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FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE Whale-fishery and Seal-catching.

IT has been verified from experience, that WHALES change their places of resort in consequence of the continual warfare against them. At the first settlement of this country, WHALES were commonly found on these coasts, and not unfrequently drove ashore. The WHALE FISHERY, carried on by the Dutch, English, and our countrymen, in the northern seas, was formerly very productive; but of late years, vessels frequently returned home without the least success. The present rout of WHALES is along the Brazil coast; and they are still tending southward, so that there can be little doubt but in a few years, the WHALE-FISHERY will be prosecuted in as high a southern, as it has been in a northern latitude.

A very serious inconvenience will arise from this change, which is indeed already experienced; and more particularly when vessels are unsuccessful, which often happens: That is, the extreme length of the voyage, which occasions an increase of the expences of outfit. To remedy, in an essential manner, this very serious inconvenience, which may eventually discourage this valuable branch of fishery, the following hints are suggested.

From some late voyages to the Faulkland islands, which have been sufficiently successful to prove the experiment, there can be no doubt but by connecting the two objects of WHALING and SEALING, a very profitable voyage would be made. Should the whaling voyage prove successful, the vessel returns home to a sure and certain market. If only partially successful, or totally unsuccessful, let the vessel run to the Falkland-Islands, and undertake the killing of Seals, which are to be found in different parts of those innumerable inlets and islands. A knowledge of their haunts, notwithstanding the pretensions to the contrary, can be readily acquired by a persevering search. SEALS abound in vast numbers, and keep together in herds. They are so harmless and tame, as to suffer themselves to be knocked down with clubs, the only weapon used in killing them. The point is to get between them and the shore when in a rookery, as it is phrased, of 1500 SEALS, not ten will escape, and a crew of twelve men will sometimes kill as many, or more, in one day. The Nantucket and eastern part of Long-Island Whalers, will find themselves peculiarly adapted for this business, as being accustomed to live ashore as well as follow the seas—hunting is familiar to them. Many advantages are lost by the inexperience of the crews in this trade, and the novelty of the business. They are generally at first so terrified with the grinning and howlings of the SEALS, as to suffer a few to break thro' the line which intercepts their communication with the sea, which if once accomplished, it is almost impossible to prevent the whole herd from escaping. Great resolution and alertness is therefore required, and the latter being a qualification which ordinary seamen are seldom remarkable for ashore, will prove the superior advantages of our Eastern Whalers, in this particular, which is a very essential one.

Seal-catching has hitherto been prosecuted merely for the sake of the skins. The Hair-Seals are serviceable for Leather, and will sell at market from 10 to 12 cents, pr. lb. especially the smaller kind, which are in great estimation for fine shoes. The Fur-SEALS are an object of remittance to Canton, and tho' hitherto sold from half to three quarters of a dollar, pr. skin, will, no doubt, upon a fair experiment of the China-market, bring more. The skin of the Fur-Seal with the Fur on, when properly dressed, makes exceeding handsome Waistcoat-Patterns, and might be introduced for that purpose; they are of a more durable nature, and would be very serviceable, especially to labourers, having all the advantages, without the inconvenience of leather.

There is another advantage to be derived, which has hitherto been overlooked, and that is, the making of Oil from the Seals, which are remarkably fat and oily. There can be no doubt at all, but a very considerable benefit would arise on this score, and no persons can be better qualified to make the experiment than the Eastern Whalers. The crew of a vessel will be at very little expence for provisions, except bread, as great plenty of Hogs are to be taken with dogs, and

wild fowl, such as Ducks, Geese, &c. are so abundant and tame, as to be knocked down with clubs, and afford very good sustenance. Their feathers may likewise be saved—and afford another object of profit.

By wintering in these Islands, frequent chances offer of going out with boats and taking Whales, which approach very near. Likewise great quantities of Oil may be made from Sea-Lions, and a large fish called the Black Fish, which are very plenty, and so large, as to afford two to three barrels each.

By exploring this hitherto little frequented part of the world, other advantages may possibly be found; but that arising from sealing is already proved from actual experiment. SEALS likewise abound on the opposite shores of Patagonia, where the trade may be carried on without any difficulties but what may arise from a coast, as yet little navigated.

The writer of these observations has been induced to offer them solely from a motive of communicating to his fellow-citizens at large, a branch of commerce, that promises considerable benefit to the United States, conceiving it to be the duty of every person to add, as far as is in his power, to the common stock of national profit and happiness. The remarks are founded upon an actual knowledge of facts. The few voyages which have hitherto been made, have been conducted with affected secrecy. It is impossible, however, to withhold for any length of time, what is necessarily imparted to many. To blend the two voyages of WHALING and SEALING, appears to be extremely feasible, and likely to produce a sure success; and every means that may tend to promote the navigation of the United States, will, however, humbly represented, be, no doubt, candidly accepted.

The Tablet.—No. 150.

[Continuation from the last number.]

“Conquest and plunder bring, with riches, a train of pernicious vices; but this does not prove that the wealth attending industry and commerce, is pernicious also.”

