

men is perhaps rather dearer than ours, on the other hand, the rate of interest is lower in England and so are seamen's wages. It would be improper, therefore, to consider the amount of British tonnage in our trade, as a proof of a bad state of things, arising either from the restrictions of that government, or the negligence or timidity of this. We are to charge it to causes which are more connected with the natural competition of capital and industry, causes which in fact retarded the growth of our shipping more when we were colonies and our ships were free than since the adoption of the present government.

It has been said, with emphasis, that the constitution grew out of the complaints of the nation respecting commerce especially that with the British dominions. What was then lamented by our patriots? Feebleness of the public councils, the shadow of union, and scarce the shadow of public credit, every where dependence, the pressure of evils, not only great, but portentous of civil distractions. These were the grievances and what more was then desired than their remedies? Is it possible to survey this prosperous country, and to assert that they have been delayed? Trade flourishes on our wharves, although it droops in speeches; manufactures have risen under the shade of protecting duties from almost nothing, to such a state, that we are even told it is safe to depend on the domestic supply, if the foreign should cease. The fisheries, which we found in decline, are in the most vigorous growth; the whale fishery, which our allies would have transferred to Dunkirk, now traverses the whole ocean. To that hardy race of men, the sea is but a park for hunting its monsters; such is their activity, the deepest abysses scarcely afford to their prey an hiding place. Look round, and see how the frontier circle widens, how the interior improves, and let it be repeated, that the hopes of the people, when they formed this constitution, have been frustrated.

But if it should happen that our prejudices prove stronger than our senses, if it should be believed that our farmers and merchants see their products and ships and wharves going to decay together, and they are ignorant or silent on their own ruin—still the public documents would not disclose so alarming a state of our affairs. Our imports are obtained so plentifully and cheaply that one of the avowed objects of the resolutions is, to make them scarcer and dearer. Our exports, so far from languishing, have increased two millions of dollars in a year. Our navigation is found to be augmented beyond the most sanguine expectation.—We hear of the vast advantage the English derive from the navigation act, and we are asked in a tone of accusation, shall we sit still, and do nothing? Who is bold enough to say, Congress has done nothing for the encouragement of American navigation? To counteract the navigation act, we have laid on British a higher tonnage than our own vessels pay in their ports—and what is much more effectual we have imposed ten per cent. on the duties, when the dutied articles are borne in foreign bottoms. We have also made the coasting-trade a monopoly to our own vessels. Let those who have asserted that this is nothing, compare facts with the regulations which produced them.

Tonnage.	Tons.	Excess of
American 1789	297,468	American
Foreign	265,116	tonnage.
		32,352
American 1790	347,663	
Foreign	258,916	88,747
American 1791	363,810	
Foreign	240,799	123,011
American 1792	415,331	
Foreign	244,263	171,067

Is not this increase of American shipping rapid enough? Many persons say it is too rapid, and attracts too much capital for the circumstances of the country. I cannot readily persuade myself to think so valuable a branch of employment thrives too fast. But a steady and sure encouragement is more to be relied on than violent methods of forcing its growth. It is not clear that the quantity of our navigation, including our coasting and fishing vessels is less, in proportion to those of that nation. In that computation, we shall probably find, that we are already more a navigating people than the English.

As this is a growing country, we have the most favorable ground of dependence on the corresponding growth of our navigation: and that the increasing demand for shipping will rather fall to the share of Americans than foreigners is not to be denied. We did expect this from the nature of our own laws—we have been confirmed in it by experience—and we know that an American bottom is actually preferred to a foreign one. In cases where one partner is an American and another a foreigner, the ship is made an American bottom. A fact of this kind overthrows a whole theory of reasoning on the necessity of further restrictions. It shows that the work of restriction is already done.

