

can only be carried on where foreign vessels of different nations are permitted to make a depôt, as no one nation could furnish all the articles without an increase of expense, which would defeat the object, and hence our English free ports have failed. This sort of trade, when the Spaniard visits the free port, is that most profitable to the European merchant, and it will now be seen that, from the superior value of those assorted packages to the customers of the Spaniard, it is more advantageous for him to pay the duties and fees at St. Thomas, rather than purchase packages less saleable at an English island, though he would have neither duties nor fees to pay. The repetition of this idea so often demands an apology, but it is upon it that the whole question turns respecting free ports in the West Indies. It will also be seen that for some time to come in a thinly settled country, this clandestine trade will flourish, as the Spaniard, whose case we have supposed, will continue to be able to undersell even the merchant who may import his goods direct from Europe to the Spanish main. The latter must pay warehouse rent, and enormous duties on foreign commerce, and heavy fees to corrupt men in the new government. All these expenses must be put on his goods, and which the contraband trader avoids. Mr. Sarqui, one of the first foreign merchants at St. Thomas, and who has had the greatest experience in that trade, told me, that encouraged by a fair and moderate tariff of duties, especially promulgated by the Colombian Republic, he sent down two vessels to La Guayra, laden with goods, proper for the market, and the vessels entered at the Custom House in a legal manner. As soon as his and some other vessels had begun taking in their loading, the tariff of duties was altered by the government to a scale extravagantly high, so that he and other merchants had generally suffered considerable pecuniary losses whenever they depended on the government of South America. Such proceedings on the part of the executive are considered by merchants to justify smuggling, in which manner, for many years past, trade has almost universally been carried on. These considerations,