TO contemplate the causes which have operated in the rise, the progress, and the decline of nations, is a task which no legislator or civilian can too often impose upon himself. Those, who employ their reflections in this way, will discover some events, which, under certain circumstances, have a pernicious influence upon society; while others, of a like nature, in a different state of affairs, produce a series of the most important advantages. For instance, wealth and luxury may push one nation into sudden destruction, while they raise another into power and distinction, and contribute to enlarge the circle of general enjoyment, as well as to secure the continuance of rational freedom. I will now submit to the consideration of the reader, a few sketches upon the situation and character of the Romans, with a view of ascertaining what occasioned the rise and downfall of that nation. It shall then be enquired of him, whether he seriously believes the affairs of the United States can ever flourish or decay, from similar causes.

That the Romans made such a conspicuous figure upon the stage of human affairs, was originally owing to the mere accident of their being introduced by such a founder as Romulus. Had any of the neighboring states been conducted by a leader of superior address, and who possessed greater talents for plunder, the name of Rome had perhaps never reached posterity. To the single circumstance therefore of his intrigue and enterprize, must be ascribed their original ascendancy over other nations. After they had once taken the lead, and begun to spread their conquests and dominion about the contiguous country, it was almost impossible their career should be checked. There was no system of combination in the adjacent states, that could bring their forces to act in such concert, as to make an effectual stand against the Roman arms. Their government was erected for the sole purpose of war. Their situation was favorable to this object, and no other. The age in which they lived was martial. They were poor, and of course, habitudes of simplicity and self-denial rose naturally from that poverty. Personal safety, and the defence of the state were so blended, that the idea could not be separated. Valor was almost the only quality in repute, because it was almost the only one that was useful. The love of esteem is so strong a passion, that most men cultivate those qualities which will gain it. This accounts for their so

much boasted amor patriæ. Their fidelity to government was no less secured by the rigors of superstitious, than it was incited by a desire of plunder.

Who does not perceive, in such a fabric, a constant effort, existing within itself, to fall to pieces? Such a people cannot be supposed to keep themselves together without perpetual war. If they have no foreign wars, they probably will have contentions at home; and what they call the period of peace, is precisely the time, when they will most harass and destroy one another. In short, they must be gaining conquests over other nations, or they fall into factions, and precipitate themselves into ruin at once. The effect of conquests is wealth and insolence. Their public virtue results from nothing but their danger and their poverty. But the period must arrive, when their situation will be no longer hazardous or indigent. What is the consequence? Their severe discipline, and rigid maxims, which were a substitute for private virtue, are shaken by faction, and relaxed by pleasure. Riches, pouring in from conquests, introduce crimes and profligacy, and thus the spirit, and even the name of civil liberty is lost in the general depravity. Is there not an essential difference between the effect of wealth thus acquired, and that which is the reward of arts and industry? Why does a robber or a gambler make a wanton use of the property he acquires? Because, the disposition, which urges him to assume such a character and conduct, implies such a want of principle, as renders him unfit to hold any of the blessings of life. Wealth will not prosper in such hands. The case is much the same with a nation of plunderers, as with a private robber. Both have hearts too unfeeling and abandoned to use the gifts of providence with decency and moderation. Excess and brutality will mark their actions. They are strangers to those restraints and refinements, which the useful employments of civil life create and support; and which guard people against those atrocious crimes, no less than against the dangerous extremes of vice and folly.

It is a maxim that will generally hold good, that no individual or community will make a proper application of wealth, which they have not honestly acquired. I will even carry the idea further and suggest, that wealth is apt to be misapplied by those who have not been personally instrumental in earning it, under circumstances that required some care and industry. It may illustrate the idea to state a case. No person will presume to say that the citizens of Philadelphia do not make a prudent and even a commendable use of their riches. But if that city should fall into the hands of an army of Tartars, and the property be divided as plunder among the soldiers, who does not paint to himself the horrid mischiefs that would be perpetrated! How suddenly would the discipline of that army be dissolved! How quick would their military ardor be dissipated and lost! Each soldier would imagine, the sooner he squandered his share, and the more outrage he committed with it, the more consistently would he appear with himself, as a barbarian and plunderer. It should not therefore too hastily be inferred, that we should experience such destructive consequences, from the affluence which attends arts and commerce, as the ancients did, from that which followed their conquests. I dwell the more minutely upon this part of the subject, and exemplify it in many different shapes, because there are many people who really apprehend that the liberties of this country must be swallowed up, if we adopt such regulations as will make us a commercial, a wealthy, and a splendid nation. To destroy such suspicions, as far as they are groundless, not only relieves those who feel from them painful and useless anxiety, but makes them better citizens and wiser politicians. It cannot then be too strongly urged upon all men, who take a part in public affairs, or who wish to discern the effect of public measures, to obtain a satisfactory solution of the following question; *whether to encourage commerce, and the mechanical and liberal arts be a circumstance, unfavorable or not in the long run, to the freedom and happiness of a community?* There is a certain point beyond which, it is said, wealth and refinement cannot be carried without vitiating the personal qualities of men, and rendering them unfit agents to manage and retain the blessings of civil liberty. In what light such an opinion should be considered, shall be made the subject of another essay.

(To be continued.)