If we take the aggregate view of our commercial interests, we shall find much more occasion for satisfaction, & even exultation, than complaint, & none for dependence. It would be too bold to say that our condition is so eligible there is nothing to be wished. Neither the order of nature nor the allotments of Providence afford perfect content, and it would be absurd to expect in our politics what is denied in the laws of our being. The nations with whom we have intercourse have, without exception, more or less restricted their commerce. They have framed their regulations to suit their real or fancied interests. The code of France is as full of restrictions as that of England. We have regulations of our own, and they are unlike those of any other country—inasmuch as the interests and circumstances of nations vary so essentially, the project of an exact reciprocity on our part is a vision. What we desire is to have not an exact reciprocity, but an intercourse of mutual benefit and convenience.—It has scarcely been so much as insinuated that the change contemplated will be a profitable one—that it will enable us to sell dearer and to buy cheaper—on the contrary, we are invited to submit to the hazards and losses of a conflict with our customers—to engage in a contest of self-denial. For what—to obtain better markets? no such thing—But to shut up, forever, if possible, the best market we have for our exports, and to confine ourselves to the dearest and farthest markets for our imports. And this to be done for the benefit of trade, or as it is sometimes more correctly said for the benefit of France. This language is not a little inconsistent and strange from those who recommend a non-importation agreement and who think we should even renounce the sea and devote ourselves to agriculture. Thus to make our trade more free it is embarrassed and violently shifted from one country to another, not according to the interest of the merchants, but the visionary theories and capricious rascals of the legislators.—To make trade better it is to be made nothing.

So far as commerce and navigation are regarded, the pretences for this contest are confined to two. We are not allowed to carry manufactured articles to Great-Britain, nor any products, except of our own growth; and we are not permitted to go, with our own vessels, to the West-Indies. The former, which is a provision of the navigation act, is of little importance to our interests, as our trade is chiefly a direct one, our shipping not being equal to the carrying for other nations, and our manufactured articles are not permitted in quantities for exportation, and, if they were, Great-Britain would not be a customer. So far therefore the restriction is rather nominal than real.

The exclusion of our vessels from the West-Indies is of more importance. When we propose to make an effort to force a privilege from Great-Britain, which she is loth to yield to us, it is necessary to compare the value of the object with the effort, and, above all, to calculate very warily the probability of success. A trivial thing deserves not a great exertion; much less ought we to stake a very great good in possession for a slight chance of a less good. The carriage of one half the exports and imports to and from the British West-Indies is the object to be contended for. Our whole exports to Great-Britain are to be hazarded. We sell on terms of privilege and positive favor, as it has been abundantly shown, near seven millions to the dominions of Great-Britain. We are to risk the privilege in this great contest—For what. For the freight only of one half the B. West-India trade with the U. States. It belongs to commercial men to calculate the entire value of the freight alluded to. But it cannot bear much proportion to the amount of seven millions. Besides, if we are denied the privilege of carrying our articles to our vessels to the islands, we are on a footing of privilege in the sale of them. We have one privilege if not two. It is readily admitted that it is a desirable thing to have our vessels allowed to go to the English islands, but the value of the object has its limits; and we go unquestionably beyond them, when we throw our whole exports into confusion and run the risk of losing our best markets, for the sake of forcing a permission to carry our own products to one of those markets; in which too, it should be noticed, we sell much less than we do to Great-Britain herself.—If to this we add, that the success of the contest is grounded on sanguine and passionate hypotheses of our being able to starve the islanders, which on trial, may prove false, and which our being involved in the war would overthrow at once, we may conclude, without going further into the discussion, that prudence forbids our engaging in the hazards of a commercial war; that great things should not be staked against such as are of much less value; that what we possess should not be risked for what we desire without great odds in our favor; still less if the chance is infinitely against us.

If these considerations should fail of their effect, it will be necessary to go into an examination of the tendency of the system of discrimination to redress and avenge all our wrongs, and to realize all our hopes.

