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THE TABLET.—No. XVI.

*Customs are not always so wrong as they appear to be.*

IN walking the streets the other day, I overheard two gentlemen conversing; one of whom warmly reprobated the practice of pre-engaging votes for an election. The unreserved manner, in which he expressed himself, indicated a peculiar degree of frankness and honesty. I was, on the first impression, involuntarily led into a coincidence of sentiment; but upon more mature reflection, I am induced to take a different side of the question.

This is one of those political points, that can only be determined by a consideration of the circumstances, that attend each particular case. In a community made up of numerous small corporations, where the settlements are frequent, and the institutions of society so formed, that the people, as a matter of course, acquire a knowledge of characters, no benefit results from electioneering. Connecticut is a community that falls within this description. If a candidate for an office, in that State, comes forward with his pretensions, it will have, either a *bad* effect, or *none at all*.—Should it so happen, that his reputation is previously established, he has no occasion for any exertions in his own behalf. But should his character, from any cause, not be generally known, his solicitude may so operate, as to do an injury to himself, or the public. If he is a man of real, though unknown merit, he may render it suspicious, by an attempt to proclaim it to a people, who have been accustomed to seek their own objects of praise and preferment. If he is an undeserving man, it is possible he may, by some seducing arts, catch the popular humour, and carry his point, to the exclusion of one who is meritorious. As a general rule in Connecticut, it will be better for the candidate himself, and safer for the people, that he should make no bustle about his election. It may happen, however, that some extraordinary cases will authorize a departure from this principle.

In a community differently circumstanced, the reverse may be proper and beneficial. Where the districts are large, the inhabitants thinly scattered, and composed of various descriptions of people; and where the interior regulations are not calculated to render it for the inclination or convenience of men to have a general knowledge of each other, I believe the public interest is promoted by a pretty active spirit of electioneering.—The confusion and animosities that prevail on these occasions, may be disagreeable and hurtful; but they must be considered as an evil necessarily resulting from the nature of the situation. When a candidate offers himself for an office, he puts himself up as a public mark; and, as it were, calls upon mankind to investigate his character. His enemies will expose his demerits, and though there may be great intrigue and deception on both sides, yet upon the whole, if his reputation is notoriously bad, he will not probably succeed in his election. There is no other method, under such circumstances, for the people to ascertain characters. It is a poor method, but it is better than none. It is *bad* doing with it, but *no* doing without it.

Probably men would be worse than they are, if they were not restrained from vicious or imprudent conduct, by a fear that their foibles or their vices would be exposed, when they are placed in a conspicuous station. I recollect an anecdote, which may serve as a striking instance of the caution, which a prudent man observes, in offering himself to the people as a candidate of their choice. A gentleman in a neighboring state was solicited by his friends to propose himself as a representative for a certain district. His vanity was flattered with the idea that was suggested to him. He had no other objection, he said, against the attempt, than that it would bring his character to a most critical test. Though he was not conscious of any circumstance in his life that deserved censure, or that would excite ridicule; yet it was possible, some incident had escaped him, which some other person might recollect and urge to his disadvantage. "On such an occasion," said he, "the memory of one's enemy is remarkably quick and retentive; and besides, any little inadvertency, which was overlooked when it happened, may now be remembered and exaggerated in such strong colours, as will give it the complexion of a very blameable action. There is, upon the whole, a risk in defying the world to scrutinize too exactly the diversified scenes of my life." Such suggestions did not restrain his friends from repeating their solicitations; and at length he assured them, that in two days he would give his final answer. In the mean time, he had a trying interview to hold with his wife. It occurred to him as a possible event, that he might be pointed at as

a cuckold. He never entertained the least suspicion of such a thing; and was perfectly happy in his conjugal connection. If his wife had ever made a mistake of that nature, he was ignorant of it, and it gave him no uneasiness; but should he offer himself a candidate for an office, the inmost secrets of his family would be discovered. There are certain moments, when the mind of a man is so susceptible, that the possibility of an evil assumes the appearance of reality. He could not communicate the affair to his wife, without a perturbation of spirits, that indicated real jealousy. But his feelings were too critical to be suppressed, and he hesitatingly described his case. After suitable explanations the matter was amicably settled: His wife overlooked the enquiry; and he was satisfied of her fidelity. No difficulty now stood in his way. He came out boldly with his pretensions; but within three days afterwards, he was mortified to see in the newspapers, a very severe attack upon the character of his ancestors. His grandfather had, by some unjustifiable act, rendered himself odious to his neighbors; and though the circumstance was generally forgot, yet on this occasion, the whole transaction was revived; and our candidate, instead of carrying his election, had a mean epithet or nick-name fixed upon him, which to this day he wears with lively mortification.

EXTRACT FROM "AMERICAN ESSAYS."

On COMMERCE.—[Continuation.]

THE Dutch were so early prepossessed in favor of Commerce, and distant colonies, that even at that critical period, when they were considered as dependent provinces, and were involved in a long, expensive, bloody war, in order to shake off the Spanish yoke, they never lost sight of those important objects, by which, and a due attention to the importance of a NAVY, they were enabled, not only to support the expences of that war, but even greatly to enrich themselves; and at the same time, to furnish HENRY the IVth. with men and money, to co-operate with them against the common enemy, the King of Spain, who was at that period so rich, and powerful, from Commerce, and his colonies, that he only wanted less bigotry, with common prudence, to have enabled him to give laws to all Europe.

