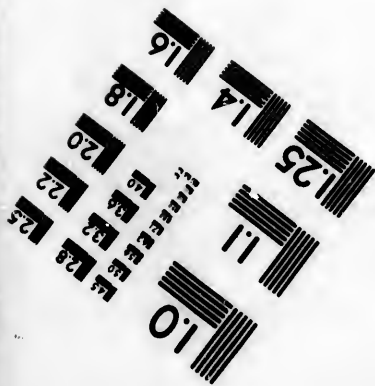
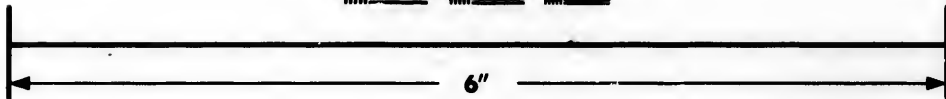
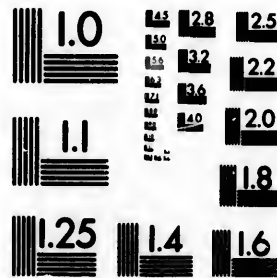


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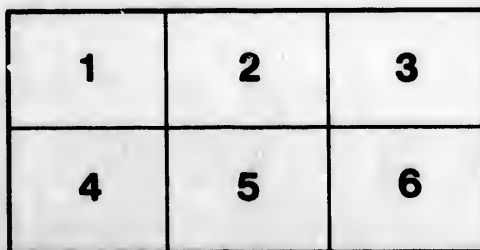
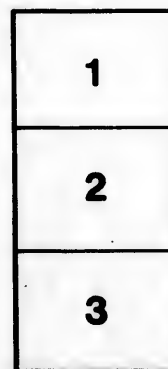
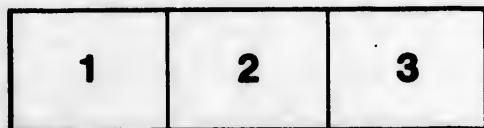
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REFLECTIONS

UPON

THE VALUE OF THE

BRITISH WEST INDIAN COLONIES,

AND OF THE

BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN
PROVINCES.

1825.

"Regions Cæsar never knew
Thy posterity shall sway."

COWPER.

LONDON:

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REFLECTIONS,

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IT seems to be an established principle in human affairs, that, in proportion as men are successful in life, the means to which they owe their rise or promotion should be undervalued or forgotten. The unwearied assiduity, the anxious attention, the severe labour of their early days are studiously omitted in their accounts of themselves, and to their superior abilities alone do they wish that to be attributed which is the result of many an hour of care, and which has been obtained after encountering many a day of bitter disap-

pointment and fatigue. The practice of those virtues to which they have been indebted for their success is, in consequence, too often neglected. The same exertions are not made to retain as were found necessary to acquire ; and, such is the instability of human affairs, and the inconsistency of the human mind, that reverses are but too often to be traced to the neglect of those measures which caused their prosperity, and which, if persevered in, would have insured its continuance.

It would appear that it is with nations as with individuals. An enthusiastic attachment to their country, contempt for wealth, and respect for all the military virtues enabled the Romans to establish an empire, the gigantic remains of which are even not yet obliterated. No sooner, however, did the love of ease, a fondness for luxury, and the desire of enjoyment supersede the sterner qualities, than their power visibly

declined, and their empire, in consequence, fell a prey to the more hardy, as well as the more virtuous nations by whom it was attacked. If we turn from the Romans towards ourselves, and endeavour to trace our own conduct, and look back at those measures we have adopted, and which have led to our present unexampled prosperity ; ships, colonies, and commerce, we will find to have been the favourite objects of our pursuit, and the great stepping-stones which have enabled us to reach that height and pinnacle of power on which we are actually seated. The first and last-mentioned of these (our great means and accessories of wealth) are still held in repute ; but attempts are daily made to undervalue our colonies, and to diminish their importance in public estimation. Partial statements of their expense are exhibited ; without at the same time offering a correspondent view of their advantages. The

question of the colonies is attempted to be separated from that of the shipping and the commerce to which they have given birth. It is asserted that the advantages of the two latter may be maintained without incurring the expense of the former; and the advocates of these new theories would persuade us, upon the faith of their opinions, to forego possession of provinces deemed of the utmost consequence by our ancestors, and to the fortunate occupation of which, much of our glory and prosperity is still principally attributed by the greater part of mankind.

