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THOUGHTS on the subject of NAVAL POWER IN THE UNITED STATES, and on certain means of encouraging and promoting their Commerce and Manufactures.

No. I.

The leading ideas in the following papers are produced by a sincere and thorough conviction, that no branch of commerce, or even trade in general, should be so pursued, permitted, encouraged or defended by the United States, as to hazard the public liberty at home, the principles of Freedom abroad, or taxes on the whole nation, nearly as great as, equal, or superior to, the exclusive profit of the mercantile body.—We have rejected the example of Europe as to standing armies, political churches, the penal code, and other dangerous errors and aberrations from right; but the splendours and temptations of naval power and external commerce, as established and extended in Europe, have their full share of influence over many persons of great worth and judgment in the United States.

A review of the nature and practice of the European Government will fully convince us, that their public authority is the principal mean to procure seamen for their navies.—The most energetic navy (that of England) is manned by "impressment." This operation is considered in the United States to be conducted on the principles of mere arbitrary Government. The happiness of the seamen's families, their comforts and their necessities, do not seem to be objects of any consideration. The mariner's personal rights,* and even his written and signed engagements to serve private persons, British or foreign, under shipping papers or portage bills, are violated without any allowance of damages either to the seaman or the merchant, without punishment, & without censure, & indeed, often without justification or applause. In manning her navy, G. Britain is manifestly and completely despotic over her own merchants, sea captains and mariners, and acts, at present, in like manner even with respect to foreign merchants, captains and seamen. She undertakes to dictate to her nautical subjects alone, that they shall neglect or violate all their engagements and serve her, and upon terms also dictated by her; for impressed British seamen's wages are fixed by that Government. To consult together merely for procuring higher wages, would be treated as a mutiny. If her seamen were to be at liberty to ask and obtain their own rates of wages, and were to be paid those wages, their navy could not be continued on its present scale. Will the seamen of the United States submit to a single regimen in this case, like that of Great-Britain? Will the rest of the people of this country consent to such an example of coercion and limitation of wages? Will our Legislatures and Courts permit or sanction such a regimen to one class of citizens? Will our Courts of Impeachment & Courts Martial allow the orders and conduct of civil and military officers, in conformity with such a regimen, to pass unnoticed and unpunished? Do not these considerations deeply affect the practicability of a great naval power, on the principles of the constitution of the United States? It may be fairly and prudently asked, Whether a standing naval establishment is not liable to a large proportion of the objections to a standing army; and whether it is not entitled to that name and character in a very considerable degree? The use which was made of the British navy, in the war of 1775, against the American colonies, even while it was confessedly a civil war, will prove that a naval force can be openly and actively used to destroy the public liberty of a nation at home; and the use which was made of the British navy in the peaceable year 1792, and in the war of 1793, against France, will prove that it can be used to destroy the principles of public liberty abroad.† The dreadful condition of Ireland, upon various occasions, and for many years, is, in a considerable degree, to be ascribed to the state of control in which it has been held by means of the British navy, in which tens of thousands of Irish seamen were enlisted or impressed. Had that country been joined to this continent in 1776, or to that of Europe in 1792, Ireland would have had complete British constitutional liberty or a separation. It is in evidence, that a great navy may destroy liberty at home and abroad, by force, while the patronage of the appointments and supplies, and the willing dependence of its whole appropriate judiciary power, with the fruits of its rapacious and lawless spoliations, carry servility and corruption into every class of the nation. Similar reflections arise concerning the use of the navy in the slave trade, islands and colonies.—These observations are not made from any unfavourable opinions of the individuals who

* If a person of a religious society principled against war, or one believing the war of the time unjust, be impressed, the rights of conscience are violated.

† It is no consequence to this argument, that France afterwards departed from the principles of liberty.

compose our navy, or that of any other nation; but are merely intended to prove, that although a navy has not been thought to endanger public or general liberty in the present form and manner of an army, it is so justly exceptionable on that score, as to require a constitutional prudence in relation to it, as a standing armament in the hands of the Government. Every standing public force requires caution, whether it be on the water or on the land.

But it may be observed, that commerce exists, that it is absolutely necessary, and that it is profitable. The carriage of our produce by ships into the consumer's markets, is as useful to the growers of that produce as the carriage by waggons. The rights and interests of commerce, as well as the interest of agriculture, therefore, require that our ships be kept as free as possible from impediments to their voyages, their cargoes from spoliation, and their crews, whether natives or aliens, from foreign impressment. For this purpose, some persons have desired that the United States should be immediately made and permanently maintained a considerable naval power. We have suggested for due consideration some difficulties and some apparent impediments. It will be determined how far they are inherent in the nature of things in the United States, how far they are real, and how far they can be acquiesced in or obviated.