Although nature has been extremely parsimonious of her favors to Holland, not only with respect to her coast, which is very dangerous, and her harbours few, and barred, (but the country itself seems of right to belong more to the ocean than to *terra firma*, and is only preserved from inundation by dint of constant struggle, labor, and immense expence) yet it now abounds in productions and resources of every kind, the natural fruits of industry, extensive Commerce, and flourishing colonies.

The Dutch merchants, individually considered, are universally acknowledged to be the richest in the world, and Amsterdam may, at this day, be considered the second grand mart in Europe; and the great *Store House* of the commercial world; and it is computed, that the city of Amsterdam alone, pays more than one third part of all the taxes of the United Provinces. Yet in all emergencies and exigencies of the States, the Dutch have ever kept in view the importance of Commerce, and necessity of observing great moderation in laying duties or imposts on trade; having always considered it their primary and most certain dependence; and the event has fully proved the measure to be wise and politic.

Manufactures, of almost every kind, are now carried on to great advantage in Holland; and at the same time, Amsterdam can furnish the manufactures of all Europe, nearly as cheap as the countries where they are made.

This idea is worthy the contemplation of the citizens of the United States of America. We have very rich neighbors, who begin to open their eyes to their own particular interest: We cannot have better customers; and nothing is more natural, or probable, than a very extensive and advantageous commercial intercourse, when it shall be known that we are possessed of the means to support and encourage it.

Insurances are now publicly made in London, on vessels and cargoes from that port bound to the coast of Brazil to be sold to the Portuguese, the underwriters take all risks, at 10 pr. cent. The necessity of a drawback, on the exportation of all goods, which pay a duty on importation, is therefore too evident to be controverted, without which it would be fruitless to attempt a foreign commerce, on which the prosperity of America principally depends: Should heavy duties on importations into the United States be early attempted, it is greatly to be feared, that it will encourage attempts at smuggling, which would be greatly fa-

cilitated by our innumerable safe ports and inlets; because Commerce, in its present infant state, cannot be sufficiently productive to support the number of officers, that would be necessary effectually to guard all those ports; and at the same time, answer the more essential purposes of revenue: If therefore only moderate duties are imposed, they will of course be more cheerfully paid—will discourage all illicit attempts, and be certainly productive of much greater revenue: Smuggling is known and practised more or less in all countries: There are many who affect to think it no crime to rob the revenue; and it is well known, that many captains of vessels have not scrupled to swear to the truth of false manifests and invoices; and have often not been ashamed to avow the perjury, pretending to believe a custom-house oath less sacred than any other; and thereby impiously denying the ubiquity of the Deity; but however infamous the name of an *Informers* may have sounded in the ears of the people of America before the revolution, and however venial the offence may have then appeared to cheat a king, the case is now widely different: In robbing the revenue at this day, we cheat ourselves; an *Informers* is therefore our best friend; a Smuggler is incontrovertibly a public injury, and therefore deserves the most ignominious punishment; the fair trader is a public benefit, and therefor deserves the greatest encouragement and support; and as a contraband trade, with every other species of fraud by which the revenue is robbed of its dues, directly tends to the ruin of the fair trader, as well as to the injury of the state, surely no honest man can hesitate which side to take, or doubt whether he shall support a friend, or an enemy: None but an enemy to the country will attempt to injure it; none but an enemy will encourage, or even conceal the attempt.

No nation upon the globe is possessed of so many natural advantages for the great purposes of Commerce, and Colonization, as the United States of America: Her coast, and almost innumerable harbors, from her most northern boundaries to the river *St. Mary*, which divides Georgia from the Spanish territories, are throughout their vast extent, the safest, most navigable, and most commodious in the world. There is no part of the globe where ships may with equal safety navigate, where the risk is so equal in all seasons of the year, notwithstanding the severity of the winters on the northern coast, or where navigation sustains so few injuries: Nothing more is wanting to ensure our prosperity, but to find markets to take off our almost inexhaustible, and still increasing superfluities: These markets would probably be most effectually secured by planting distant colonies, where we could establish a certain exclusive interchange of commodities, to mutual advantage—or by establishing factories in some of the Asiatic provinces, or elsewhere, totally independent of any European power—to barter with the natives for such articles, as may either serve for our own use, or to remit where our own produce will not sell, or is prohibited.

The establishment of colonies, or even factories, in advantageous situations, particularly in Asia, (though I would by no means confine my views to that quarter of the globe) is evidently an object of vast importance to the United States, as naturally tending to promote the rapid increase of their naval strength, which would soon render them too formidable to dread any unprovoked injury, or insult. I am well aware, that the present exhausted state of our public finances precludes the idea of any early public exertions in support of the prosecution of any new schemes, however advantageous they may appear; but there are private merchants in America, of abilities, enterprise, and fortunes, equal to any possible undertaking; and government is always able so far to promote every measure tending to the public good, as to secure to the first patriotic adventurers, certain privileges and immunities, that shall ultimately compensate to them, or their heirs, the risk, trouble and expence.

The world is wide, and immense tracts in *Asia*, *Africa*, and *America*, perhaps some of the richest, remain yet unknown, or unexplored: these may hereafter fall to the lot of Americans to discover and possess; and thereby open new sources of riches—and be a new stimulus to our industry.

E. C.

AMERICAN MACHINE.

It is said, that there is now in the possession of William Pollard, Esq. of Philadelphia, a valuable spinning machine on a new construction, and far superior to any thing of the kind, which has yet appeared in Pennsylvania. British emiffaries have, on former occasions, purchased and sent off from this country, machines calculated to promote the manufactures of America. Doubtless the present proprietor of this machine will be sufficiently on his guard against negotiations so prejudicial to the United States.