

The export before the war, brought more than a million of dollars into this country; probably it is not less at present, and no small part in gold and silver: It is computed that 30,000 persons, including 4,000 seamen subsist by it. Many say very composedly, if it will not maintain itself let it fall. But we should not only lose the annual million of dollars which it brings us; an immense capital would be lost. The fishing towns are built on the naked rocks or barren sands on the side of the sea. Those spots however, where trade would sicken and die, which husbandry seems to till, and which nature seems to have devoted to eternal barrenness, are selected by industry to work miracles on: Houses, stores and wharves are erected, and a vast property created—all depending on this business.—Before you think it a light thing to consign them to ruin, see if you can compute what they cost; if they outrun your figures, then confess that it would be bad economy as well as bad policy to suffer rival nations to ruin our fishery.

The regulations of foreign nations tend to bring this ruin about; France and England equally endeavor, in the language of the Secretary of State, to mount their marine on the destruction of our fishery.

The fish of Newfoundland is allowed liberal bounties by the English government; and in the French West-Indies—we meet bounties on their fish, and duties on our own, and these amount to the price of the fish: From the English islands we are quite shut out—yet such is the force of our natural advantages that we have not yielded to these rivals. The Secretary of State has stated these, page 5th and 6th, of his report.

The more fish we catch the cheaper; the English fish will need a greater bounty—whereas if we should yield, the English would probably need no bounty at all; they would have the monopoly. For example, suppose the English can fish at two dollars the quintal—we catch so much that we sell at one dollar and two thirds; the loss to them is 1/3 dol. each quintal. They must have that sum as a bounty.

Whereas if we increase our fishery, a greater and a greater bounty is needed by foreign nations—the contest so painfully sustained by them must be yielded at last, and we shall enjoy alone an immense fund of wealth to the nation, which nature has made ours; and though foreigners disturb the possession we shall finally enjoy it peaceably and exclusively. If the lands of Kentucky are invaded, you drive off the invader, and so you ought—why not protect this property as well.

These opinions are supported by no common authority.—The State of Massachusetts having represented the discouragements of the fishery, the subject has received the sanction of the Secretary of State; he confirms the facts stated in the petition; he says it is too poor a business to pay any thing to government. [See page 12.]

Yet instead of asking bounties, or a remission of the duties on the articles consumed, we ask nothing, but to give us our own money back, which you received under an engagement to pay it back, in case the article should be exported.

If nothing was in view therefore, but to promote national wealth, it seems plain that this branch ought to be protected and preserved; because, under all the discouragements it suffers, it increases, and every year more and more enriches the country, and promises to become an inexhaustible fund of wealth.

Another view has been taken of the subject which is drawn from the naval protection afforded in time of war by a fishery.

Our coasting and foreign trade are increasing rapidly; but the richer our trade becomes, the better prize to the enemy: So far from protecting us it would be the very thing that would tempt him to go to war with us. As the rice and the tobacco planter cheerfully pay for armies and turn out in the militia to protect their property on shore, they cannot be so much deceived as to wish to have it left unprotected when it is afloat; especially when it is known that this protection, though more effectual than the whole revenue expended on a navy could procure, will not cost a farthing; on the contrary, it will enrich while it protects the nation. The coasters and other seamen in the event of a war would be doubly in demand, and could neither protect themselves nor annoy the enemy to any considerable degree; but the fishermen thrown out of business by a war, would be instantly in action.—They would as they formerly did, embark in privateers—having nothing to lose, and every thing to hope, they would not dishonor their former fame. Their mode of life makes them expert, and hardy seamen. Nothing can be more adventurous. They cast anchor on the banks, 300 leagues from land, and with a great length of cable ride out the storms of winter: If the gale proves too strong they often sink at their anchors, and are food for fish which they came to take; for ever wet, the sea almost becomes their element—cold and labor, in that region of frost, brace their bodies and they become as hardy as the Bears, on the islands of ice; their skill and spirit are not inferior—familiar with danger they despise it. If I were to recite their exploits the theme would find every American heart already glowing with the recollection of them; it would kindle more enthusiasm than the subject has need of: My view is only to appeal to facts to evince the importance of the fishery as a means of naval protection. It is proper to pass over Bunker's hill, though memorable by the valor of a regiment of fishermen; nor is it necessary to mention further that 500 fishermen fought at Trenton.

It is known that the privateers man'd by fishermen, in want of every thing, not excepting arms, which they depended on taking from their enemies—brought into port warlike stores of every kind, as well as every kind of merchandize sufficient for the army and the country: the war could not be carried on without them. Among other exploits almost beyond belief, one instance is worth relating—these people in a privateer of 16 guns and 150 men, in one cruise took more than 20 ships with upwards of 200 guns and nearly 400 men.

The privateers from a single district of Massachusetts where the fishery is chiefly seated, took more than 2,000 vessels, being 1/3 of the British merchant vessels, and brought in near 1200. An hundred sail of privateers, man'd by fishermen, would scour every sea in case of a war.