If it be supposed for a moment, that these objections are not real, and that they may be obviated, then let us consider the vast expense of a naval establishment.

Great-Britain spends annually from seventy to eighty-five millions of dollars on her navy. One-tenth of her navy would cost us ten or twelve millions of dollars, which is from 11 to 12 per cent. on all our exports, foreign and American, in the greatest year. It is the whole net profit of our trade, and it is presumed, more. Yet such a limited navy could not, of course, resist a fifth of the fleets of England, nor could it resist the navy held by several other powers, till the British revenue lately devoured all the other navies of the old world. The navy of G. Britain is indeed a brilliant instrument of stupendous power; but it has proved, to her finances, a splendid instrument of ruin. It costs her from seventy to 85 millions of dollars per annum in direct expenditures, under regular appropriations, besides a great indirect amount, in bounties on sail cloth, on fisheries, and numerous other things in their complicated system of commerce and finance.† It is a standing army, as oppressive to foreign nations as the standing armies of the Stuarts and the Cromwells were to the British nation. It has become hostile to the liberty of all at sea, and, so far as it spares the British people themselves, it is because it is employed upon aliens. It involves Great-Britain in great odium, and in incessant, bloody and expensive quarrels and wars of pride, power and avarice. It facilitates her immense participation in the commerce and slavery of the blacks, and in the cruel and extensive tyranny exercised over India.

Do the United States want such a navy; such an instrument of oppression; such an instrument of defence; such an instrument of offence; such a drain for their wealth; a mill stone slung around the public neck, to deal destruction to all we may chuse to insult, and at the same time to bend the public neck, and sink the public body in the abyss of military expense? The British plea of defence, for the fatal expenses of a navy, does not exist in the case of the United States. They are not an island of 70,000 square miles; nor are they near to any foreign enemy; nor have they concentrations of movable property to tempt and enrich invaders; nor keys of their country in the shape of fortresses or metropolitan cities, by which invaders may hold and command their dominions; nor have they transmarine colonies; nor any commerce which the Foreign World can do without. The interest of Europe will prevent the annihilation of a country's trade, which presents them with abundance of food and increasing raw materials for their colonies, armies, navies and manufactures, and which affords a steady vent and an immense consumption for their manufactured commodities.

† It is difficult to procure correct statements of the British naval expenses down to the present time; but a recurrence to the British New Annual Register, for the years 1801, 1802, and 1803, will shew, that the sums of 15,000,000l. sterling, equal to 70,320,000 dollars, and 19,012,237l. sterling, equal to 84,500,000 dollars, were appropriated for the navy department in two of those years. It is also stated, that 330,000,000 of pounds in navy bills were issued by the Government in one of those years, but that 5,000,000 remained locked up in the bank. It is presumed from these facts, and the wonderful exertions of 1804, 5 and six, that the direct and indirect naval expenses of Great-Britain are much greater than has been supposed.

No. II.

But if the most interesting and important considerations forbid the dangerous

war-creating and expensive instrumentality of a large navy to protect our commerce, and since trade is highly desirable, and indispensably necessary to the planters and farmers, it is proper to devise a system of protection for it; and this is an object demanding the temperate investigation and careful reflection of every description of our citizens.

The following questions may help to lead us to the true ground:

1. Should the United States have any navy, and how strong or numerous should it be?

2. What should be the commercial pursuits of the United States?

3. By what means, other than a navy can the United States promote and protect their commerce?

To the first question, requiring much calm investigation, it is conceived that the following ideas may serve as an imperfect answer. It is not by force, that we can protect our trade from the great navies of the primary maritime powers; for it is conceived that we cannot at present, and ought not to establish a naval force equal to theirs, on account of the monstrous expense, the danger to our civil institutions, and for the other reasons before assigned against the establishment of a great naval power in the United States. But we may protect our trade by force from the petty and irregular states, whose commerce with us affords no means of acting upon them; such, for example, as the several states of Barbary. A fleet commensurate with such objects and no more, appears to be that limited force, which we may establish without any of the objections to a great navy, which have been suggested. If we are to go further in this dangerous and costly operation, it is respectfully recommended, that the subject be first thoroughly examined and well considered.

The second question proposed is, what should be the commercial pursuits of the United States? To this it may be generally replied, that no trade whatever, internal or external, which injures agriculture, or benefits the merchants only, at a great expense to the rest of the community, should be pursued.

It is our interest to import implements and materials for manufactures, and manufactures themselves, which will employ many vessels, rather than to import manufactured goods which will employ very few.

It is our interest to promote and establish internal trade, of which manufactures are a most valuable part, rather than external trade; because the raw materials and family supplies of the American manufacturers, fishermen and coasters are drawn from ourselves, or from our carrying trade, which last is very little promoted by the importation of cheap foreign manufactures.

