

National Gazette.

By PHILIP FRENEAU.

VOL. I.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1791.

NUMB. 9.

For the NATIONAL GAZETTE.

A Political enquiry into the best means of improving the Commerce of the American States.
[Continued from our last.]

THERE are two classes of people in this country, who, I foresee, will have very little relish for the opinions I have been endeavoring to establish, in the preceding part of my address. These are, *first*, prejudiced people, who will never quit the old track, be it ever so inconvenient; and, *secondly*, interested persons, who will naturally raise objections to whatever seems to interfere with their favorite schemes.

The southern states (say some) are too warm; and those to the north and north-east, too cold, for the breeding a sufficiency of sheep to supply a large woolen manufactory in America.

In answer to this objection, I observe, that the southern provinces of Spain are exposed to a still greater excess of heat than those of the United States of America, and yet support immense manufactures of woolen, for the purposes of commerce. The northern parts of Germany are extremely cold in winter, and yet they likewise excel in the manufacture and exportation of woolens. These are truths so well known in the commercial world, that I suppose nobody will dispute them.

It would be worth while to remark, in respect to the qualities of wool, that in the north as well as the south of Europe, there are a particular breed of sheep, whose wool is finer, longer, and bearing a greater resemblance to silk, than that of any other sort. It is observed, too, that difference of climate and the many varieties of pasturage are productive of three sorts of wool, the best, the indifferent, and the worst. These three varieties may be considered as the principal support of the cloth manufactures, and are, we may say, the *golden fleece* for any nation, that knows how to turn to the best advantage the resources which a well directed industry puts into their hands.

Wool is the better in quality for the fleece not being shorn too early in the season. The ancient laws of the kingdom of France fixed the time of shearing to the tenth of June. It is remarkable that the fleeces shorn about this time yield at least about one-fourth more from the loom, than those taken later, and better preserve that natural silky gloss, which is very imperfectly imitated by the use of gums. Another advantage in shearing sheep about this time, arises, from the fleece being then arrived to a state of maturity, which makes the cloth more susceptible of the dyes and stiffening.

It has cost every manufacturing nation in Europe abundance of trouble to bring their woolen fabrics to the necessary degree of perfection. Even Sweden, notwithstanding the rigour of her climate in winter, has succeeded not only in her endeavors to propagate the breed of English sheep, but also in improving the aboriginal stock, by introducing rams from abroad. If there be only moderate care taken to protect these animals from the severity of storms, and keep them under shelter during winter (as is the case in Sweden) in order to prevent the rain from breeding a rot in the wool, there is no danger but that it will always be excellent in its quality.

It may be objected that a strict national attention to the propagation of sheep would divert too many people from the duties of agriculture, inasmuch as even to injure, ultimately, the progress of the woolen manufacture itself. I answer, that one man, with two dogs, is at all times sufficient to feed and oversee six hundred sheep, capable of producing to the value of £.600 a year in

wool, besides manure proper for fertilizing the ground. This quantity of wool wrought into fine broadcloths, would, with proper management furnish a circulation of more than £.6000 in trade, and give subsistence to a multitude of people in the towns, who might at all times be kept busy, while those in the country might be profitably employed in the winter, when agricultural labors are suspended.

If such methods were adopted, there would be no danger of the lands suffering for want of cultivators; so far from it, that these are the very means to increase the number of husbandmen, and consequently the quantity of land in tillage. It might further be observed, that mountains and heights inaccessible to the plough, are the most proper for the support of sheep. Certain it is, that these animals are much fonder of the pasturage on elevated situations, than the contrary; since here they breathe a clear wholesome air, which contributes not a little to their growth and the fineness of their wool. The Pyrenean mountains, the Alps, and the most rugged parts of Switzerland, are everywhere covered with flocks of sheep, whose fleeces supply the manufactories, and enrich a country naturally churlish and barren. It is clear, then, from these instances, that the raising of sheep can neither injure the public, nor be prejudicial to agriculture. On the contrary, a woolen manufacture, well established, would be an inexhaustible source of wealth, a fund constantly increasing, and flowing from the hand of industry to circulate through the country at large, and serving as the ground-work for the establishment of an extensive commerce.

Persons inclined to raise difficulties, and throw obstacles in the way of this plan, may possibly object, that the population of America is too inconsiderable for projects of this kind at present; that our flax, our silk, our wool are too trifling in quantity to build such schemes upon, &c. A thousand instances, however, prove the contrary to these assertions. Geneva and Liege were much more scant of people, in proportion to their extent, than the United States, when industry and the patronage of government caused their infant manufactures to begin to prosper. A small town, or village, that sets itself in earnest about any manufacture, is equally capable with the largest of advancing it to the utmost possible degree of perfection. Whoever has travelled through Europe, will subscribe to the truth of my observation, where an infinite number of very considerable establishments in manufactures are carried on in villages.

