National Gazette.

By PHILIP FRENEAU.

Vol. I. THURSDAY, November 24, 1791. Numb. 8.

For the NATIONAL GAZETTE.

A Political enquiry into the beſt means of improving the Commerce of the American States.

[*Continued from our laſt.*]

[*In this part of his addreſs, the author proves from the experience of hiſtory, that government ought, by every proper means, to exert its endeavors to procure from Europe and elſewhere, perſons ſkilled in the uſeful arts, in order to manufacture the raw materials produced, or capable of being produced, in this country.*]

IN order to prevent the fruits of our agricultural and commercial induſtry from centering wholly in the hands of ſtrangers, it is abſolutely neceſſary for the United States to preſerve a unity of intereſts among themſelves; the firſt object of which union of intereſts ſhould be, the putting it out of the power of any body of men, an individual, or a foreigner, to thwart ſuch meaſures as ſhould be taken to promote the national commercial advantages in view; and to place things on ſuch a footing, that the plans and machinations of foreigners ſhould rather be made to cooperate in the ſucceſs of thoſe beneficial deſigns.—In a word, every ſtep taken by government ought to be dictated by the idea of the national intereſt at large, which ought to be conſidered as the central point of all their operations.

This principle being eſtabliſhed, I would go on to obſerve, that the great aim of every wiſe adminiſtration ought to be to protect, and give a direction to national induſtry in its infancy; and even to make conſiderable ſacrifices, if neceſſary, to enſure ſucceſs to all that claſs of people engaged in the production of raw materials, and the proſecution of thoſe arts, which are conſidered among the *uſeful* in every country.—To delay time in proving ſo evident a principle as the preceding, would be abſurd; becauſe there is no example in hiſtory, of its having ever been controverted.

This leading idea in our mercantile ſyſtem, naturally induces an enquiry into the moſt proper means of encouraging the cultivation of thoſe articles which afford the means of manufactures and arts, and are the common cauſe of their flouriſhing in any part of the world.

Manufactures are, in themſelves, of little conſequence without the aid of the arts; deprived of which they are never known to ſucceed to any conſiderable degree. For the encouragement of them, all wiſe governments have ever found it their intereſt to eſtabliſh ſchools for drawing, engraving, painting and chemiſtry, that by the aſſiſtance of theſe their artiſts might be enabled to advance their fabrics to the utmoſt degree of perfection. Theſe arts only, if well followed, are of ineſtimable value to the nations that encourage them, by exempting them from a tribute, which, (previous to their making them their own) they paid to their neighbours, in the purchaſe of their merchandize.

From this ſpirit of enquiry and imitation, it has happened, that ſeveral European nations can at this day manufacture painted or printed muſlins, lawns, callicoes, and even paper hangings, [illegible] auty and fineneſs to thoſe that [illegible] dia; and have therefore, [illegible] ſelves from a ſpecies of [illegible] formerly paid to In- [illegible] ſtry. [illegible] have ever re- [illegible] heir national [illegible] ſis of their [illegible] National [illegible] s pur- [illegible] reat [illegible] aw [illegible] as [illegible]

attempting to diſcover the means by which the moſt intelligent legiſlators and patriots of former times were enabled to do ſuch immenſe ſervices to their country in promoting their fabrics and inventions, did not hiſtory ſtep in to our aſſiſtance.—To hiſtory, then, ancient and modern, let us recur for information; there we ſhall ſee detailed at full length the various particulars, a knowledge of which is neceſſary for promoting the public weal.

In all the wiſe governments of antiquity we may conſtantly obſerve an ardent deſire and emulation to encourage the growth of the more liberal arts. Chemiſtry, encouraged by the bounties of ſovereigns, ſet men upon exploring the bowels of the earth and bringing to light the ſecrets of the mineral world. It was this encouragement alſo that developed the nature of plants and vegetables and blended their various colours in ſuch a manner as to contribute to the pleaſures and luxuries of life. The compoſition called glaſs, the artificial paſte known by the name of porcelain, and that beautiful gloſs called varniſh, all owe their origin to the encouragement which enlightened miniſters have afforded to men of obſervation and reflection. The nature of indigo, ſaffron, and a multiplicity of other precious plants, has been inveſtigated for the purpoſes of beauty and variety in colours, and the culture of them has been encouraged in every country, where the climate has ſuffered them to grow.