Every act of unlawful impediment, injury, embarrassment, or injury to our foreign trade and navigation, and to our navy, ought to be a strong and animating incentive to promote domestic trade and manufactures, because they are less subject to those foreign injuries, and because the cultivation of internal trade and manufactures silently operates as a fine upon the foreign invaders of our maritime rights and the foreign violators of our commercial interests. We should render it perfectly manifest and absolutely certain to Europe, that so far as the American commercial spirit is checked or injured at sea, it will be unceasingly turned to and promoted on the shore. Our cities, towns, and villages must be scenes of commerce or of manufactures. If foreign nations interrupt us in a legitimate course of fair share of the business of supplying ourselves from the cheapest and most convenient sources abroad, we shall, independently and of necessity, supply ourselves from existing or new sources at home.

We reasonably desire to secure to ourselves a share of the carriage of our own unwrought goods to the foreign manufactures, and of their manufactures to our markets, and it is our wish to promote the foreign consumption of our products. So far as we prevent the American consumption of foreign manufactures, not made from our own produce, we promote our carriage of our own raw materials, our carriage of foreign manufactures, and the fabrication of our raw materials by foreign manufactures. Thus, for example, the recent act of congress on Mr. Nicholson's resolutions, by prohibiting certain articles of wool, linen, silk, and leather, (which are made abroad entirely from foreign materials that we neither grow nor

carry) occasions cotton gloves, hose, shirting, sheeting, towelling, tabling and furniture stuffs, to be used, which are made chiefly from the cotton produced on our farms, and in the carriage of which to Europe, we largely participate.

And here we obtain a view of a very important principle, which may assist us in answering the third question, "By what means, other than a navy, can we promote and protect our commerce?" remembering always, that such commerce must be free from injurious effects upon agriculture, & not unreasonably burdensome on the nation, to be entitled to promotion and protection by our federal legislature?

By well devised acts of congress, it is firmly believed that we can do much for the promotion and protection of our trade. It is conceived, that the principles of Mr. Nicholson's bill, rightly understood, are an example of that nature. G. Britain so interrupts and coerces our seamen, and embarrasses, obstructs, and blockades our trade, that we are compelled to increase the encouragements to our manufactures of certain articles; and in order to do this with prudence, and secure revenue from consumption at the same time, we take the same kind of goods from other foreign nations (with little or no navy to accommodate us or not so much in the practice) to far as they can supply them. It may be observed, too, that some amongst us heartily approved that law, because it would induce G. Britain to manufacture substitutes from our raw cotton for the linen, woolen, flannel, and leathern goods prohibited; and because we should partake largely in carrying that raw cotton to England—two considerations of great and obvious importance.

Another set of provisions might be made by law for the encouragement of our shipping and commerce. We mean here explicitly to suggest, that we may now adopt many of the regulations of the British navigation act, since we have provided for great a quantity of tonnage, and are well able to maintain and increase our vessels. Before we had so much tonnage, our planters and farmers prudently feared every regulation, which might tend to diminish the number of vessels, which could be expected to carry off our produce, and import supplies. Things are now materially changed, and we have ships enough to carry all we raise, & much more. Those which might yet come hither with cargoes from their own ports, & in ballast, would be numerous and useful in the exportation of our crops.

We may adopt measures to replace the amount of the British four per cent. export or convey duty imposed on the exportation of their own manufactures to the United States. It is believed, that the merchants trading to other foreign countries do not pay that extraordinary duty in England, which is the more unsatisfactory because we are the principal consumers and vendors of their manufactures, and because we cannot impose a similar duty on exports from hence for their account, the constitution of the U. States forbidding all duties on exportations.—We never asked the protection for which the British four per cent. duty is charged, nor do we desire or receive that protection. We are willing entirely to rely on our own neutral flag and vessels under the law of nations. To replace the amount of that duty in the treasury of the United States, we may either impose an equal duty of four per cent. on all imports from G. Britain by or on account of British subjects, or we may abolish the drawback on all goods so imported.

In cases wherein we are not admitted, with a real reciprocity, into foreign ports, so as to exclude our ships from the freight of articles which are imported in foreign ships, to the injury of our agriculture and manufactures, as well as of our commerce and navigation, it will be wise deliberately to revise the lists of imported articles.—For example, we might advance the duty on spirits from the cane, or entirely exclude the entry from all places, into which our ships are not regularly admitted. We can procure liquors from our distilleries of domestic and foreign materials, and from rum, brandy and wine countries, into which our ships are admitted to carry our produce, and from which they can bring away those foreign commodities.

It seems expedient for us to encourage the importation of sugars, coffee, cocoa, pimento, ginger, pepper, and other spices and groceries from countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope, rather than cotton piece goods, which interfere with our