In regard to the growing of flax, although there are vast quantities of this article raised, it is certain, that a greater demand from the manufactories would at once increase the quantity, as was the case a few years ago in Prussia. To speak candidly, the culture of flax does not appear to be properly attended to in all parts of the United States. The land for this purpose ought to be of the very best kind; the clod should be broken fine, and the ground as well prepared with dung, &c. as you would a spot for a garden. The flax-seed may then be sown as thick as you would sow grass-seed in a meadow; but when it is about six inches high, it should be carefully weeded, without which, grass and other vegetable substances would be apt to impede the growth. In the Austrian Low Countries, they often secure their flax by sticking it; that is to say, the branches or suckers are tied to little stakes, about a foot high, to keep it from falling down, or lodging, and consequently losing much of its good quality. In this manner, too, they secure their flax in Flanders and Zealand, where it grows to the greatest perfection, and

furnishes materials for lace, cambric, and other fine textures, from its being very long and of a fine fibre. There is also another sort, perhaps, little known in America, called the *Everlasting Siberian flax*: This species of flax (like the sugar cane) grows several years from the same root, always springing up anew, as soon as the old stalk is cut off. Naturalists have observed that there are, in common, from thirty to forty stalks, in this kind of flax, growing out from the same root. Experience has proved, that the general qualities of this plant, for manufacture, are fully equal to those of the best flax of other kinds more generally known in Europe. The only defect is, that its fibres cannot be spun into the finest sort of thread—but there are abundance of uses for which a coarser texture is equally valuable with the other; mankind standing in need not only of superfine linens, but, much more generally, of those that are coarse and stout.

The cultivation of Siberian flax, should be a national object, then, in America; for this plain reason, that the annual expence, in the common way, of preparing and sowing the ground would be saved, except at long intervals of time; it being only necessary to sow it once, and it will yield the most abundant crops for a great number of years.

Raw silk may be justly reckoned one of the principal materials for a national manufacture. With regard to this commodity, however, there are people amongst us not ashamed to assert, that it cannot be produced, in any considerable quantities, in cold countries. The example of Prussia, where industry is every day making unrivalled progress, is amply sufficient to destroy a prejudice, which has indeed antiquity on its side, but has been ruinous to this branch of art. Ever since the king encouraged the planting of mulberry-trees, Prussia has raised silk enough to supply her whole national manufactures in that article. But it must be remarked here, that it was not merely the good wishes of the court that established this noble manufacture in Prussia; it was in its infancy assiduously encouraged, and directed by laws and regulations favorable to those employed in the nurture of silk-worms, as well as to the manufacturers of the silk. In tracing the procedure of the Prussian government, relative to the silk manufactory, we shall uniformly find that the Prussian monarch was deeply impressed with the importance and utility of such establishments, to the welfare of his nation. In the next place, to prevent the exportation of raw silk from his dominions, he issued a mandate in 1749, in which his subjects were forbidden, under pain of severe penalties, to sell any of their raw silk to foreigners, or to export any the least quantity out of the kingdom, upon any pretence whatever; but to carry it to the national manufactories, where they would find a ready market for it, there to be wrought up into the various stuffs for home use, as well as exportation. The severity of this law was extended even to velvets made abroad, the wearing of which was prohibited by an edict which decreed, that all foreign velvets found in the kingdom that should be proved to be of foreign manufacture, should be torn to pieces and burnt by the hands of the common executioner. By the same edict, the Prussian tailors were forbidden to make up any suit of imported velvet. This was done, pointedly, with a view to exclude the productions of the neighboring silk manufactories of other nations; and it was no uncommon thing for the monarch himself to refuse an audience to any person, be his quality what it might, who was clothed in a suit of any foreign manufacture whatever.

But it is not Prussia alone, among the

northern powers of Europe, that has found the good effects of a careful attention to the culture of the white mulberry-tree; very lately all the other civilized states, still further north, have strenuously endeavored to free themselves from a dependence upon the more southern nations, for the article of silk. The several circles of the German empire, as well as Denmark, have at present an abundance of the species of mulberry trees above mentioned, which they cultivate to the greatest degree of perfection.

These examples must convince every body of the fallaciousness of the idea, that the establishment of silk manufactories is only practicable in warm countries. In France there is not, at this day, a single province which has not a considerable number of these most valuable trees; and not a few of the principal roads through the kingdom are planted with them for many hundreds of miles in length, on each side. Besides all this, the government has taken care mulberry nurseries should be continually in growth, to supply, gratis, every person that should think proper to plant them on his lands.

[The remainder of this translation in our next.]

PHILADELPHIA.

CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 23.

A report was read from the Secretary at War, on the petitions of the legal representatives of William Bond, Wadleigh Noyes, Charles Motte, Barnard Elliott, Samuel Wife, Benjamin Huger, John Bush, and Richard Shubrick, officers slain in the service of the United States during the late war.

Referred to the committee for making compensations to widows, orphans, and invalids.

Petitions were read from Peter Huber and James Pettigrew, praying the renewal of certificates lost or destroyed. Referred to the Secretary of the Treasury.

Petitions from John Blake and Michael Rapp, praying compensation for advances and supplies, during the war.

A petition from Paul Weyandt, of Pennsylvania, praying receipt of the pay due to his son, lieutenant Jacob Weyandt, who died in the United States' service during the war.

A petition from Juliana Shulz and Philip Zeiber, executors of George Shulz, deceased, for allowance of the rent of a tenement, the property of said Shulz, appropriated for the use of the medical department during the war.

Ordered, severally, to lie on the table.

A memorial was read from the people called Quakers, in Virginia, stating their objections to certain parts of the militia bill, now depending. Referred to the committee of the whole house on said bill.

The house then proceeded to the consideration of the amendments reported yesterday by the committee of the whole house to the "bill apportioning the representation of the people of the United States, according to the first enumeration." The first of which amendments was, in substance, that from March 3d, 1793, the House of Representatives should be chosen by the people, in the proportion of one representative for every thirty thousand persons; viz. 4 from New-Hampshire; 15 from Massachusetts; 7 from Connecticut; 2 from Rhode-Island; 2 from Vermont; 11 from New-York; 5 from New-Jersey; 14 from Pennsylvania; 1 from Delaware; 9 from Maryland; 21 from Virginia; 2 from Kentucky; 11 from N. Carolina; and 2 from Georgia.