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Mr. James Graham

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of his death. By his marriage with Jane De Lafons he left four sons worthy of such a father ; and who have all distinguished themselves in the departments which they have chosen :—Peter Le Roy, the eldest, who has succeeded his father as clock- and watch-maker to the king, and who is the inventor of the marine watches ; John Le Roy, of the Royal Academy of Sciences ; Julien David Le Roy, professor in the Royal Academy of Architecture, and of the Institution of Bologne, author of the Ruins of Greece ; and Charles Le Roy, of the Royal Academy of Montpellier, correspondent of the Academy of Sciences of Paris, and professor of medicine in the University of Montpellier.

III. *An Essay on Commerce, as at present carried on by different Nations ; with some Hints, which the Writer thinks would tend greatly to the Advantage of every Country. By Mr. JAMES GRAHAM, of Berwick-upon-Tweed*.*

COMMERCE has long been the distinguishing characteristic of this country : it is the great source of our national wealth as well as individual riches. It is commerce that rouses and calls forth the adventurous spirit of our merchants and the persevering industry of our manufacturers. To carry the various produce of our country to the remotest part of the earth gives employment to our sailors, whose valour and intrepidity are the admiration of Europe, and give to Britain that preeminence amongst the nations which she now possesses.—If such are the great advantages derived from commerce to this country, it surely ought to be the study of every individual, as far as his abilities, situation, and circumstances in life will admit, to be acquainted with its nature, and to trace its various connections.

To make some observations on the first principles of trade, or the beginning of commercial intercourse with different countries, and to point out what to me appears the most

* Read before the Literary Society of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

likely means of bringing commerce to its highest degree of perfection, is the design of this essay.

If we take a survey of this earth, even those places where nature seems to have been most bountiful, and to have poured out her whole luxuriance, even there we shall find some wants, some articles or produce, which, if obtained, would add either to the ease or comfort of the inhabitants. If we cast our eyes on the more northerly climates, where the sterility of the soil is rendered more barren, from the small degree of that solar warmth which gives life to the whole creation, yet even there we find a superfluity of some articles extremely necessary to the inhabitants of more favoured situations. Such indeed is the diversified nature of the earth we inhabit, that there is no country, however highly it may be favoured, which can produce all that is necessary for the comfort, health, protection, and security of its inhabitants.

From these causes commerce is certainly nearly coeval with man: and if men had duly observed these immutable laws of their Creator, and regulated their conduct accordingly, all intercourse would have been so reciprocal, that both national and individual interest, as well as social happiness, would long have continued to bless the world.—But jealousy, envy, and ambition, the most dangerous passions of the human breast, soon made man lose sight of his true interest. When kings, governors or rulers, by whatever name they are called, once turned their attention to raising a revenue, whether for the support of their own kingdom, or to gratify their own ambition, and increase their greatness, the idea of taxing the produce of neighbouring states seems very soon to have engrossed that attention. To a weak shortsighted politician the idea is no doubt flattering: he vainly thinks he shall raise a revenue and increase the resources of his own people by taxing his neighbours, not recollecting how soon and how easily all will be retaliated. Whoever may have had but small opportunities of observing the intercourse of different nations, and comparing the commercial laws and regulations by which they are governed, will easily see with what exactness they endeavour to counteract each other. I could illustrate this in a variety of instances, but it would lead

lead me to too great a length for what I intend, viz.—only a short essay. Let one observation suffice: Compare the duty on wine in this country with the duty on English malt liquor in some others. The people in foreign countries are as much astonished to hear the low price at which our ale and porter can be made, as we are to hear the price at which the cultivator of the grape can sell his wine. One can scarcely be prevented from thinking that it is surely a mistaken, not to say a cruel, policy, which thus prevents the great bulk of the people from enjoying those bounties of Providence which the earth sends forth in such abundance. If my memory is to be trusted, it is to this commercial jealousy we owe most of the wars which for more than a century past have tormented mankind, and destroyed millions of the human race: and, what yet is a more melancholy reflection, this dæmon of discord seems only to be increasing in strength and plotting fresh inroads on the happiness of mankind. I will, however, beg leave to observe, that the idea of universal empire, encouraged by successive victories, and of commanding the trade of the world into one emporium, however flattering to the conquering hero or adventurous merchant, both alike are destructive to the general happiness of mankind: and I am persuaded, that as soon will the immutable laws of the universe be changed,—the different climates of this earth send forth the same productions,—as either will be realized. A small recollection of history will fully convince us, that ambition had no sooner supposed that her wishes were to be gratified, than the mighty fabric has tumbled in pieces, and brought the vain projector to a premature death, or to linger out a few years covered with shame, disgrace, and remorse. Such, I am persuaded, will be the natural consequence of all overstrained ambitious speculations. I make no doubt but many will recollect several instances of some persons in this country, of large fortunes, extensive credit, and wide-spread connections; who, not satisfied with all these, but prompted by ambition, wished to bring all under their grasp; and in the pride of their hearts have declared, My warehouses, or my granaries, shall be the general depôt of such or such an article;

article; I will then fix my own price, and riches will flow from every quarter. How few, very few, of such have succeeded, but brought ruin on themselves, and misery on all their connections! I am apt to think, that what is the case of individuals will in a certain degree be the case with nations. I am persuaded that God, in pity to mankind, has set some bounds to ambition which it cannot pass.