It has been avowed, that we are to look to France, not to England, for advantages in trade; we are to shew our spirit, and to manifest towards those who are called enemies, the spirit of enmity, and towards those we call friends something more than passive good will.—We are to take active measures to force trade out of its accustomed channels, and to shift it by such means from England to France. The care of the concerns of the French manufacturers may be left perhaps as well in the hands of the Convention as to be usurped into our own. However our zeal might engage us to interpose, our duty to our own immediate constituents demands all our attention. To volunteer it, in order to excite competition in one foreign nation to supplant another, is a very strange business; and to do it, as it has been irresistibly proved it will happen, at the charge and cost of our own citizens, is a thing equally beyond all justification and all example. What is it but to tax our own people for a time, perhaps for a long time, in order that the French may at last sell as cheap as the English—cheaper they cannot, nor is it so much as pretended. The tax will be a loss to us,

and the fancied tendency of it not again to this country in the event, but to France.—We shall pay more for a time, and in the end pay no less; for no object but that of one nation may receive our money instead of the other: If this is generous towards France, it is not just to America. It is sacrificing what we owe to our constituents to what we pretend to feel towards strangers. We have indeed heard a very ardent profession of gratitude to that nation, and infinite reliance seems to be placed on her readiness to sacrifice her interest to ours. The story of this generous strife should be left to ornament fiction. This is not the form nor the occasion to discharge our obligations of any sort to any foreign nation—it concerns not our feelings but our interests yet the debate has often soared high above the smoke of business into the epic region. The market for tobacco, tar, turpentine and pitch has become matter of festivity, and given occasion alternately to rouse our courage and our gratitude.

If instead of hexameters, we prefer discussing our relation to foreign actions in the common language, we shall not find that we are bound by treaty to establish a preference in favor of the French. The treaty is founded on a professed reciprocity—favor for favor—why is the principle of treaty or no treaty made so essential, when the favor we are going to give is an act of supererogation. It is not expected by one of the nations in treaty: for Holland has declared in her treaty with us, that such preferences are the fruitful source of animosity, embarrassment and war. The French have set no such example. They discriminate, in their late navigation act, not as we are exhorted to do between nations in treaty and not in treaty, but between nations at war and not at war with them so that when peace takes place, England will stand by that act on the same ground with ourselves. Mr. Ames proceeded to shew that if we expect by giving favor to get favor in return, it is improper to make a law. The business belongs to the executive in whose hands the constitution has placed the power of dealing with foreign nations. He noticed it's singularity to negotiate legislatively—to make by a law half a bargain, expecting a French law would make the other. He remarked that the footing of treaty or no treaty, was different from the ground taken by the mover himself in supporting his system. He had said favor for favor was principle. Nations not in treaty grant favors—those in treaty restrict our trade. Yet the principle of discriminating in favor of nations in treaty was not only inconsistent with the declared doctrine of the mover and with facts, but it is inconsistent with itself. Nations not in treaty are so very unequally operated upon by the resolutions it is absurd to refer them to one principle. Spain and Portugal have no treaties with us, and are not disposed to have—Spain would not accede to the treaty of commerce between us and France, though she was invited—Portugal would not sign a treaty after it had been discussed and signed on our part. They have few ships or manufactures and do not feed their colonies from us; of course there is little for the discrimination to operate upon. The operation on nations in treaty is equally a satire on the principle of discrimination. Sweden, with whom we have a treaty, duties rice higher if borne in our bottoms, than in her own. France does the like, in respect to tobacco two and half livres the quintal, which in effect prohibits our vessels to freight tobacco, as the duty is more than the freight. He then remarked on the French navigation act, the information of which had been given to the house since the debate began. He said the mover had, somewhat unluckily, proposed to exempt from this system nations having no navigation acts, in which case France would become the subject of unfriendly discrimination as well as Great-Britain.

