
tie.

Vita Civilis in Societate est, Societas in Imperio, &
Commercio.

Commercio Gentes mare, montibusq; discreta miscen-
tur, ut quod usquã nascitur, apud omnes affluat.



HERE be twoo pointes about
the which the Royal office, and
administration of a Prince, is
wholy employed, to wit, about
the Gouernement of the Per-
sons of men, next of Things cõ-
uenient and fit for the mainte-
nauce of Humane societie: wherein principally the
civile life consisteth, and hath her being: And there-
fore the Prince that loveth the Policie, and ruleth by

B sage

sage and good counsell, is to constitute and appoint certaine Lawes, and ordinarie Rules, both in the one and the other of the abouesaid pointes, and especiallie in the first, as the chiefest, which is cōversant and occupied about the institutiō of the persons of men in Pietie, civile conversation in maners, and facion of life, and finallie in the mutual dewtie of Equitie, and Charitie one towards another: of the which my purpose is not to intreat, but somewhat of that other point, namely the gouernement of Things convenient, and fit for the maintenance of Humane Societie: wherevnto mens actions and affections are chiefie directed, and whereabouts they bestow and employe not onely the quickenes and industrie of their spirites, but also the labour and travaile of their handes, and sides: that so they may drawe from thence either commoditie or pleasure, or at leastwise therby supplie, helpe, & furnish their severall wantes, and necessities: From hence, as from a root or fountaine first proceedeth the estate of *Marchandise*, and then consequentlie in a rowe, so manie, diverse, and fundrie Artes, as we see in the worlde. At which it should seeme that man beginneth the train, or course of his life, and therein first of all discovereth not onlie the dexteritie and sharpenes of his witt, but withall that naughtines & corruption which is naturallie in him: for there is nothing in the world so ordinarie, and naturall vnto men, as to contract, truck, merchandise, and trafficque one with an other, so that it is almost vnpossible for three persons to converse together

gether two houres, but they wil fall into talke of one bargaine or another, chopping, changing, or some other kinde of contract. Children, as soone as euer their tongues are at libertie, doe season their sportes with some merchandise, or other, and whē they goe to schoole, nothing is so common among them, as to change, and rechange, buye and sell of that, which they bring from home with them: the Prince with his subiects, the Maister with his seruants, one freend and acquaintance with another, the Captaine with his souldiers, the Husband with his wife, Women with, and among them selues, and in a woord, all the world choppeth and chaungeth, runneth and raveth after Martes, Markettes, and Marchandising, so that all things come into Commerce, and passe into Trafficque (in a maner) in all times, and in all places: not onely that, which Nature bringeth foorth, as the fruites of the earth, the beastes, and living creatures with their spoiles, skinnes, and castes, the metalles, mineralles, & such like things, but further also, this man maketh merchandise of the workes of his owne handes, this man of another mans labour, one selleth woordes, another maketh trafficque of the skins, and blood of other men, yea there are some found so subtile and cunning merchantes, that they perswade and induce men to suffer them selues to bee bought and solde, and we haue seene in our time enowe, and too manie, whiche haue made merchandise of mens foules: to conclude, all that a man worketh with his hand, or discourseth in his spirit, is nothing else but

marchandise, and a triall to put in practise the Contractes, which the Legistes & men skilful in the lawes knew not to name otherwise the thus: *Do ut des Facio ut factas*: the which wordes in effect comprehend in them all Negotiations, or Traffiques whatsoever, and are none other thing but meer matter of marchandise, and Commerce. Now albeit this affection be in all persons generallie both high and low, yet there are of the notablest, and principallest Traffiquers which are ashamed, and thinke scorne to be called Marchantes: whereas in deede Marchandise which is vsed by way of proper vacatiō, being rightlie considered of, is not to be despised, or accounted base by men of iudgement, but to the contrarie, by manie reasons and examples it is to be prooved, that the estate is honorable, & may bee exercised not only of those of the third estate (as we tearme them) but also by the Nobles, and chieft men of this Realme with commendable profite, and without anie derogation to their Nobilities, high Degrees, & conditions: With what great good to their States, honors, & enriching of themselues and their Countreys, the *Venetians*, *Florētines*, *Genoueses*, and our neighbours the *Hollanders*, haue vsed this trade of life, who knoweth not? or hauing seene the beautie, strength, opulencie, and populousenes of the abouesaid Citties, and Provinces wondreth not thereat? Was not this the first steppe, and entrie of the Kinges of *Portugall* vnto the kingdomes, and Riches of the East? *Solon* in his youth, gaue him selfe to the feat of Merch-

