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A Memoir on the subject of a Navigation Act, including the encouragement of the manufactory of boats and sea vessels, and the protection of mariners.

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The commencement, progress, magnitude and prospects of the mercantile shipping of the United States.

A recurrence to the ancient writings, which relate to the colonial establishments in North America, will prove to the candid and judicious examiner, that the founders of those provinces, of whatever nation, which now compose the United States, took, for the time, very enlarged and prospective views of *political economy*.

In the course of that steady progress to the present happy condition, which a beneficent Providence has dispensed to us, the fathers of our country and its attentive observers beyond the Atlantic, have constantly agitated the interesting subject of *the political economy of the new world*.

From the birth of this country till the memorable epocha of '76, its political economy was modified by the hand of a jealous, interested and powerful brother. It was forgotten, or rather, perhaps, amidst a cloud of passions, not perceived, that each of the American sections was, at strict constitutional and public law, and in substantial justice, *a genuine co-ordinate state* of a federated empire—*united only* by means of one common *executive* government—the small as independent of the great, as the great of the small members of that mixed monarchical *union*.

Under these circumstances, the people of this country constantly observed, considered and judged well, in matters relating to their political economy. Their complaints against the evils, touching that object, imposed upon them by the elder members of the family, were founded in true wisdom, as well as substantial justice.

The public necessities, in the revolutionary war, entirely suspended the practical adherence to the right theory on this subject; but there are many evidences of a serious attention to that theory, among the public acts and disquisitions of those times.

No sooner had peace removed the occasion of this wise temporary suspension, than the legislators of the several states, the framers of all commercial laws at that time, commenced measures for the permanent establishment of a system of political economy. It is true that these laws were imperfect, and often faulty, from the conflicting efforts of agricultural, commercial and manufacturing, and of eastern, middle, southern, Atlantic and western economists; from resentments and partialities in respect to foreign powers; and, above all, from the exercise of duties concerning national and extra-territorial objects, by worthy, but zealous representatives of the interests of towns and counties, or, in other words, for want of powers in the general government of that time.

A memorable evidence of the convictions of some of the most able, enlightened and affectionate fathers of our country, upon this subject, will be found in the salutary and auspicious proceedings of the legislature of Virginia, in their spring session of 1786, which produced the *commercial* convention at the city of Annapolis in the following autumn, the federal convention of 1787, and our present invaluable national constitution. This precious instrument, which has not yet received any amendment of its powers in relation to commerce, is predicated on the propriety, utility and necessity of a system of trade laws, founded on correct and fixed principles.

In digesting laws, for that branch of our political economy, which comprehends external commerce and navigation, the coasting trade and the fisheries, the United States will find themselves instructed by the experience of a quarter of a century, as a country in peace, during the last sixteen years of which they have been in a state of neutrality. Many and precious, it is believed, are the lessons which our statesmen may derive from that extraordinary time.

It is ascertained, that the construction and employment of sea vessels are generally profitable occupations; that they are necessary to agriculture and defence, and beneficial, and indeed requisite, to manufactures.

It will be remembered, that these occupations were commenced in the early stages of our existence, grew with our prosperity, contributed largely to its increase, and have risen sometimes in a natural, steady and regular manner, and sometimes with surprising rapidity, to a greater height than those of any other country, in proportion to our wealth and numbers, proving at once the fitness of the territories and products of the United States, and the capacities of their citizens for ship building, fishing, trade and navigation.

It is a truth which ought to be most accurately appreciated, that a very large part of our recent benefits from commerce, have been produced by the wars that have arisen out of the French revolutions, of which the neutrality of our country has enabled us greatly to profit; and we ought carefully to remember, that the earliest French revolution having affected the years '88, and '89, in the time of the meeting of the *notables*, and of their first colonial disturbances, *the whole of our commerce under the existing constitution of the United States, may be considered as that of a fortunate neutral, whose field of employment was at first enlarged, and afterwards constantly extended by the increase of the number of the belligerents, till at length it included all the civilized and commercial states, except ourselves.*