All the arts and ſciences keep an equal pace with each other, and afford a reciprocal aid. In the department of legiſlation we have ſeen Lycurgus and Solon, two of the moſt celebrated lawgivers of antiquity, zealouſly travelling the whole world over, with a view to make new diſcoveries in ſcience, improve their own underſtandings, and diffuſe the knowledge they had acquired when they returned to their own countries, in eſtabliſhing the arts, and rendering their fellow-citizens independent in the poſſeſſion of them.—We find talents and abilities every where encouraged by the friends of mankind, and directed to proper purſuits. In modern hiſtory, with what an ardor do we ſee human induſtry exalted to the higheſt pitch; and how rapid has been the progreſſion of knowledge in all enlightened governments! Peter the Great in Ruſſia, Ferdinand in Pruſſia, Lewis the Great in France, a multitude of German potentates, and, to mention no more, all the patriotic and wiſe Kings of Great-Britain, have ever declared themſelves the friends and patrons of arts and ſciences; and hence it is, that at this day we ſee their reſpective governments the moſt flouriſhing and happy in Europe.

Not a few of theſe illuſtrious perſonages travelled Europe over to acquire the requiſite knowledge for the eſtabliſhment of every ſpecies of manufacture, and to induce, by their munificence, foreign artiſts and manufacturers to ſettle in their territories, and engage in their various fabrics. Thus it was that Peter, czar of Ruſſia, brought his marine to perfection—and Joſeph the ſecond, a great number of manufactures before unknown in his dominions. Henry the fourth of France entertained preciſely the ſame views: he did not indeed go abroad for this purpoſe in perſon, but he employed ſeveral of his ſubjects in travelling for the ſame benevolent end. In his reign, the art of *tanning leather* was ſcarcely known in France—but this excellent monarch did not think it below his royal dignity to ſend one of his moſt able tanners into Hungary, to diſcover the ſecret of their method of tanning. The conſequence was, that in a very ſhort ſpace of time France wholly exempted herſelf from a tribute which ſhe had before annually paid to foreign induſtry, by having been under the neceſſity of purchaſing Hungarian leather.

And thus it has been, that by ſovereigns incurring ſome little expence in the way of experiments of the above kind, the greateſt national advantages have been found to reſult. Both Sully and Monteſquieu, during their reſpective adminiſtrations, were invariably bent upon uſing every poſſible means to make France the ſeat of the arts. The great Colbert followed exactly in their ſteps by eſtabliſhing certain regulations, which, at the ſame time, perfected the art of dying, and brought into diſrepute those dyes of inferior quality which fraud and ignorance had introduced. He had the diſcernment to know, that the firſt requiſite in every manufacture is the goodneſs of the work, and that without a principle of fair dealing and honeſty, every ſpecies of commerce dependent upon the manufactures of a country, muſt fall to the ground.—But, not contented with advancing thus far, he encouraged manufactures in general by beſtowing premiums proportioned to the merits of the manufacturers. If we attend to hiſtorical information, we ſhall likewiſe ſee that the ſame policy was obſerved by the Empreſs Maria Thereſa, of Auſtria, whoſe liberality was ſuch, as even to beſtow large fortunes upon thouſands of artiſts who were willing to come and ſet up their manufactories in Germany.

A ſimilar mode of proceeding has in times paſt proved the ſalvation of France. The time has been when ſhe purchaſed from her neighbours to the amount of more than fifty millions * yearly, only in the two articles of broadcloths and ſilk.—But no ſooner did the French apply themſelves to the planting of white mulberry trees, feeding ſilk-worms, and preſerving their wool, than they manufactured to the amount of the ſame ſum over and above their home conſumption. A ſimilar change took place in the article of lace, in their trade with the countries of Flanders and Brabant.

From theſe ſketches of information, it is eaſy to ſee, that a nation can, whenever it pleaſes, free itſelf from the tribute which it may have been accuſtomed to pay to the ſuperior induſtry of its neighbours—By encouraging and protecting uſeful eſtabliſhments they may do ſtill more, and even advance ſo far as to turn the balance of trade in their favour.

