

"Look at the manner in which the people of New England have of late carried on the whale fishery. Whilst we follow them among the tumbling mountains of ice, and behold them penetrating into the deepest recesses of Hudson's Bay and Davis's Straits, whilst we are looking for their beneath the Arctic circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of Polar cold—that they are at the antipodes, and engaged under the frozen Serpent of the South. Falkland islands, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition is but a stage, and resting-place in the progress of their victorious industry. Nor is the Equatorial heat more discouraging to them than the accumulated winter of both the Poles. We know that whilst some of them draw the line and strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude, and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil. No ocean but what is vexed with the fisheries, no climate that is not witness of their toils. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm engagement of English enterprise, ever carried this perilous mode of hardy enterprise to the extent to which it has been pushed by this recent people—a people who are still as it were in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood."

But Britain did not conciliate. The Revolution went on, and the American whale-fishery perished, leaving not one vessel on either fishing-ground.

Yet it is curious, Mr. President, to mark the elasticity of our countrymen in this, their favorite enterprise. A provisional treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain was concluded on the 30th of November, 1782. "On the 3rd of February, 1783," (I read from an English paper of that period,) "the ship *Bedford*, Captain Flores, belonging to Massachusetts, arrived in the Downs. She passed Gravesend on the 4th, and on the 6th was reported at the Custom House in London she was not allowed regular entry until after some consultation between the Commissioners of Customs and the Lords of the Council, on account of the many acts of Parliament yet in force against the rebels of America. She was loaded with 587 barrels of whale oil, and manned wholly with American seamen, and belonged to the Island of Nantucket. The vessel lay at the Horsley Downs, a little below the Tower, and was the first which displayed the thirteen stripes of America in any British port.

Nevertheless, the lost vantage ground was not easily or speedily regained. The effort was made against protection, against exclusion in foreign markets, and against bounties by the English Government equivalent to forty dollars per man employed, or fifty per cent. on the value of every cargo obtained—bounties not occasionally nor irregularly offered, but continued from 1750 to 1824, and amounting in the aggregate to three millions of pounds sterling. Nor was this all. These bounties enhanced with additional inducements, were offered to the Nantucket fishermen, on condition of their abandoning their country, and becoming inhabitants of the adjacent British Islands. It seemed, indeed, that a crisis in this great national interest had come. Happily there was, on the French side of the Channel, at least, one unwearied friend of America, as there were many watchful enemies of England. LAFAYETTE wrote several letters to Boston, and arrested an immigration from Nantucket to the British colonies, and islands, already on the eve of embarkation, and then addressed himself to the French monarch and his Court. France saw at once the danger of a transfer of so great a number of seamen, together with the very secret part and mystery of whale hunting, to her hereditary and relentless enemy. The good but ill-fated Louis XVI equipped six whal-

ing vessels, with American harpooners, on his own account and offered a bounty of nine dollars per man, payable by the Royal Treasury, to every American fisherman who should emigrate to France. In a whole year, only nine families containing thirty-three persons, accepted this offer; and therefore the King, in compliance with LAFAYETTE's first advice, adopted the expedient of discriminating in favor of American cargoes of oil and whalebone in the French market. The American whale fishery began to revive, and in 1787, 1788, and 1789, it employed an average of 122 vessels. But it still labored under the pressure of competition, stimulated by bounties both in England and in France. In 1790, the Great and General Council of Massachusetts appealed to Congress for protection to this great interest of their Commonwealth. Mr. JEFFERSON, the Secretary of State, submitted an elaborate reply, which, whilst it was liberal in its spirit, nevertheless closed with the declaration, that "the whale fishery was a branch of industry so poor as to come to nothing with distant nations who did not support it from their treasures—that our position placed our fishing on ground somewhat higher, such as to relieve the National Treasury from giving it support, but not to permit it to derive support from the fishery nor relieve the Government from the obligation to provide free markets for the productions of the fishery, if possible."