If we compare the immense present tonnage of our private ships, with the greatest exports of our own produce and manufactures, and if we consider the moderate quantities of foreign commodities, which, in a season of peace, we ever have, or are ever likely to be permitted to carry for other nations, we may safely conclude, that our merchants and ship builders can provide for the transportation of all our merchandise, foreign and American, to transmarine markets. The same facts will further prove that, if we could have the monopoly of our own trade, it would not employ the vessels we build and own. It is, therefore, too probable, that, on the return of peace, our present vast property in ships, worth, perhaps, fifty millions of dollars, will languish in our hands. At least, the noble manufacture of ships is likely to be arrested in a very inconvenient degree.

It is prudent to remember the severe trials to all, who were concerned in the construction and employment of ships, which were ingeniously and effectually created by the enforcement of the old, and the formation of new laws of navigation by the European states, in the six distressing years which preceded the adoption of the federal constitution. Those serious times clearly prove to the anxious and enlightened friends of American trade, that our present tonnage will induce similar distresses, unhappily proportioned to its vast increase, unless the wisdom and goodness of a parental government shall save us from the evils which may come. An ambitious navy has become a favorite object throughout Europe, and it is now every where perfectly understood, that private ships are *the cradles of the marine nursery*. Ingenuity and rigor, even beyond those of former times, must be expected to distinguish the formation and execution of foreign navigation laws. The unfavorable effects of such obvious measures, on the builders and owners of American ships, will be sure. Seriously forewarned by past times, and by the clear prospect of those to come, the faithful citizen of the United States turns with an affectionate confidence towards his own government for measures of effectual and timely provision against avoidable distress. The mercantile shipping of the United States are *the vehicles to transport the produce of the land to foreign markets, and to import the supplies of the people and government.* If our merchants and ship builders should be exposed to ruin by a bad system of political economy, the owners and cultivators of the American soil will surely and deeply suffer with them.

If foreign governments would agree to *the universal freedom of trade*, this country would be required, by prudence and by justice to the mass of its citizens, to make the experiment of such a state of things. Our government, in that case, might say to the merchants, seamen and ship builders, the field of competition lies open before you. But the state of things is very different. Foreign nations are all now jealous and intelligent rivals, and will become unfeeling monopolizers, if they can lull, deceive or coerce their improvident neighbors.

If we consider the history of our own commerce, and that of ancient nations, if we duly appreciate the utility of navigation and trade to the prosperity of agriculture and manufactures, and particularly if we reflect on the commercial avidity which has distinguished the commencement of the nineteenth century, we shall not probably fail to be convinced, that *a wise system of laws to support trade and mercantile manufactures,* digested in the form of *a navigation act,*" has really become absolutely necessary.

It is respectfully suggested, that the most salutary measure, which can be adopted, will probably be the immediate commitment of this important subject for deliberate and profound investigation. But though it will be necessary to await, with respect, the result of such an examination, it may be useful, here, to display, by a few examples, *the nature* of the provisions, which existing evils and impending dangers seem to require.

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Suggestions in relation to a navigation act, respectfully submitted to the public judgment.

Foreign colonial principles, incorrectly applied to the most forcible and unjust usurpations by the sword, as well as to scenes populated by national migration, are often used in treaties and statutes, to deprive the United States of profitable and fair reciprocity of trade with eight tenths of the subjects of a foreign power, while our territorial districts (our genuine and valuable colonies), and a precious acquisition by fair and costly purchase, are equally open to those, who have and those who have not colonies: to those who exclude us from, and those, who admit us into their colonial establishments. Some nations refuse a participation in the carriage of our own produce to their colonies, and they escape the countervailing justice of an export duty, *because our constitution forbids that imposition.* The returns for these exports are often made in distilled spirits, from the freight of which we are also excluded, though they interfere with the produce of our orchards, and with those breweries and distilleries, which support the prices of our grain and fruit. These foreign spirits also interfere with the profits of our vast importation of molasses in our own vessels. It is respectfully submitted as a provision fit for insertion in a permanent system of commercial laws, that an additional duty be laid upon fermented and distilled liquors, and all materials for the manufacture thereof, imported in foreign vessels, from ports or countries into which our vessels are not permitted by permanent laws, to enter, for a participation in such trade, and for which commodities they may not carry funds, either in cash or in the produce of the United States. If we gain the just reciprocity, our ship-wrights and merchants will feel the benefit; if not, our landed interest and our traders in distilled spirits, wines and molasses with more liberal powers, will gain considerable advantages. *A foreign monopoly, extinguishable by our laws, will be excluded from our country.*— As an evidence of the extreme injustice of foreign laws and treaties in this respect, it may be correctly stated, that the manufactures of our principal supplier consumed by us, and in which we participate the carriage, would not fill three thousand hogsheads, while the monopolized freight of the rum of their colonies is actually paid on thirty thousand.