Some gentlemen think of a navy: but what navy could do more; what nation would provoke a people so capable of injuring them. Could 50 ships of the line afford more security—and yet this resource of the fishery always ready, always sufficient, will cost nothing. The superior naval force of our foes should not discourage us; our privateers would issue like so many sword fish to attack the whale.

I leave these observations to their weight, and forbear to press them further—strong as I think them, I rest my support of the bill on another ground.

I will only ask whether you will oppress if you will not encourage them—whether if you will not give them the money of the public, you will partially seize their own. This is all they ask—if your policy demands from them so much, will your justice deny them so little?

I have repeatedly asserted that the bill will not cost the public a farthing, you only take the money which the fishery brings into the Treasury for the salt duty, and pay the same or a less sum back in bounties, instead of a drawback on the exportation of the fish; here I rest the argument. Before I adduce my proofs, I cannot forbear to lay open the state of my mind.

I rely on the truth of the facts I propose to offer. I rely on the proof of them, being as near demonstration as the nature of the case will admit; I make no doubt of the good sense and good intentions of the gentlemen whom I wish to convince; and yet I am sorry to say I am far from being sanguine in the hope of gaining a single vote for the bill. I will explain my meaning and then I think no gentleman will take exception at it: This debate depends on calculation. In print or writing, or in private conversation, figures have the advantage of every other mode of investigation: the mind is fixed to a point and made to perceive it clearly.—But in public debate it is otherwise—figures not only disgust

attention, but, as the mind cannot carry them along, they confound it; they make a plain thing look mysterious, and bring it into suspicion; when I ask of the committee an hearing, and it is granted, I get nothing—I want a close attention, and I have to beg, and earnestly too, that gentlemen will not trust their first opinions and vote against the bill, without condescending to receive and to weigh the facts and calculations of its advocates.

The first question is, how much does government receive by the duty on the salt used in curing the fish which is exported.

The quantity of fish must be known. Several ways of information are to be explored.

The Secretary of State supposes the fish of 1790, to be 354,276 quintals.

A treasury return of fish exported from Aug. 20th, 1789, to Sept. 30th, 1790, which is 13 1/2 months, is 378,721 quintals.

For a year equal to 340,849

See Secretary's Report, page 16.

Foreign dried fish imported from 15th August, 1789, to August 1790, 3701 quintals.—5 per cent. drawback thereon is only 310 dollars, at 1 1/2 dollars per quintal.

Mr. Giles is mistaken in supposing that foreign fish deducts 16,000 dollars from our estimate.

Return of fish in 7 months, from May 30th to December, 1790, exported—all fish of the United States, 197,278 quintals;

Which for a year is 338,184 do.

The medium may be fairly taken for the time past at 340,000 quintals a year.

Six gentlemen of Marblehead certify, that 5043 hogheads, or 40,344 bushels of salt were used on 38,497 1/2 quintals; which for 340,000 quintals, gives 356,200 bushels.

The duty at 12 cents is 42,744 dollars, which government receives.

But the charge to the United States is, at 1 1/2 cents dolls. per quintal, 45,900

Whereof the fishery receives 10 cents on each quintal exported, 34,000

Charges as the law stands 11900

Further this is but an estimate made up from what the last year proved. The next may be very different, and probably it will be. If more money should be demanded than 44,000 dollars, we must not be accused of misleading Congress. But in that case an increase would be made by the law—for the more fish is exported the more 3 1/2 cents to be paid; so that the bill creates no burden in that way. But the increase of the export of fish will probably operate in favor of government. For it is known that the economy, skill and activity of the fishery are making progress. It's success has progressed. The more fish to a vessel, the cheaper the allowance on the tonnage—Therefore the tonnage of vessels will not increase in a ratio with the increase of the fish.

The very objections prove this. For they deem the encouragement too great. But any encouragement must have the effect.

The difference of the agreements for distributing the fish according to the present practice, or by this bill, makes a great one in the quantity taken. The bill reforms the practice in this point. Marblehead vessels take less than those from Beverly. The former throw the fish into a common stock, which is afterwards divided upon a plan very unfriendly to exertion. A man works for the whole—perhaps 12 hours, and they take about 800 quintals to a vessel. But in Beverly, the exertion is as great as can be made—18 hours a day, because each man has what he catches, and they catch 1100 quintals.

Marblehead seamen sailing from other towns, and dividing as last mentioned, which the bill establishes, seldom fail to catch 2 or 300 quintals more than vessels and men from Marblehead on the first plan. Accordingly I assert on good authority, that the increase in Marblehead only may be computed at 15,000 quintals, merely in consequence of the reform by the bill. The best informed persons whom I have consulted, entertain no doubt that the export in case the bill should pass, would not be less than 400,000 quintals, probably more—but at 400,000 quintals, it would add 7,200 dollars more to the salt duty; a sum more than equal to any estimate of the actual tonnage, or any probable increase of it, 42,744

7,200

49,944 Salt duty on 400,000 quintals.

Other facts confirm the theory, that skill and exertion are increasing in this business.

In 1775, tons 25,000, seamen 4405. Fish sold for 1,071,000 dolls.

In 1790, 1/3ths of the seamen and 1/3ths of the tonnage, take as much fish. It is owing to this that our fishery stood the competition with foreign nations.