He remarked on the disposition of England to settle a commercial treaty, and adverted to the known desire of the Marquis of Lansdowne (then prime minister) in 1783, to form such an one on the most liberal principles. The history of that business and the causes which prevented it's conclusion ought to be made known to the public. The powers given to our ministers were revoked, and yet we hear that no such disposition on the part of Great-Britain has existed. The declaration of Mr. Pitt in parliament, in June, 1792, as well as the correspondence with Mr. Hammond, shew a desire to enter upon a negotiation. The statement of the report on the privileges and restrictions of our commerce, that Great-Britain has shewn no inclination to meddle with the subject seems to be incorrect.

After tracing the operation of the resolutions on different nations, he examined the supposed tendency to dispose Great-Britain to settle an equitable treaty with this country. He asked whether those who held such language towards that nation as he heard could be supposed to desire a treaty and friendly connection. It seemed to be thought a merit to express hatred—it is common and natural to desire to annoy and to crush those whom we hate, but it is somewhat singular to pretend that the design of our anger is to embrace them.

The tendency of angry measures to friendly dispositions and arrangements is not obvious. We affect to believe that we shall quarrel ourselves into their good will. We shall beat a new path to peace and friendship with Great-Britain, one that is grown up with thorns and lined with men-traps and spring-guns. It should be called the war path.

To do justice to the subject its promised advantages should be examined. Exciting the competition of the French is to prove an advantage to this country, by opening a new market with that nation. This is scarcely intelligible. If it means any thing, it is an admission that their market is not a good one, or that they have not taken measures to favor our traffic with them. In either case our system is absurd. The balance of trade is against us and in favor of England. But the resolutions can only aggravate that evil, for, by compelling us to buy dearer and sell cheaper, the balance will be turned still more against our country. Neither is the supply from France less the aliment of luxury than that from England. The excess of credit is an evil which we pretend to cure by checking the natural growth of our own capital, which is the undoubted tendency of restraining trade, the progress of the remedy is delayed. If we will trade, there must be capital. It is best to have it of our own, if we have it not we must depend on credit. Wealth springs from the profits of employment, & the best writers on the subject establish it, that employment is in proportion to the capital that is to excite and reward it. To strike off credit, which is the substitute for capital, if it were possible to do it would so far stop employment. Fortunately it is not possible; the activity of individual industry eludes the mis-judging power of governments. The resolutions would in effect increase the demand for credit, as our products being for less in a new market, and our imports being

bought dearer, there would be less money and more need of it. Necessity would produce credit. Where the laws are strict it will soon find its proper level, the uses of credit will remain and the evil will disappear.

But the whole theory of balances of trade, of helping it by restraint, and protecting it by systems of prohibition and restriction against foreign nations, as well as the remedy for credit, are among the exploded dogmas which are equally refuted by the maxims of science and the authority of time. Many such topics have been advanced which were known to exist as prejudices, but were not expected as arguments. It seems to be believed that the liberty of commerce is of some value. Although there are restrictions on one side, there will be some liberty left, counter restrictions, by diminishing that liberty are in their nature aggravations and not remedies. We complain of the British restrictions as of a millstone—our own system will be another, in that our trade may hope to be situated between the upper and the nether millstone.

On the whole, the resolutions contain two great principles. To control trade by law, instead of leaving it to the better management of the merchants, and the principle of a sumptuary law. To play the tyrant in the counting house, and in directing the private expenses of our citizens, are employments equally unworthy of discussion.

Besides the advantages of the system, we have been called to another view of it, and which seems to have less connection with the merits of the discussion. The acts of states and the votes of public bodies before the constitution was adopted, and the votes of the house since, have been stated as grounds for our assent to this measure at this time. To help our own trade, to repel any real or supposed attack upon it, cannot fail to prepossess the mind, accordingly the first feelings of every man yield to this proposition. But the sober judgment on the tendency and reasonableness of the intermeddling of government often does, and probably ought still oftener to change our impressions. On a second view of the question, the man who voted formerly for restrictions may say—much has been done under the new constitution and the good effects are yet making progress. The necessity of measures of counter restriction will appear to him much less urgent, and their efficacy in the present turbulent state of Europe infinitely less to be relied on. Far from being inconsistent in his conduct, consistency will forbid his pressing the experiment of his principle under circumstances which baffle the hopes of its success. But if so much stress is laid on former opinions in favor of this measure, how happens it that there is so little on that which now appears against it. Not one merchant has spoke in favor of it in this body; not one navigating or commercial state has patronized it.

