

large and increasing multitude whom the competition of the labour-market, or a restless spirit of adventure, annually discharges on the shores of the Atlantic or Pacific. The ardour which has been kindled in the political contests or commercial speculations of a free and opulent state—the love of freedom and free discussion—the intolerance of detected abuses or slighted remonstrances, or rejected trade—all these combine to people our distant provinces with a body of energetic and active-minded men, whom conciliation and good government may cherish into loyal and enthusiastic subjects, but whom spleen, contumely, and mismanagement will infallibly sour into sulky and resolute rebels. The alternative is perhaps of more consequence than many people think. It is a common assertion that one day or other the colonies will be independent of us, and that it matters not how soon that day comes. We think that it does matter a very great deal. We think that the addition of another maritime Power to those which already exist, or the annexation of a large maritime district to a Power which is already great and every day becoming greater, is not a thing to be contemplated without some dismay. However sanguine the hopes of others may be, we do not anticipate with perfect assurance the arrival of that era when corn, cotton, and calico will cement the ends of the earth together in peace indissoluble. We believe that for generations to come that nation will enjoy the most secure peace which shall be best able to dictate the terms of terms; and that the most powerful nation will be that which shall have the greatest amount of men and shipping and the greatest extent of seaboard at command. For this reason, among others, we are anxious that the time should not be precipitated which is to give the harbours of Nova Scotia or the banks of Newfoundland to a hostile republic or a rebellious federation."

THE INQUIRY INTO THE NAVIGATION LAWS.

We notice with satisfaction that Mr. Ricardo has postponed his motion for a Select Committee to inquire into the Navigation Laws, till Tuesday the 9th of February. There exists a strong prejudice or opinion in favour of these laws, and the delay will give the Ministers and the members of the legislature time to reflect on their effects, before they say Aye or No to Mr. Ricardo's proposition. We propose, at present not to pronounce a dogmatic and decided opinion, but to indicate some of the points which we think require investigation.

These laws are rather of a political than of a commercial character. The object aimed at was the defence, not the enrichment, of the country. On this ground Adam Smith, who took an unfavourable view of them commercially, gave them his approbation. "The defence of Great Britain," he says, "depends very much upon the number of its sailors and its shipping." The act of navigation, therefore, very properly endeavours to give the sailors and shipping of Great Britain the "monopoly of the trade of their own country." "It is not impossible," he adds, "that some of the regulations of this famous act may have proceeded from national animosity." They are as wise, however, as if "they had all been dictated by the most deliberate wisdom." We are not, therefore, primarily to try the Navigation Laws by their commercial effects, but by their effects on the safety and defence of the country. The former are subordinate to the latter, and never have been thought of or cared for when the safety of the State was endangered. They can only be considered as affecting that, and can only become arguments against the laws when that is endangered by their commercial effect. If these laws lessen our wealth, both relatively and absolutely—lessen our trade, lessen the number of our ships and of our seamen,—then, and then only, can we allow the commercial arguments suggested by Dr. Smith and other writers to weigh against them. Believing, for our part, that there is a consistency and harmony throughout Nature, we shrink with dismay from the assertion that laws which diminish the wealth, augment the strength and power, and insure the safety, of the nation.

The navigation act of the Commonwealth was intended, as Blackstone says, "to clip the wings of our opulent and aspiring neighbours, the Dutch." "National animosity at that particular time," says Smith, "aimed at the very same object which the most deliberate wisdom would have recommended, the diminution of the naval power of Holland the only naval power which could endanger the security of England." Relatively to England, and perhaps positively and absolutely, Holland has since that period declined, while England has increased in trade and power, and the rivalry of Holland is no longer the least to be apprehended. How far that altered relation may have been brought about by our navigation laws, is one of the points which Mr. Ricardo's committee should investigate. Mr. McCulloch says, "that it may be fairly doubted whether the navigation laws had the effect of weakening the naval power of the Dutch, and of increasing that of this kingdom." Now, this point is not one of mere curiosity, but of great scientific and moral importance, tending to demonstrate either the harmony or the anomalies of the moral laws, under which nations as well as individuals live, and proving or disproving whether the indulgence of national animosity be coincident with the most deliberate wisdom, and may be relied on to insure national safety.

Admitting, however, that the Navigation Laws tended to ensure our relative superiority to Holland, though it seems to have a much more natural, and we rejoice to say, a much more permanent cause, in a sea-boarded nation, and a surface six times as great as that of the united provinces, it may still become a question whether the decay of Holland has been beneficial to England. If there was a great rivalry and animosity between the two nations in the time of the commonwealth, though before that England and Holland had been closely allied, and had fought together the battles of civil and religious liberty, it seems to have been rather between their statesmen than the two nations. The people were engaged

in similar pursuits, and entertained similar opinions. Those of England felt the inconvenience of the Navigation Act, and in one year after it was enacted presented many petitions against it. Within less than thirty years after the Navigation Act was passed by the Rump Parliament the two nations were engaged in a war of self-defence. Through the reigns of William the Third and Ann, they fought side by side, and from that time, till the breaking out of the French Revolution they continued, in general, allies and friends. How weakening an ally and a friend can have added to the national safety is another of the points that the committee may investigate for the satisfaction of the public and the behoof of moral science.