I have been led into these reflections in consequence of observations I have lately met with in a popular periodical work. The passages to which I more especially allude, and which appear to me to be particularly erroneous and objectionable, are those wherein our West Indian colonies in general, but particularly that most beauti-

ful and magnificent island Jamaica, are undervalued and held up as objects of expense; and as, in fact, injurious instead of beneficial to the mother country. In a later number our North American provinces are not treated with more respect, and the writer of that article not only defies any one to point out a single benefit of any sort whatever derived by us from the possession of Canada and our other North American colonies, which are stated to be productive of heavy expense to Great Britain, and of nothing else; but adds, that every man of sense, whether in the cabinet or out of it, knows that Canada must at no distant period be merged in the American republic, and that John Bull discovers no very great impatience of taxation, when he quietly allows his pockets to be drained, in order to clear and fertilize a province for the use of his rival, Jonathan.

It appears to me to require no great

depth of thought, nor very superior abilities, to refute assertions and predictions, the former not warranted by facts, and the latter not deduced from the history of past events. I maintain that a most erroneous view has been taken of the value of Jamaica, as well as of our West Indian colonies in general; that our North American provinces are of the utmost political importance to the British empire—are increasing sources of wealth to the mother country; and that their conquest by the government of the United States is a most improbable if not an impracticable event, keeping in view the constitution of that government, and assuming that common precautionary measures will be adopted by his Majesty's ministers.

Without attempting to enter into the details of the exports and imports of the different West Indian colonies, it may suffice for our present purpose to observe, that

the duties levied upon our West Indian importations into the ports of Great Britain and Ireland, put about five millions sterling per annum into the treasury of the United Kingdom, and furnish us, in fact, with one-tenth of our present national income. The produce and manufactures of Great Britain and Ireland, to the amount of two millions, are annually exported to the West Indies. The trade gives employment to twenty thousand British seamen, and the shipping interest and ship-builders of the United Kingdom of course receive a corresponding benefit. It is also to be observed, that the whole remaining value of the West Indian yearly importations, after paying the five millions sterling of importation duties, and exporting British manufactures and produce to the amount of two millions (as before stated) to the West Indies, is either vested in the funds, laid out in the purchase of land, or spent in the United Kingdom,

to the advantage of the funded, the landed, and the manufacturing interests. It seems difficult for human ingenuity to contrive, or even to wish for colonies more productive of benefit to the mother country.

The only drawbacks or disadvantages are the being obliged to keep 3000 men at Jamaica, and 4000 in the other West India colonies, making a total demand of 7000 men upon our disposable force, together with the necessary attendant expenses of barracks and fortifications. It is not however to be imagined, as the reviewer asserts, that this charge falls upon the mother country. The island of Jamaica feeds the 3000 men allotted for her defence, and also pays all expenses of barracks and fortifications. Most of the other colonies have commuted this demand upon them by giving to the government of Great Britain $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. upon their exports, in addition to the duties collected upon their produce when imported

into Great Britain and Ireland. The paper therefore published in the Review, and alluded to at the commencement of these reflections, giving a statement of the money drawn and expended by the commissariat on account of the contingencies of the army in the West Indies, cannot be considered as a fair or correct statement, in so much as the sums paid by the different colonies for that year, and which have been thrown into the general receipts of the treasury of the empire, ought to have been credited and balanced against the money drawn from England. The money also stopped from the Jamaica garrison, for their rations or provisions, should be placed to the credit of the West Indies, government incurring no expense on that account, the whole amount of which is defrayed by the island. If the total of the $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. duty in those colonies where it is collected, be subtracted from the amount of the bills

drawn by the commissariat, to meet the expenses for which the duty was granted; and the money deducted for rations from the garrison of Jamaica (which rations, as already explained, cost the government of Great Britain nothing) be also taken into consideration, it will not appear that more has been expended than what the colonies were justly entitled to expect, or beyond the amount of funds levied and placed at the disposal of his Majesty's ministers by West Indian proprietors, for their own protection and security. The argument of expense appears therefore, as far as the West Indies are concerned, to fall to the ground.