An excluding duty upon all the produce of the foreign fisheries, belonging to governments which so duty or exclude ours, would favor the fishing and coasting trades, and ship-building, and would occasion a demand on our agriculture for substitutes, in the shape of pickled and salted provisions.

An abolition of all the present duties on mercantile vessels (to place them on a footing with working waggons) is respectfully suggested, ships being *the vehicles for our produce,* as much as carriages. But, as foreign nations may continue to impose duties and light-money on our vessels, provisions of law to collect equivalent duties from them, might be made. These, it is believed, would produce a fund sufficient for the expences of the establishments for the direction and safety of shipping. But, if they should not, then the ordinary impost would be a just fund. For, it is fitter to include this actual charge of importation, like the rest, in the price of the commodity, than to demand the same tonnage from an *American manufactured* ship *in ballast,* as is paid by a ship with a rich cargo *of foreign manufactures and produce.* It seems to be a different spirit which solicits an abstinence from duty on working & *even on pleasure carriages,* imposing the road tax upon the persons and property of the poor and the rich; and which asks a tonnage *duty* from the builder and owner of *the greatest vehicle of our country produce.*

It would be a very familiar, safe, wise and just provision of law to declare no foreign ship shall bring to us the produce of any country but its own, unless its government grants to our vessels, with entire good faith, the privilege of carrying to their ports the produce of foreign countries, as freely as to their own ships. *The subject of this suggestion is conceived to be of primary importance.*

The immediate exclusion of *cotton yarn* from all countries, and the gradual exclusion of low-priced cotton manufactures, from countries, which do not consume our cotton wool, would occasion the small freight which those goods afford us, to be exchanged for the freight on our own cotton, exported to make such goods abroad, and the freight of the goods, so manufactured, back to this country. The increased consumption of our own cotton would benefit agriculture, as well as commerce. This occurs to a great extent in the East India trade. It would be perfectly easy and more advantageous on the whole, to lade our India vessels with sugar, coffee, spices, teas, silks, porcelain, saltpetre and some other commodities, than with goods made of *foreign rival cotton.* It is conceived, however, that China ought to form an exception, as that country treats us with perfect reciprocity and justice.

An alien duty is laid upon the mercantile transactions of our citizens in some countries. An extra duty of one per cent. on all dutied *manufactures* from the dominions of such powers might yield an indemnity, or produce an abolition of these invidious impositions.

Some countries exclude all our manufactures. Others admit them. We receive all. An extraordinary impost, on the least liberal, is a duty to the most liberal and to ourselves. This would be the more just, because, while our manufactures and products are rejected by some countries, they receive the same kind of goods from other friendly nations.

A duty is respectfully suggested of two and one half per cent. upon all goods, wares and merchandise on board any vessel of the U. S. from which a passenger or contracted seaman shall be impressed, which goods shall be the property of a subject or citizen of the impressing power. A duty is also suggested, to be made payable in six months after the end of every calender year, on all the dutied *manufactures* of every foreign nation, unless it shall be officially declared by the Secretary of State, within the month preceding the time of payment, *that no fact of the nature of an impressment has been committed, during the said calender year of importation, on board of any ship or vessel of the U States, and remains uncompensated and unremedied, to the best of his knowlege.* From these duties we might except cotton goods from Europe, as generally made of our own produce. If it be thought a delicate operation, thus to deal with foreign nations, it is no less delicate any longer to endure violations of the personal rights of American citizens, and of the flag of the U. States. We do not impress out of any foreign ship. No foreign government would suffer the practice at our hands.