I must here beg leave to make one observation, to prevent my being misunderstood; and that is, It is not my intention to argue in the smallest degree against duties; it is likewise highly expedient to tax some articles more than others;—it is only the extreme to which many duties are carried that I would combat, together with that ambitious monopolizing spirit, whether in an individual or a nation, which wishes to counteract the very laws of nature, by bringing the whole produce of the earth and the industry of its inhabitants into the vortex of their own power. I will also endeavour to answer an objection which is commonly brought forward, and by many thought unanswerable, viz.—Money must be had; and how can it be obtained but by increasing the duties? That an additional duty may for a while give a larger return I will admit: but I am very certain it can only be of a temporary duration; because every advance in the price of any article will in a certain degree lessen its consumption; and add to this, it increases the smuggling of the article:—from these two causes the decrease of the revenue will naturally follow. I could produce many instances, but this would lead me to too great a length. Suffice it to observe, that smuggling and illicit trade are carried to a greater extent in almost every article where the prospect of much gain holds out a strong temptation: and of all the evils which can afflict a nation, I believe smuggling, if its various consequences were taken into consideration, is the most dangerous:—it estranges the mind from all the regular habits of industry, and insensibly makes inroads on the moral principle of the human heart. Let any person take but a glance at the numerous laws and statutes to prevent smuggling in its various branches, with all the pains and penalties annexed:—the mind will shrink

shrink with disgust, if not with horror, from the perusal :— and, as if all were not enough, oaths are introduced as an additional barrier. A recourse to them is most alarming to every serious mind ; it is sapping the very pillars of virtue, and with gigantic strides rendering the mind indifferent, if not callous, to the most serious and the most useful of all appeals—I mean the solemnity of an oath.

The closest politician may please himself with framing additional laws and more severe restraints, but all will be found ineffectual while the present system is pursued : the more timid or conscientious will be restrained, and all their exertions of industry paralysed ; but the daring and adventurous will spring up in every direction. This, however, with some other particulars to prove and illustrate the proposition I have here laid down, may be the subject of another essay, if this should be thought worth the attention of the Society. I will at present only mention one instance, which must be in the recollection and knowledge of many —I mean the small amount of the revenue on tea before the reduction of the duty took place : and yet, to secure the revenue, every law and regulation which human ingenuity could contrive were put into practice.

It now only remains for me to say what is the line of conduct, or plan, which a wise statesman and true patriot ought to pursue. A thorough knowledge of his country is certainly the first and most essential requisite ; to be well acquainted with all its more natural productions ; and to bring these to the highest possible perfection, his constant aim and study. I do not mean to say that any check should be given to the experimental agriculturist,—quite the reverse,—but only that the principal concern of the government should be to give the greatest encouragement to the productions which, by observing the laws of nature, there is reason to believe can be brought to the highest degree of perfection. The next and most essential, I conceive to be, To study the genius of the people ; carefully to observe their natural disposition ; to note their turn of mind and principal propensity, with all the anxious concern with which a wise parent would watch and study the rising dispositions, the natural talents and various inclinations

inclinations of his children, and put them to such professions as there is good reason to think they would most excel in. I am fully persuaded that it is as impossible for the inhabitants of any country to excel in the manufactory of every article, as it would be by any degree of cultivation to cause the earth in any one country to produce or bring forth the various productions of other climates. To inquire into the cause of this is not the design of the present essay ; I only mean to state facts. The gin in Holland, the brandy in France, the rum in the West Indies, occur to my mind, at present, as in point. Notwithstanding the great capital of the English distillers, their persevering industry and diligence, aided by every chemical knowledge and improvement,—how different are our productions from those mentioned ! Yet in France, Holland, and the West Indies, these operations are often carried on by mere novices (if I may so speak) in the profession. I will now contrast English malt liquor with what is made any where in Europe. I believe it will be generally found that our ale and porter as far exceed those of all other countries, as the brandies in France and the gin in Holland excel ours. I would likewise mention our excelling in almost every article in the manufacturing of iron : I might contrast some of what may be called the loom manufactory. I am well aware that in many of these we either excel or have arrived at a great degree of perfection : still in many others we fall far short. I have, however, at present only mentioned those which I think are almost generally known and acknowledged.

From a review of the whole, it appears to me self-evident, that the true interest and real riches of every country consist in having a reciprocal intercourse with each other ; to have no prohibitory duties, nor any so high as to create too great a temptation to illicit trade. By these means the whole revenue or duty could be easily collected, and with less than half the present number of officers. Traders and merchants would then be much more upon an equal footing in regard to excise regulations ; the more timid and conscientious would

would rejoice under the protection of the law, and the more daring and adventurous would feel little temptation to transgress its boundaries. The present code of excise laws, at which the most resolute shrink back with disgust, and which cause the more serious to heave a sigh at the inroads they are making on religion and morality, would assume all the mildness of the jurisprudence of the English constitution. The wise politician would feel no anxiety at the prosperity of any neighbouring state: the more they cultivated the natural production of their soil or climate, and the higher degree of perfection to which they brought some branches of manufactory,—on the more easy terms could his people be supplied; and as they increased in riches, so much the more would be the demand for the natural productions of his country, as well as for all the articles of manufactory in which his people might excel. Pursuing this plan, every nation would see its true greatness and real riches so connected with that of others, that it could not hurt another without the greatest injury to itself. Jealousy and envy would find no place in the human heart; trade would be found only in its infancy; its extension, I am persuaded, would be far more than we are apt to conceive; and peace might continue to bless the world.

But I must here suppress my feelings, as my design is only to use fair reasonings, and to draw just conclusions.

J. G.

IV. *Analysis of the lately discovered Mineral Waters at Cheltenham; and also of other Medicinal Springs in its Neighbourhood.* By FREDERICK ACCUM, M. R. I. A. Operative Chemist, Lecturer on Practical Chemistry and on Mineralogy and Pharmacy, &c.

OF all the mineral waters which have acquired celebrity within our own times, the springs of Cheltenham hold a most distinguished rank. Their fame is the more solid, and their character will be the more permanent and flourishing,