But the reviewer asserts, that the five millions levied upon our West Indian importation is, in fact, money taken out of the pockets of the people of England, and that we are no more obliged to the West Indian proprietors for this addition to our revenue,

than to the inhabitants of China for the sums raised upon the importation of their tea. He also states that we could obtain sugar cheaper from foreigners and from the East Indies, if the additional duty to which foreign and East Indian sugar is liable, was removed.

That the importation duties are paid by the consumer there can be no doubt; there needs no ghost come from the grave to tell us this. It must, however, be equally allowed that they cause a certain diminution in the profits of the grower of the article. The Chinese merchants, indeed, sell their tea to the East India Company, without adverting to, or being even acquainted with the importation duties to be paid by the East India Company in England. Not so the West Indian proprietor; the value of his estate is materially affected by the rise or fall of the duties on West Indian importation. When these

duties have been diminished, a corresponding reduction in the price of sugar has not been experienced. This is a proof that the West Indian proprietor pays his proportion of the tax on his property in a corresponding diminution of the profit he would otherwise have gained. In this respect he does not stand alone. The tax on leather has been taken off, and every body who expected cheap shoes has been disappointed. The tax on malt was diminished, and yet we looked in vain for cheap beer. The tax on salt is reduced to almost nothing, but nobody pays less for their hams or their bacon. These facts may serve to show, that although the consumer pays the duty upon the article, yet that the producer or owner of the commodity suffers a diminution of profit in proportion to the amount of taxation. If his profits augment as you diminish the duty, that they must have diminished in proportion as you

have augmented it, is a truth which can hardly be controverted.

That foreigners or East Indian merchants could import sugar somewhat cheaper into England than at the rate we now pay for West Indian sugar may very possibly be the case. Taking it for granted that they could, it argues, however, very little knowledge of human nature, to suppose that the British public would have their sugar cheaper, if the additional duty on foreign and East Indian sugar was taken off tomorrow. The reviewer calculates that we could be supplied from the East Indies at one penny per pound cheaper. The truth of this assertion is however to be proved; and if, as is generally allowed, the value of an article is regulated by the demand, and the quantity in hand to answer that demand, it appears very open to discussion. The merchant, whether he imports his commodity from the East or the West,

will naturally endeavour to gain the greatest profit he is able; and will assuredly charge the highest price which he finds the consumer will pay. If the additional duty on East India sugar was repealed forthwith, a sufficient supply for the consumption of Great Britain and Ireland could not be immediately imported. It is only by degrees, and after the lapse of several years, that such a quantity as three millions and a half of hundred weights could be annually procured. Who can assert that the price of sugar in India would not rise in consequence of such an additional demand for it as an article of export? Experience and common sense point out the contrary. Who will insure the undisturbed continuance of our rule, and the maintenance of perfect tranquillity in these distant regions? and yet both are necessary to introduce a new culture to such an extent. Who is so innocent as to suppose, that

after beating their West Indian rivals out of the field, the East Indian merchants would content themselves with the smaller profits with which they may have commenced, and which would have occasioned their success? If they should, they would be very different from any merchants the world ever yet has beheld. But the West Indian colonies have been the cause of wars and may again involve us in hostilities! Are we then exempted from the common lot of mankind in India? Have no wars taken place in the Mysore, or with the Mahrattas, or with the Burmese? The West Indies are at any rate the grave of our army, and cause an alarming consumption of our men. This is in truth an evil, but one considerably diminished by the superior barracks, and more judicious arrangements lately adopted. But have we nor jungle fevers to contend with in the East?—no alarming attacks of cholera

morbus sweeping away the inhabitants of whole provinces? The returns of the number of recruits annually sent out to the King's regiments, as well as to the East Indian Company's European corps, would unfortunately answer this question.

Upon such futile calculations as the foregoing, is the boasted saving of one penny in the pound of sugar held forth to the public; and upon such grounds, and in the very uncertain expectation of such a reward, are we called upon to neglect and undervalue our West Indian possessions; to change our system; to endanger a revenue of five millions sterling per annum; to risk the loss of a market for our produce and manufactures, to the amount of two millions yearly; to hazard the loss of employment for 20,000 seamen; and to bring distress upon all the British interests connected with our West Indian possessions; the inevitable re-action of which

upon the landed, the funded, the commercial and manufacturing classes in Great Britain cannot be contemplated without horror. Surely we ought to reply to all such advisers, if not literally, at least in the spirit of the well known words of the assembled barons—"Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari."

