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THE CLAIMS OF THE BRITISH WEST INDIA COLONIES.

To the right of obtaining necessary supplies from America, and of employing the necessary means of effectually obtaining those supplies under a limited and duly regulated intercourse, stated and vindicated, in answer to Lord Sheffields strictures.—By G. W. JORDAN, Esq. F. R. S. Colonial Agent for Barbadoes.

Political economy, it seems like religion, has its bigoted as well as its rational professors; and examples of each kind are afforded by the parties who now demand our consideration, So closely attached is Lord Sheffield to the navigation laws, that he will allow of no deviation from them, however imperiously required by circumstances: and the dictates of policy, or the calls of humanity, or the pressure of famine, are in his mind scarcely adequate excuses for any departure from the rigid enactments of our marine regulations. His lordship had censured the Dutch property act, the repeal of the American countervailing duties, and the admission of American shipping into our West India islands, under licenses severally granted by their privy council here, and by the respective governments of the islands abroad. Mr. Jordan, however, triumphantly combats the views of the noble Lord on all these points. The first two, indeed, are now nearly events of past history; but it should seem that Mr. Jordan was of opinion that it would facilitate his success in debating the latter point, if he shewed that, in matters of like import, Lord S. was not entitled to the credit which previous reputation had a tendency to secure to him; but that on the contrary his ideas were confined, and that he laboured under prejudices which materially misled him.

In order to comprehend the third point in dispute we must take a brief historical view of it. Mr. Jordan informs us that various articles of which the colonies are in want, cannot be supplied by Great Britain, among which are those of the first necessity; that the American states, when subject to Great Britain, were accustomed to furnish these commodities to the West India islands; that they were principally conveyed in American bottoms; that the purchasers paid for them in produce; and that, when the American war broke out, the colonies, debarred of this important trafic, were reduced to extreme hardships. When peace became re-established, the necessity of a renewal of this intercourse between the islands and the American main land was universally felt and admitted; and accordingly it was allowed and regulated by the 28th of the King. In passing this statute, the legislature took it for granted that the circuitous voyage of British ships—vessels furnished by the colonies which still remained to England, and such as the islands themselves would build—would be fully adequate to the transport of the American supplies; and it therefore enacts that these goods shall be imported solely in British bottoms. This expectation has completely failed; so that, from the date of the statute to the present time, licences sanctioned by parliament have been issued by the privy council here, and by the several governments of the island, dispensing with its provisions, and allowing the admission of American vessels, in order to prevent the inhabitants from starving, and to supply them with materials to enclose the produce which was to be conveyed to the mother country.—The legislature, in passing the before mentioned act, recognized the necessity of the intercourse between the islands and America, and had no idea of shackling it by directing an inadequate mode of carriage: but that the mode which it did establish was wholly inadequate, the experience of more than 10 years demonstates. Nothing can more strongly prove this fact, than the regular issue of licences dispensing with the provisions of the statute during the whole of that time. The council at home is above suspicion; and the governors abroad, as is here shown, exercise the power under a very serious responsibility.

'I know' says the author, 'the case to have occurred, when during the continuance of war, and whilst Great Britain, in extreme distress, had opened her ports to all ships, and paid bounties upon all species of corn and grain, and upon India corn among the rest, drawing thus from the colonies all means of supply instead of sending them any, that letters of the strictest and harshest tenor were received by the chief of a colony respecting the admission of American vessels, and holding out in prospect the dangers annually indemnified against, although the colony was at that very time in a state of the greatest distress, and many whites and negroes had actually perished of famine, or of diseases which famine had provoked. At this very period, supplies of flour, embarked in this kingdom for the colonies, were by order actually relanded and retained.'

Lord Sheffield is here shewn to have censured the licences, without stating the urgent circumstances which rendered them absolutely indispensible. It is also proved that he charges the merchants and planters with seeking an unlimited intercourse with America, while they only solicit that the wisdom of the legislature should provide effectual means for carrying on that restricted communication, without which the islands cannot subsist, and which Great Britain has hitherto allowed.