The enterprise had not yet languished into life, when the French Revolution of 1789 occurred, which involved Europe, and ultimately the United States, in wars that swept the latter, as well as the French and Dutch, from all the fisheries, and left them in the exclusive enjoyment of Britain, who achieved in those wars her now established pre-eminence as the conqueror of the seas. At their close, the British had 146 vessels in the Northern whaling ground, which captured no less than 133 whales, and thus obtained 13,590 tons of oil and 438 tons of whalebone; and fifty-six ships in the Southern whale fishery equally successful. The Americans now re-entered the game, and the tables were speedily, and, as we think, permanently, turned in their favor. In 1824 the British became discouraged, and withdrew their bounties; and in 1842 they had no more than 18 vessels in the North fishery, which captured only 24 whales. The Southern fishery declined still more rapidly; so that, in 1845, not one British whaler appeared in the South Seas. Since that time, all nations have virtually abandoned this "hardy form of perilous industry" in favor of the Americans. The entire whaling fleet of the world, in 1847, consisted of about 900 vessels, 40 of which belonged to France, 20 to Bremen and other ports in Northern Europe, 20 to Now-Holland and other British Polynesian Colonies, and all others, more than 800 in number, with a tonnage of 240,000 tons, belonging to the United States. The capital thus employed exceeded twenty millions of dollars, and the annual productions of the fisheries amounted to thirteen millions of dollars. With the decline of this enterprise in Great Britain, her commercial writers began to discountenance whale fishing altogether; and while they now represent it as a new gambling adventure, they endeavor to stimulate the people of Continental Europe to substitute vegetable oils for those procured in the sea.

Mr. President, pray consider the cost, time, dangers and hazard of the whale fishery. Each vessel with its outfit is worth \$30,000, and carries thirty able-bodied seamen, and is afloat on a single voyage one or two, perhaps three years. It finds the whale always above the sixtieth

degree of latitude, and can remain there only during the brief Polar Summer of three months. The whole time may elapse without a whale being seen. When discovered, every stage of his capture is toilsome, and attended with multiplied dangers to the assistants, increased by the shoals, the ice, the storms and the fogs, which protect the animal against his pursuers. The statistics are absolutely frightful to a landsman or a common seaman. In 1819, of sixty-three British ships sent to Davis's Straits, ten were lost. In 1821, out of sixty-nine, eleven were lost. Of eighty-seven ships that sailed for Davis's Straits, in 1830, no less than eighteen were lost, twenty-four returned clean, while not one of the remainder had a full cargo, and only one or two half-fished.

Pray consider, now, Sir, that the great triumph of the American fishermen was achieved, and is still sustained, not only without aid from the Government, but practically also without aid from the capital or enterprises of general commerce; and, indeed, to quote the nervous language of JEFFERSON, "with no auxiliaries but poverty and rigorous economy." The whaling fleet of the United States, in 1846, consisted of 739 vessels. Of the thirty States, only five—New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York—were represented; and all of them, except New York, are the States least blessed in fertility and climate. New Hampshire, having only a single port, sent only one vessel. Rhode Island, one of the three most diminutive States, equipped fifty-two. Connecticut, a small State, sent out one hundred and twenty-four. New York, with her extended territory, vast wealth, and stupendous commercial establishments, sent only eighty-five; and all the rest proceed from that State, inferior to many others in extent, wealth, and commerce, but superior to them all in intellectual and social development—Massachusetts.

Wealth does nothing, patronage does nothing, while vigour does everything for the whale fishery. In Great Britain, London resigned it in favor of those poor and obsolete towns, Hull in England, and Peterhead, in Scotland, as soon as the Government bounties ceased. So of the 85 vessels which, in 1846, represented New York in the fishery, only one went up from the port of New York, the commercial capital of the State and of the Continent, while no less than eight proceeded from Cold Spring, a mere nook in the mountains which crowd toward each other just above the city, as if to prevent the waters of the Hudson from their destined meeting with the tides of the ocean. All the others were sent from New Suffolk, Greenport, and Sag Harbor, inconsiderable villages or hamlets on the outward coast of Long Island. Massachusetts exhibits the same case. Boston finds more lucrative employment for her capital in spindles, in railroads, and even in her fields of ice and granite; and so leaves the profits and toils of the whale-fishery to Freetown, Falmouth, Sippican, Wareham, Plymouth, Holmes' Hole, Fall River, Provincetown, Fairhaven, New Bedford, and Nantucket, towns which but for their pursuit of the whale fishery, would scarcely have been honoured with designation on the chart or names in the gazetteer. Most wondrous of all, Nantucket is a sandy island, fifteen miles long, and three miles broad, capable of maintaining by agriculture only one hundred persons, and yet it was the cradle of the whale fishery; and neither any town in America, nor in England, nor even in France, has ever successfully established or at all maintained the whale fishery, without drawing, not merely its knowledge of whale-hunting, but the officers and crews of its vessel, chiefly from that sandy shoal thus rising above the surface of the sea.