His Majesty's North American provinces do not offer the same pecuniary advantages as the West Indian colonies. To those, however, who look beyond pounds, shillings, and pence, and who can contemplate their present resources and population, as well as anticipate their future greatness, with the eyes of statesmen, their importance and political consequence will easily be made evident.

Lower Canada contains a population of nearly half a million of souls, and affords a militia of 76,000 able-bodied men, accustomed to the use of arms. They are a

moral, industrious, sober, and contented people, attached to their own customs, laws, language, and religion. They are Roman Catholics, but as their clergy are educated in Canada, and have no connection with the Pope, or with any foreign power, all political objections to that religion are, in the case of Lower Canada, removed. The church is not paid by the government, as was erroneously stated in Parliament, but has the twenty-sixth part of the grain raised on the lands of Catholics. This claim the law acknowledges, but this is all the favour shown to the Catholic religion. If a Catholic sells his lands to a Protestant, or if he thinks proper to become a Protestant himself, his estate is no longer liable to this very humble tithe. Hay and potatoes are exempted from this charge. The church is governed by a bishop (a native Canadian) who receives, in addition to the rent of some

lands of no great value, one thousand per annum from the Civil List of Great Britain. This annual thousand pounds is all that the Catholic church establishment of Canada costs the mother country. The twenty-sixth part of the grain from the Catholic lands is found to be an ample allowance. The income of the curés averages £300 per annum, which affords them, in a cheap country, the means of living most respectably, and of even exercising a very liberal hospitality. This short account of the Canadian church is not irrelevant to the subject. It marks strongly the difference between the Canadian and the American character, and in some measure accounts for it.

We are told by the inspired writer that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The reviewer must surely have had this seemingly paradoxical assertion in his mind, and have been misled by

•

respect for the author, to construe it too literally, when he maintained that Canada was shortly to merge in the American republic. Where otherwise could he have learnt that 76,000 men in arms (not scattered, like the Americans, over a vast extent of country, but thickly settled on the banks of the St. Lawrence, and easily assembled) were to crouch under the modern fasces of a power they dislike; towards which they have an hereditary enmity; and whose regular army consists only of 5,000 men? It is not the magnitude of the territory of a state, but the vigour of its institutions and the martial spirit of its people, which render it a dangerous neighbour. Far be it from me to undervalue the talents or the military qualities of the Americans. They are men, and confessedly men of enterprise and activity. I may, however, observe, that their customs, usages, and employments are essentially pacific. They are

occupied in the useful and laborious pursuits of agriculture and commerce. They have a well regulated militia, and it would be a rash and ill advised measure to invade their country. But they are not, and (whilst their present form of government exists) they cannot be a conquering nation. They have neither the means nor the inclination to form a regular army. A popular chief, the angry feeling of the moment, or some other equally temporary cause may induce their militia to cross the Canadian frontier. Desultory attacks, however, and permanent conquest are very different things. The latter are neither effected or maintained without regular troops. The 76,000 militia of Lower Canada are fully as good as any force the Americans can bring against them. If we look to the events of last war, we may observe that, notwithstanding the very little assistance afforded by England during the two first years, what

trifling progress was made by the Americans towards becoming masters of Canada, although the war was of their own chusing, the intention of the conquest avowed, and they had had plenty of time to make, what appeared to them, every necessary previous preparation. They were checked upon one occasion by the Lower Canadian militia alone, unsupported by any regular troops. The moment that Great Britain was able to spare reinforcements, from the termination of the more important hostilities in which she was engaged in Europe, the nature of the war changed, and it became defensive on the part of the Americans. It is a fact, too notorious to be disputed, that so far from dreaming of persevering in the attempt at the conquest of Canada, the American government, when the peace took place, had not the means of putting their troops in motion for another campaign. Had the war been conti-

nued for another year, a separation, in all human probability, would have taken place amongst the states of the Union. The wisest of them saw the folly of the attempt upon Canada, and had already begun to deliberate upon the propriety of not furnishing their proportions of men and money demanded by the general government for the continuance of the war. If then we may judge of the future by the past ; if we reflect upon the character of the Canadian—moral, religious, influenced by his curé, and that curé perfectly happy and satisfied with the British government, and dreading all connection with that of the United States, which allows no church establishment whatever ; if we moreover avail ourselves of the moment of profound peace, to occupy judiciously such military points as experience has shown to be necessary, with a view to give confidence and support to the Canadians, and to make

the Americans pause before they think of again attempting to invade a country evidently prepared for defence; surely the conquest of Canada by the government of the United States may be pronounced, as was stated in the early part of this paper, a most improbable, if not an impracticable event.