Commenda
tion. F. a.
causant.

chandise, and in his time saith *Plutarch* (bringing *Hesiodus* for his Authour) there was none estate of life reprochfull, neither Art, or occupation, that did put difference betweene men, but rather which is more, *Merchandise* was accompted an honourable thing, as that whiche ministred the meanes to haunt, and traffique with Barbarous Nations, to procure the friendship of Princes, and to gaigne experience in many matters: in so much (sayeth hee) that there haue been Merchants, which were founders of great Citties, as he was that founded *Marfeilles* in France: The wise *Thales Milesius* did also exercise Merchandise, likewise *Hippocrates* and *Plato* defrayed the charges of a voyage, whiche hee made in *Egypt*, with the monie which he got there by selling of oyle: So that it appeareth, that not onely a Prince may vse this kinde of men, I meane Marchantes, to the great benefite, and good of his state, either for forreigne intelligence, or exploration, or for the opening of an entrie and passage vnto vnknown and farre distant partes, or for the furnishing of monie, and other provisions in time of warres, and dearth, or lastly, for the service and honor of the Prince, and Coutrie abroad at all times requisite, and expedient, but also this kinde of life may be exercised and vsed with commendation, and without losse of one jote of honor in those, who are honorable, or of eminent degree, as aforesaid: Wherevnto I adde this further, that without Merchandise, no ease or commodious living continueth long in anie state, or common

Plut. in vita
Solonis.

wealth, no not loyaltie, or equitie it selfe, or vpright dealing. Therefore herein also, as in the former point, good order and rule is to be set, where it is wanting, or where it is already established, there it ought to be preserved: for the maintenance of so necessarie, and beneficiall an estate in the common Wealth, by constituting meet and well proportioned ordinances ouer the same, & ouer those things, which are thereupon depending, betweene the Marchantes, and those things, which are marchandized, or handled likewise with covenable, and well appropriated Magistrates, and overseers for the maintenance, and execution of the said ordinances. For it is very certain and true, that *sine imperio nec domus ulla, nec Civitas, nec Gens, nec Societas, nec hominum uniuersum genus stare, nec rerum natura omnis, nec Mundus ipse potest.* &c.

The peaceable, politike, and Riche Prince King Henrie the seventh, well marking the truth hereof, and perceiuing that as in former times, so in his, manie disturbances, grieuances and damages had befallen to, and among the English Merchantes his subiectes, trading into the lowe Countries, *ob defectum boni Regiminis*, tooke order for the same, as well by confirming the auncient Charters of his Predecessours, Kings of England vnto the Societie of M. M. Adventurers, as also by adding therevnto newe, whereby he so strengthened, and enlarged the authoritie, and Priviledges of the saide Fellowshipe, that euer since the same hath flourished in great prosperitie, and wealth, and out of it (as out of a plentifull Nour-

Nourcerie) haue sprong and proceeded almost all the principall Merchants of this Realme, at least such Companies, as haue arisen since, haue for the most part, fetched their light, patterne, and forme of policie and trade from the said Societie to the inestimable good and commoditie of this Realme, our native Countrey: so that to change this course were to returne to the olde confusion, and disorder, and withall to bereave the lande of so necessarie and seruicicable an estate, as *Merchandise* is.

Whatsoever is commendable, or is said of the best founded Companies, or Merchauntes in generall, maketh also for the Companie of Merchantes Adventurers speciallie: howbeit these things are particularie for our purpose to be considered in this Company: *The first Institution: The Auncient estimation it hath had: The state and Governement of it, and such benefites, as growe to the Realme by the maintenance of it.*

Of the first Institution of the Fellowshipe or Companie of Marchantes Adventurers, and the causes thereof.



*M*ARCVS Cato, a prudent Councellour, and a good husband in deed, saith: *Quod oportet Patremfamilias vendacem esse non emacem:* And who knoweth not, that we haue no final need of manie things, whereof foreign