It would greatly encourage the carrying trade and ship-building (as well as manufactures, and the improvement and cultivation of our lands), if iron were to be made a free commodity; and if a duty fully equal to, or even greater than that on iron were laid on foreign manufactures of that material. More than half our bar iron is said to be imported. Foreign and American artists and improvements, in the metal branches, abound in the U. States. The raw material is really wanted. The consumption would be quickly increased by the spring, which would be given to the iron manufactory. The iron masters would not lose their profits, since it would only be a change of duty. The great mercantile manufacture of sea vessels is favorably affected by the abundance of iron, and the number of iron manufacturers. We exempt raw hides and skins from duty, to encourage the leather manufacturers though foreign skins interfere with the produce of every farm. This aid or rather relief to ship building, the fisheries and carrying trade, would be substantial, safe and just, yet it could not excite jealousy, or a disposition to countervailing duties on the part of foreign governments—a circumstance always worthy of attention. Cheap ships, *as vehicles of our produce and supplies,* are as important to the planters, farmers and government, as cheap waggons. Greater fortunes have been made by iron works on a medium, than can be expected by building and owning vessels henceforth. The latter occupations are more likely to want the aid of a fair and judicious economy, than the former, and the persons engaged in them are much more numerous than the iron masters. It is conceived that the common and approved principle of exempting raw materials from duty, is in no case more fairly applied than it would be in respect to iron.

The exemption of hemp and flax from impost, and raising the duties on all the manufactures of hemp and flax would also encourage the building and employment of ships, and give a spring to those manufactures in the U. States, which would probably occasion the freedom of the two raw materials not to be injurious. Many of the reasons which arise on the subject of iron, occur in respect to hemp and flax. The carriage by sea of these two commodities, would employ many vessels. In every case of the encouragement of mercantile manufactures (and of all others), the consumption and employment of grain, flour, meat, beer, cider, distilled spirits, horses, working oxen, building materials and fuel, which are all drawn from our lands, would give an extension to the markets of the farmers, greater than that which arises from the production of the raw material.

It is considered, that an experience of years has furnished evidence of the expediency of our laws respecting foreign interposition in the coasting trade; yet a deliberate revision of them, for the purpose of adopting similar or suitable provisions in a new act of navigation, would be a very interesting part of the proposed measure. The coasting trade of G. Britain steadily employs more tonnage and seamen than any other branch of their great commerce, though they possess colonies and dominions in the four quarters of the world. As we have not any transmarine establishments, this branch of navigation is the more important. The purchase of Louisiana has greatly increased our coasting trade.

This brief and imperfect memoir is only intended as a respectful effort to bring into early consideration a wise and equitable system of statutable provisions for the promotion of our navigation, commerce and fisheries, and for the protection of our seamen and mercantile flag. The general nature of the suggested measure will be sufficiently indicated by the principles, facts and observations which are here submitted. The wisdom of the legislative and executive government, in constitutional concert, in this as in all other cases, will decide on the expediency, the necessity and the various modifications of the national laws.

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From a London Paper.

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THE FINE ARTS.

Yesterday the scaffolding and awning were removed from the Statue erected in Russell square, in honor of the late Duke of Bedford. Many friends of the Duke, and lovers of sculpture attended; the effect produced on the spectators was a lively admiration of the performance, mingled with emotions of regret for the loss of a nobleman who delighted in promoting the good of his country. The statue is colossal; the attitude well chosen, graceful and manly; the folds of drapery are ample yet sufficiently detailed. His grace reposes one arm on a plough, the left hand holds the gifts of Ceres, conforming with the general plan of a monument intended to mark the Duke's patriotic fondness for Agricultural pursuits. Spring-