Mr. Ames then entered pretty fully into the consideration of the absolute dependence of the British West-India islands on our supplies. He admitted that they cannot draw them so well, and so cheap from any other quarter; but this is not the point. Are they physically dependent. Can we starve them, and may we reasonably expect thus to dictate to Great-Britain a free admission of our vessels into her islands. He went into details to prove the negative. Beef and pork sent from the now United States to the British West-Indies, 1773, 14,993 barrels. In the war time, 1780, ditto from England, 17,795. At the end of the war, 1783, 16,526.—Ireland exported on an average of seven years prior to 1777, 250,000 barrels. Salted fish the English take in abundance, and prohibit it from us. Butter and cheese from England and Ireland are but lately banished even from our markets. Exports from the now United States—1773, horses 2768—cattle 1203—sheep and hogs 5,320. Twenty-two years prior to 1791, were exported from England to all ports, 29,131 horses. Ireland on an average of seven years to 1777, exported 474 live-stock exclusive of hogs. The coast of Barbary, the Cape de Verdes, &c. supply sheep and cattle. The islands since the war, have increased their domestic supplies to a great degree.

The now United States exported about 13,000 barrels of flour in 1773 to the West-Indies, Ireland by grazing less could supply wheat—England itself usually exports it, the also imports from Archangel, Sicily and the Barbary states furnish wheat in abundance. We are deceived when we fancy we can starve foreign countries. France is reckoned to consume grain at the rate of seven bushels to each soul. Twenty-six millions of souls the quantity 182 millions bushels—We export to speak in round numbers five or six millions bushels to all the different countries which we supply, a trifle this to their wants. Fugality is a greater resource. Instead of seven bushels perhaps two could be saved by stinting the consumption of the food of cattle or by the use of other food. Two bushels saved to each soul is fifty-two millions of bushels, a quantity which the whole trading world perhaps could not furnish. Rice is said to be prohibited by Spain and Portugal to favor their own. Brazil could supply their rice instead of ours. Lumber—he stated the danger of despoiling Canada and Nova-Scotia too much as rivals in the West-India supply, especially the former. The dependence the English had placed on them some years ago had failed, partly because we entered into competition with them on very superior terms; and partly because they were then in an infant state. They are now supposed to have considerably more than doubled their numbers since the peace, and if instead of having us for competitors for the supply as before, we should shut ourselves out by refusing our supplies or being refused entry for them, those two colonies would rise from the ground, at least we should do more to bring it about than the English ministry had been able to do. In 1773, 679 vessels, the actual tonnage of which was 128,000, were employed in the West-India trade. They were supposed on good ground to be but half freighted to the islands; they might carry lumber, and the freight supposed to be deficient would be at 40¢ sterling the ton, £. 128,000 sterling. This sum would diminish the extra charge of carrying lumber to the islands. But is lumber to be had? Yes, in Germany, and from the Baltic. It is even cheaper in Europe than our own. Besides which, the hard woods used in mills are abundant in the islands. We are told they can sell their rum only to the United States. This concerns not their subsistence but their profit. Examine it however. In 1773, the now United States took near three million gallons rum. The remaining British colonies, Newfoundland and the African coast have a considerable demand for this article. The demand of Ireland is very much on the increase. It was in 1763, 530,000 gallons; 1770, 1,558,000 gallons; 1778, 1,720,000 gallons.

(To be concluded in our next.)