Finally, the average in future may be relied on not to be less than 350,000 quintals.

Salt duty on which 43,944 dollars.

Bounties 44,000

Wanted 56

The calculation first made will answer the purpose, 340,000 quintals pay salt duty 42,744 dollars

Tonnage bounty 44,000

Wanted 1256

This is the mighty defect. Observe the authentic return of the export of fish may be, and we can almost prove it to be below the future export—Whereas to banish all doubt we go to the top of the scale for the tonnage, we take what we know to be the utmost. This we might have represented more favorably if we had chosen to conceal any thing. But even this will answer our purpose.

For 200 tons are wanting in the estimate of the bounties, being 19,800, not 20,000, which will take off one third of the deficient sum.

The tonnage over 68, which receives nothing, is not mentioned—which probably is not less than another third.

The boats under 5 tons tho trifling, are to be noticed—they receive nothing.

But above all, the chances of non-compliance with the regulations are in favor of the remainder of the 1256 dollars being stopped. Boats may not get 12 quintals to the ton, or vessels may have their voyages broke up, and not stay four months on the fishing ground, in either case they would receive nothing. Take all these together, it is not to be doubted that 1256 dollars will remain of the 44,000 in the treasury.

But these are trifles which I cannot believe gentlemen are anxious about.

For the event cannot be reduced to certainty. What quantity of fish will be exported, no man can tell now. But as government may receive more than it will pay, the chance may turn the other way, and it may have to pay a few hundred dollars more than it will have received. We have

seen that the chance is most in favor of government. But one chance must balance the other. This answer is sincerely relied on as a good one.

I barely mention that the wear of cordage, cables, sails and anchors is very great. These articles on being imported, pay duties. So that it is probable the extra duty paid by the fishery on their extra consumption, will over balance any little sums supposed to exceed in the bounty.

It has been asked, as if some cunning was detected, why if the money received in the treasury to pay the drawbacks is equal to the proposed bounties, a further appropriation should be made? This cunning question admits of several very simple answers.

The bill being for 7 years, the average product is the proper sum to be calculated. But the 3 first years may fall short of the bounties, say 2000 dollars a year, which is 6000

The 4 last may exceed 2000 8000

Shall a poor fisherman wait for the whole, or if he takes his part according to the money in the treasury—for a 24th part of the bounty on his vessel, from 1792 to 1795.

2d. This delay would happen after a bad year, the very time when he would most need prompt pay.

3d. But fish taken this year will not be exported till December next. Therefore the money will not be stopped by the drawback as the law stands, till 6 months after.

A substitute has been proposed for the clause, to appropriate the drawback only. This is absolutely improper. For the 10 cents allowed as drawback is but a part of the duty paid on salt—it is not easy to see any reason why a part stopped at the treasury should be equal to the whole paid there long before. The drawback falls near 9000 dollars short of the salt duty received by the government. The expense of the drawback would be very heavy and useless.

Nor may gentlemen apprehend that government, by paying next december, will advance money to the fishery. The salt duty will have been paid, and government will have the use of the money many months before the fishermen will have a right to call for the bounties.

It is left to the candor of the gentlemen who have urged this objection, whether a better or further answer is desired.

After having laboriously gone thro the estimate of the probable export of fish, it will not be necessary to be equally minute as to the quantity or kind of vessels which are to receive the bounty.

The estimate we believe to be very high. That it is high enough, we suppose very probable from the estimate of the Secretary of State, which is only 10,185 tons.

This mode of paying the bounty on the tonnage is very simple and safe—The measurement is already made and costs nothing; and as it was made to pay a duty on tonnage, we are very sure that government will not be cheated by an over measure. The mode of paying the drawback, as the law now stands, is expensive, perplexed and embarrassing; liable to frauds and delays.

This intricate and disgusting detail of calculations was necessary, to satisfy the committee that each of the three grounds of defence on which the bill rests, is tenable.

Instead of impoverishing the nation by scattering the treasure of the whole to benefit a part, it appears that we are preserving a mine of treasure.

In point of naval protection, we can scarcely estimate the fishery too highly. It is always ready, always equal to the object—it is almost the only sufficient source of security by sea. Our navigation is certainly a precious interest of the country. But no part of our navigation can vie with the fishery in respect to the protection it affords.

There is no point which regards our national wealth or national safety, in respect to which it seems practicable to do so much with so little.

We rely on the evidence before you, that the public will not sustain the charge of a dollar. Those ought not to doubt the evidence who cannot invalidate it. If then the fishermen ask you to restore only their own money, will you deny them? Will you return to every other person exporting dutied goods the money he has paid, and will you refuse the poor fishermen?

If there must be an instance of the kind, will you single out for this oppressive partiality, that branch which is described by the Secretary of State as too poor even to bear its part of the common burden. That branch which nevertheless has borne the neglect of our nation, and the persecution of foreign prohibitions and duties:—A branch which, tho we have received much and expect more both of money and services, urges no claims but such as common justice has sanctioned.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20.

A message from the President of the United States, by his Secretary, Mr. Lear, informed the House, that the bill, entitled "an act to establish the post-office and post roads of the United