Mr. Jordan is anxious not to entrench on the claims of the parent states; he acknowledged her right to monopolize the whole trade of the colonies, and all its appurtenances, imports, exports, and carriages; but if, from choce or necessity, she abandons any part of this commerce, as in the case of the present instance with regard to the more heavy articles required by the colonies, she either ought to leave them to supply the defect in their own way, or else should effectually make this provision on their behalf. The British government sanctioned the intercourse, but it provided an insufficient channel for it; and when the legislature had granted such permission, should it be a reproach to the planters and merchants to require that without which [illegible] ineffectual, that without which they must have died of famine, and the produce have perished for want of the means of package? Yet it is such a dispensation with the requisitions of an imperfect act of parliament which the noble Lord so strongly censures. It is not a dispensing power, as opposed to a regular and established law, that forms the burden of his lamentation, but the existence of dispensations in any shape: yet the real situations of things proclaims that the islands would have been depopulated, and their produce wasted, if the act of parliament had been, as he desired, rigorously enforced.

It is here justly observed that, if Great Britain allows a colony to carry on a branch of commerce with another state, it ought to be governed by the same policy with that which regulates the like intercourse on the part of the mother country. Now Great Britain allows goods to be imported in its own shipping, and in that of the state of which they are the produce; the principal navigation laws are therefore founded in naitonal reciprocity; and it would be impossible to pass more strict navigation statutes, seeing that they effect other states as well as the state enacting them. In our traffic, then, with another nation, the ships of that nation and the ships of this country indifferently import the goods which belong to that nation. If we place a colony in the same situation with regard to a branch of commerce, it is natural that the same rule should be observed; namely, that the goods imported should be brought indifferently in the shipping of Great Britain, or of the colony, or in the shipping of the country whence they are derived.

Mr. Jordan, who views its subject in all its bearings, rightly remarks that another state is a party in this matter; that we must legislate with her in view as well as ourselves; and that we ought to observe the reciprocity which is consulted in the chief navigation acts. We may enact that we shall export and import in colonial or British bottoms between the colony and America, but America will have a right to complain of the want of reciprocity, and most probably will not fail to exercise that right. The colony, *quoad* this particular traffic, should be regarded as identified with the Metropole: and the same rule should direct the intercourse with foreign states.

It is also a very important observation of this author, that, if in peace we supply the colonies with American articles in British bottoms, the conveyance of the same articles in time of war in American bottoms will be, on our own construction of the laws of nations, a contraband trade, and be liable to lawful capture by our enemy; whereas, by acting on the provisions of our leading marine statutes, that is, by admitting American produce (to the extent limited by the 28th of George III.) to be brought indifferently in English or American bottoms, the colonies in time of hostility will, in regard to necessaries and other essential articles, be put out of all hazard. We trust that considerations, so ably stated, and so temperately urged, will not long fail of producing the desired end; namely, an act which would effectually secure to the colonies the benefits contemplated by the 28th of the king, but to which it has proved utterly inadequate.

If the colonial intercourse with America is confined to its legal limits, (and Mr. J. observes that such is the vigilance of the revenue officers, that there can be no apprehension of this not being done,) it ought to be regarded with satisfaction rather than jealousy; since it can only grow in proportion to the great carrying trade with England. It is, he tells us, as little the interest, as it is the duty of the West India proprietors, to wish that this valuable monopoly should be invaded. On the part of himself and his constituents, he renounces any intention of directly or indirectly diminishing this grand source of British wealth; and on the contrary he contends that the necessary regulations which he recommends, if once fixed on a legal unchanging basis, would materially increase the consignments to the parent state.—For the particulars of the detail into which Mr. J. enters, we must refer our readers to his very able and instructive pamphlet.—

Assured of his present victory, the author invites his adversary to a fresh contest; and since the point, which the noble lord is solicited to discuss, possesses interest not merely as a subject on which political polemics may try their skill and knowledge, but claims our notice in various other respects of incomparably greater importance, we shall record the challenge in our pages; not so much from a hope of occasioning a literary tournament in which the present champions will take the lead, as in the more gratifying expectation of calling the attention of various good judges, and of the government, to a topic which strikes us as being of the utmost consequence.