In the whole hiſtory of commerce, nothing is more worthy of admiration than its progreſs in Ireland. After a tedious ſucceſſion of civil wars, that country, exhauſted, ravaged, and oppreſſed, was left a mere deſart, the people diſcouraged and their reſources ruined. In this ſituation of things, the Earl of Eſſex, then Governor of Ireland, ſoon ſaw the neceſſity of re-animating the drooping ſpirits of the inhabitants, and directing ſuch of them as had eſcaped from wounds and ſlaughter, to the purſuits of induſtry. Lord Eſſex, not wholly relying upon his own judgment in ſo momentous an affair as a general reformation of the Iriſh government, conſulted the famous Sir William Temple, a very able politician, who ſketched out a plan, which has been attended with unexampled ſucceſs.—It would be tedious at preſent to detail the whole of Sir William's plan at full length; ſufficient be it to obſerve, that he recommended a *conſcientious integrity* as the baſis upon which the ſtructure of foreign commerce ought to be built, and without which it cannot poſſibly hope to attract confidence. He, next, adviſed Lord Eſſex to encourage the breeding of cattle and ſheep, and to be particularly attentive to the raiſing of the raw materials, in general ſuited to the country, which he regarded as the ſoul of commerce, and for which there would always be a demand, as well as for their linens, at fixed and regular markets. In order to excite emulation he propoſed honours and conſiderable premiums to those who ſhould bring to market, againſt a ſpecified time, one or two pieces of linen, or cloth of the firſt quality. This gave riſe to the Iriſh manufactures—Intereſt is the grand motive of action in man, and the multitude are ever moſt open to its impreſſions..—It was, further, the advice of Sir William, to have an inſpection for every ſort of merchandize deſtined to go abroad, in order to prevent fraudulent practices, which never fail to injure the commercial credit of a nation.

By following ſuch advice Ireland ſoon re-eſtabliſhed her commerce. Such is the influence of genius and ability upon the proſperity of ſtates!

But, on the other hand, it may be aſked, whether ſimilar plans would be practicable in an infant country, ſeparated by an immenſe ocean from Europe; deſtitute of ſuitable funds, and labouring under every diſcouragement that European jealouſy and European policy can throw in its way?

To this it may be anſwered, that the eſtabliſhment of a lottery in every ſtate, would in a little time produce a fund fully adequate to the great object in view. There is every reaſon to believe, that, in a country as famous for its patriotic character as America, every citizen, being convinced of the utility of ſuch an inſtitution, would willingly riſque a trifle of money and thereby contribute to the welfare of the community by promoting a lottery which ſhould have for its object, ſimply, induſtry and extenſion of commerce.

But, ſuppoſing theſe funds already provided, and ſtill no manufactures in the country; would it not be ſo much uſeleſs money?—I anſwer, by no means; for there might be a thouſand ways inſtantly found out to employ it for the good of the public. Why not, in this caſe, follow the example of Henry the fourth who ſent throughout Europe in ſearch of the ableſt workmen, to inſtruct his own ſubjects in France?—Why might not the profits of theſe funds be employed in defraying the expences of perſons ſent on ſimilar errands? Money thus employed, inſtead of being thrown away needleſsly, would ſoon gratify us with a full diſcovery of all those ſecrets of art which are ſo carefully retained in foreign countries.—Or the money might be well applied in paying the paſſages of a certain number of tradeſmen from Europe, whom the hope of reward, and a more eligible ſituation in America, and, above all, the enjoyment of liberty, would induce to come amongſt us.

It was preciſely by ſuch ſteps that France formerly procured manufacturers from Italy, where the various ſilk fabrics had previouſly been carried to the utmoſt degree of perfection.

But it would be waſting time to go about proving that ſteps of this kind would beſt promote our national proſperity in the United States. By encouraging ingenuity and induſtry, there would be the higheſt probability of our turning, in a ſhort time, the balance of trade in our favor; as is now the caſe with those nations who have followed the propoſed plan.

There is a remarkable inſtance in the hiſtory of the reign of the Empreſs Maria Thereſa, of the national advantages accruing from the patronage of ſovereigns, in regard to arts and manufactures. This wiſe Princeſs knew very well, that the character of a ſovereign being once well eſtabliſhed for encouraging genius and induſtry, would ſoon draw plenty of people of talents into the kingdom, who might be uſefully employed:—A ſtranger made his appearance one day at Tournay, a town under the Empreſs's dominion in Flanders, and offered his ſervices to the governing powers of the place, accompanied with certificates of his ſkill and capacity, in the manufacture of china and Delft ware; articles in which that part

* 3,750,000 £. *Pennſylvania currency.*