Holland was not our only naval rival, and France, with her more extensive coast and her greater national resources, gave us, for upwards of a century, more uneasiness, and more endangered our safety, than Holland in the whole of her existence. Whatever weakened the navy of England, killed her seamen, and destroyed her ships, was inimical to her safety and her welfare. Had the Navigation Act no such effect? In less than two years after it was passed, England and Holland went to war, and the Parliamentary History of England says that Act was "the foundation of the grand quarrel that soon afterwards ensued between the republics of England and Holland." The Dutch were, undoubtedly, injured and annoyed by the Navigation Act. It hurried the two nations into war, and caused great destruction to both. It interrupted trade and increased taxation. It cost us many ships and many seamen, and weakened the naval power of both countries. After a few years, they were engaged in a war against France, and the navies of the two Protestant powers which had helped to destroy each other, when united, were not more than a match for the fleet of France. In estimating the effects of the Navigation Act on our naval greatness, the national quarrels it has excited should be rigidly inquired into, and then we venture to assert that this indulgence of the national animosity will be found to have drawn after it a long series of evils.

Although only of a secondary nature, the effect of the Navigation Laws in crippling our own commerce, and so depriving us both of seamen and ships, ought not to be overlooked. Dr. Smith has shewn that by diminishing the number of sellers in our market, it diminishes that of buyers, and made us buy foreign goods dearer, and sell our own cheaper, than if no such laws had impeded foreigners coming to our markets—that it tended to exclude us from the markets of Europe, abounding in opulent customers, who had an abundance of good things to give us in exchange, and forced a trade with colonies which were comparatively poor and destitute. Mr. McCulloch says, "that so far as it depended on us, Holland, the Netherlands, and Germany, were virtually placed without the 'commercial world.'" "In two years after the passing of the Navigation Act of the Rump Parliament," says Roger Coke, writing in 1671, "the building of ships became one-third dearer than before, and seamen's wages became so excessive dear that we have wholly lost the Green-land and Muscovy trade." To some clauses in our Navigation Act Sir Josiah Child attributed the loss of our Norway trade, which went "to the Dnæs and Holsteiners." From the very year the act was passed to our own times, notwithstanding its high character and reputed advantages, there were some parties continually aggrieved by it, and in favour of some it was continually relaxed. Now, it was the Turkey merchants, next the whale fishers, then the Russian company, and at length the United States, after they had separated from England. The necessities of the case then compelled the Legislature to suspend or alter the law. Within our own memories it led to threatened retaliations, and compelled Lord Liverpool's administration, from fear of losing our trade, to make considerable alterations in the law, and negotiate a number of reciprocity treaties, each of which sets aside some of the provisions of the navigation laws. At length it has become extremely limited in its operation, and it may be doubted whether by the warehousing and bonded system, which permits goods prohibited by the Act of Navigation to be brought hither, and warehoused for exportation, its spirit, so far as insuring a carrying trade to our own shipping, whole has not evaporated.

Not only its past effects on our commerce require to be investigated, but its present mode of operation. While it does not prevent foreign ships from bringing food hither to be stored up and used in France and Holland whenever they choose, it did prevent, until it was suspended, that food being made available for our own people. Though lying in our granaries, and the people suffering from want, it was necessary to suspend the law before the food could be used. If the effects of the law be diligently investigated, we have little doubt but the result will be to dissipate the lingering prejudices in its favour. These will be found in harmony with its malevolent origin. The rewards of wisdom have not been vouchsafed in this case any more than in others, to anger and animosity. It will not turn out to be an exception to the great principles of morals and political science, and having impeded our commerce, will also on a close examination be proved to have diminished our naval power. Of all laws, that one should be most abhorrent to free traders, which undiscussably attempts to run an active and opulent customer.

THE USURY LAWS.

We copy the following from the *Pilot*, the Editor of which paper has always been a consistent opponent of our Usury Laws.—

"The public want facts to convince them of the evils resulting from the Usury Laws. They are notoriously inoperative to keep down the rate of interest; all their tendency is the other way. The French Canadians suffer most severely from them, and yet their representatives do not seem inclined to consent to their repeal. We have been assured that usurious interest is taken constantly in the rural districts. Our present object is to assist the *Economist* with another fact. A few weeks ago an individual obtained from a gentleman in this city, of the most undoubted responsibility, six notes of hand for £125 each, at 3, 6, 9, 12, 15 and 18 months. The short note was cashed without difficulty, but the other five