'Over the remaining heads of recapitulation, as already disposed of, I hasten that I may supply your lordship with matter for further consideration, and with other subjects of stricture. I wonder that the free ports of the West Indies have escaped your lordship's animadversion.—These are ports, established for the purpose of carrying on a trade in which none but foreign vessels are or can be employed. I introduce this subject, not merely for the information of your lordship, but for the purpose of drawing the attention of government thereto. Here is indeed a formidable invasion of the navigation and colonial systems of the empire. Yet I introduce this subject for the express purpose of recommending to government to extend to these principles and practices now applied, and obtaining in only particular cases and situations, to the general and permanent establishment of a trade, not limited to ports and places, but to be opened to all the British West India islands and colonies. It is possible to open a South American trade, as well as that of North America, which, without any respect to the nature of the shipping employed, shall by a due enumeration and restriction of the permitted articles of exchange or carriage, with perfect safety and propriety, increase indefinitely the British import, export, and carrying trades of the West India islands.

"These islands are so disposed along the coasts, or stretched across between the principal points of South and North America, that access to them from both the continents may at all times be had by the simplest and cheapest species of navigation. The approach of British vessels to the continent of South America is partially or totally forbidden by the great European powers who possess it. Under these circumstances, British vessels cannot be used in the intercourse with it. Great Britain, therefore, of necessity indeed, but with her accustomed wisdom, has opened certain ports in the colonies to vessels of these foreign countries, in order that they may bring in the enumerated articles she desires to obtain, and that they carry the enumerated articles she wishes to dispose of, or such as are necessary to support the trade. The first enumeration contains articles of territorial produce of that part of the continent, and bullion among the rest; the other consists of goods of British manufacture, or import, or articles of territorial produce of the islands. Great Britain does not upon this occasion consider her navigation and colonial systems, as not at any time, upon any occasion, or under any circumstances to be invaded. She looks to the objects and purposes of those systems. She wants raw materials; she wants markets for her various articles of manufacture, commerce, and produce; she wants encouragement and extensive employment for her shipping. By neglecting all consideration of the use, as militating against her navigation and colonial systems, of these petty vessels, which serve to associate her islands with the continent, she obtains all the objects of those systems, materials, markets, and increased carriage. The ports of her islands become ports of the continent, and these vessels are only as the port vessels and lading droghers of other countries. British ships carry to, and bring away from the islands the commodities laden in, and unladen from these vessels, and neither their employment or their numbers is to be contemplated or calculated upon by Great Britain, but as proofs of the extension of her own commerce and proper navigation.

"Instead, therefore, of a port in Grenada, a port in Dominica, two in Jamaica, one in Tortola, one in the Bahamas, it might upon these principles well be recommended to Great Britain, to extend the provisions of the Free Port Acts to all the islands, or to the Custom house ports of all the islands. It might further be proposed, by enlarging and combining all the principles and practices which alike prevail in the West India intercourse with the Northern and Southern portions of America, to form one general, simple, and consolidated system, that should connect them all, which should embrace and comprehend the at present enumerated articles of import and export between the whole continent and the islands, and permit them the employment, jointly with British ships, of one decked vessels, of all the countries growing the commodities imported into the islands. I submit this proposal to the severity of your Lordship's strictures, I suggest it for the consideration of Ministers.

"In this view of the subject, what is there to be objected against North American vessels of this description, that will not apply to the Spanish Main ships of South America, and what is there to recommend the droghers of the Oronoko, and of the river of the Amazons, that will not also favour the sloops and schooners of the Delaware and the Chesapeak? they are all but as the country boats of all the other nations of the world, employed wherever our commerce extends, to bring to and deposit in ports of access, commodities for use or for transport. They are auxiliary and subservient to the great traders of the deep who may pass by them with their woven wings without jealousy or envy.

"I again most seriously and earnestly recommend to His Majesty's Ministers, to establish a general American intercourse with all the British West India colonies upon these general principles, and I do not hesitate to say, that if Great Britain still continues to refuse the employment of these petty vessels, for these purposes, and in the manner proposed, that she sacrifices, and continues to sacrifice her navigation, to her navigation and colonial systems."

If we have been taught, at an immense expense, to think justly on the subject of colonies, and if we have exploded the notion of a right of taxing them, we ought to have regarded the attempt to tax foreign states as scarcely less impracticable, or less unjust. As this is an error, which, like the fatal one before committed, is calculated for popularity, we insert the able exposure of it by the pen of Mr. Jordan:

"Unfortunately, during the late war, an idea was taken up, against all principles of political wisdom and public justice, to tax foreign nations, by retaining part of the drawback, upon the re-exportation of sugar from Great Britain. This was a great breach of parental faith, on the part of Great Britain; it was a great breach of justice thus to take away a portion of the accidental profits of commerce which they only are honorably entitled to, who risque at all times equally the loss and the profit. Like all other great violations of principle, this also was attended with consequences directly, indirectly, and remotely injurious to all whom it affected. One of these indirect and remote consequences, was an attempt made for the first time, in the ports of the colonies, to establish those distinctions between the exports to the United States, in British and in American vessels. Sugar and coffee were either absolutely prohibited to American vessels, or limited to specified portions of their return cargoes. Considerable impediments to the obtaining of supplies or necessaries were thus vexatiously created and perpetuated, and great inconveniences sustained. Not among the least was the considerable drainage of specie, complained of in all the colonies. American vessels are compelled, either to leave a particular colony without dealing, or they draw out from amidst the population of the country, those last portions of gold or silver money which, retained amidst the ranks of society by all the principles and energies of political existence and combination, yield only to the most powerful actions, and like the last portions of moisture which give form and solidity to natural bodies, are only in the extremest cases separated and carried off. The specie thus obtained was immediately laid out to purchase without restriction, return cargoes of produce among the foreign islands, to their great encouragement, and to the considerable vexation and injury of the British colonists.—This drainage of specie was attended with considerable loss, not only to the planters, but to government also, in the article of exchange. From a considerable per centage and in our market, where the money point of exchange is fixed at forty per cent. government could frequently get only twenty five per cent. or a smaller per centage on the bills she was obliged to sell for the purposes of maintaining her establishments. This certain loss, considerably overbalancing any contingent interests, deserves the attention and regulation of Government.

"This unprincipled and abortive attempt to tax foreign nations, by importing among them commodities, loaded with domestic duties, was at length abandoned. Something like a better system has succeeded. Regulations have been formed, according to which, although at times and under increasing prices, increasing portions of the drawback on sugars may be retained, yet, in compensation for this, it is with some apparent fairness provided, that in other cases a bounty shall be superadded when the prices fall beyond a certain point. There is, indeed, in the ascending scale of bounties but one solitary step of compensation, whilst in the descending the drawbacks are diminsihed through many and various degrees of decline, into total extinction. All assurance also is suspended, as to the permanent benefits of this arrangement by its limited existence, and consequent dependance upon uncertain opinions, and upon political events and combinations yet more uncertain.

"From discussions of this sort, all questions of finance ought upon principle to be excluded. Whatever sacrifices commerce may make to navigation, she should make none to revenue."

Readers who prefer instruction to amusement will set a high value on the present pamphlet; and the superior orders of persons will discern in it much of that accuracy and precision, which men of scientific views and habits sometimes happily introduce into the treatment of subjects on which moral probabilities are alone concerned. We take leave of it with the acknowledgment that it has highly gratified and instructed us; and we cordially recommended it to the attentive perusal of all who are possessed of either commercial or political influence.

To the editor of the Brattleborough Reporter.

SIR,

My letters to my constituents being closed, I have a request to make, through the channel of your paper to the editors of the Vermont Gazette, New Hampshire Centinel, Columbian Centinel, and all other publishers of papers, who have given publicity to the following declaration of mine, to which, by mistake, a very improper coloring has been given.

"The destruction of the constitution of the United States has been determined on by a private caucus of the junto I have alluded to."

In order to determine to whom this charge was intended to apply, recourse should have been had to my first letter, where this junto is described. "A few ambitious individuals undertake to anticipate the public sentiment upon all important questions," &c. Every member of the administration, every member of the national legisture, is expressly excepted. I shall not impeach the integrity of any man in public life. Great injustice has therefore been done me in endeavouring to make me say that the destruction of the constitution has been agreed on in "a caucus of legislators at Washington." I have not said so.—From the Frantic rage of the *revolutionists*, their avowed hostility to the constitution, their infernal proscription of its friends and their constant habits of *caucusing*, together with some facts of a private nature, I am perfectly convinced of the truth of the declaration which has been made; but as I am willing to yield to every member of the government the same reputation for integrity which I claim myself, I cannot but consider the application which has been made of that declaration as a very unjust one. The expression was at best incautious, but was not intended to "impeach the integrity" of any member of the legislature.

It is true that there is a standing "caucus of legislators at Washington." It is composed of very few individuals, and not one member from the New England states has ever been invited to a share in its deliberations. I am prepared to accuse this caucus of attempting to govern the union in a very improper manner, but not of conspiring the total destruction of our present constitution. They think the present constitution a very bad one, and wish to give us a good one in its room. The several alterations which they proposed at the last session of congress are fraught with ruin. In the opinion of myself and many others they would produce the destruction of the constitution; but the men who propose them believe that they would be very great improvements in our system. If we say therefore, that these gentlemen have determined to destroy the constitution, we must be understood merely as saying that the measures which they persue will produce that effect, although their object is very different. For myself I have no more doubt of their integrity, than I have that their measures, if adopted, will produce a revolution, and of course a despotism.

I request the printers throughout the union, who have published the declaration above quoted, to give a place in their columnes to this explanation, which is not less due to my reputation as a man of veracity, than to the cause of truth and the constitution.

JAMES ELLIOT.

Brattlesborough, June 29, 1805.

☞ Ferguson's Norfolk packet *will sail for Norfolk, on WEDNESDAY the* 17*th inst.*

2000 bushels SALT for sale.

July 13

For sale,

THE period of service of a German indented Servant woman. She is about 18 years of age, and has upwards of 2 years to serve. The lowest price is fifty dollars—this is stated to avoid unnecessary application. Apply to the printers.

July 15 d.

Robert Dunn

WILL shortly leave Baltimore for 2 or 3 months, those who may have business with him will please call on or before the 17th instant.

July 15 d4t.

25 Dollars Reward.

RAN AWAY from the subscriber on the 7th inst. an indented servant man, named LUCAS FISHER, by trade a *Taylor*. He had on when he went away, a blue cloth coat, with yellow buttons, nankeen pantaloons and marseilles vest—he took with him, a drab black coat faced with silk velvet of the same color.—The aforesaid Fisher is about 20 years of age 5 feet 9 inches high, walks erect, has curly hair, a remarkable large head and a projected forehead, he is by birth a Wirthenburger, and when he speaks German you may discover it by his dialect; he speaks English tolerably well, but stammers a little when speaking.—I have reason to believe he was persuaded off by a certain young woman who he was in the habit of going to see, who does not as I am informed bear the best character. I have reason to believe they have gone off together and taken the road to Reisterstown. I received information that two such persons were seen travelling on foot up that road on Sunday last—from what I can learn, the aforesaid young woman left her place where she lived on the same day, the aforesaid Fisher absconded. My reason to believe they have taken the road towards Reisterstown is that the young woman has relations living near Littles-town in Pennsylvania. Whoever takes up said runaway and secures him so that I may get him again shall have the above reward.

J. WINAND.

July 6 eod1t