But the reviewer asserts that Canada is productive of heavy expense to Great Britain, and nothing else; and defies any one to point out a single benefit of any kind whatever derived by us from the possession of Canada, and our other North American colonies. On these heads I wish to offer the following observations.

Canada has not been productive of heavy expense to Great Britain: on the contrary, the strictest economy, amounting to almost a shabby penury, has been observed with respect to Canada; we have conducted ourselves in Canada, until very lately, as if

we had made up our minds to evacuate the country at no distant period. Our measures have been all temporary, and a miserable system of expedients has in general been resorted to. Our barracks have been made of wood ; our fortifications of earth. Almost every thing of a permanent and expensive nature has been constructed by the French. It was they who built the chateau of St. Louis, the palace of the Intendant, the Jesuits' and the Dauphin's barracks at Quebec; as also those at Montreal. Money was unquestionably spent by us during the late war; but a judicious application of one quarter of the sum in time of peace, if it had not prevented the war altogether, would at any rate have diminished its expense, and removed all chance of its uncertainty. It is not meant by these remarks to throw blame upon those who had the management of public affairs, for their neglect of Canada during

the period alluded to; but engaged in the tremendous struggle of the French revolutionary wars, interests of a secondary nature were of course sacrificed; and all our means being required for more pressing objects, those which only promised a remote benefit were necessarily postponed for future consideration.

Some idea of the present value of Canada may be formed by the circumstance of 1,800 square rigged British vessels having last year entered the Gulph of St. Lawrence. Would this trade, this nursery for our seamen, this employment for British capital and industry have existed if France had remained mistress of Canada and its surrounding provinces? and yet we are defied to show a single benefit we have derived from the possession of Canada. The French navy suffered a severer blow by the loss of the battle on the heights of Abraham in 1759, than was subsequently

inflicted by Howe, or even by the repeated victories of Nelson. With Canada the marine of France was not only deprived of her right arm, but the strength taken from her was acquired by her rival. The example of France may show us, in contradiction to the assertion of the reviewers, (if we are not infatuated and dazzled by the glare of the new lights of modern philosophy,) that a military cannot exist without a commercial navy, nor a commercial navy without colonies. The French navy declined from the day France lost Canada. Her flourishing island of St. Domingo (which gave constant employment to 12,000 seamen) enabled her to continue for some little time longer to rank as a maritime power. The political economists, the wild and visionary reformers who brought about the French revolution, assisted by the society of the Amis des Noirs, soon however

deprived their country of her remaining colony. Without colonies, and consequently without shipping employed in navigating to and from her colonies, the navy of France had no means, during the revolutionary war, of recruiting with seamen. Sea-going ships (although contrary to the opinion of the reviewer) must have sea-faring men; and sea-faring men are only to be bred and trained by frequent voyages and constant practice. Every friend to humanity, every man of common feeling must deprecate the custom of pressing, and wish it to be abolished; but whatever arrangements may be made for the future manning of our navy; whatever may be the inducements to be held forth for seamen to serve in men of war, it is evident the facility of procuring the men required must depend upon the general total of sea-faring people belonging to Great Britain; and

that general total upon the extent of her commerce and the numbers of her merchantmen.

With the loss of her colonies fell, as we have seen, the navy of France. England, on the contrary, having fortunately preserved her own, and even acquired the most valuable of those of her rival, was enabled by the supplies of seamen afforded her by her colonial commerce to carry her naval force to the greatest extent. Occasionally without an ally, and shut out from all ports but those of her own colonies, her commerce nevertheless flourished. Her colonies were her markets for her manufactures. Her colonial trade formed and kept up her supplies of seamen. The additional duties levied upon the importation of colonial produce materially assisted her treasury. Is it possible that, with these facts before us, we are now told our colonies are of no use, and boldly defied to show what

benefits we have derived from the possession of provinces which, even at present, give employment to 1,800 square rigged vessels, and which number in a very few years must unquestionably be doubled!

It is stated by the reviewer, and with truth, that our exportations are considerably greater to America as she is, than to America as she was; that the inhabitants of the United States consume more of our manufactures than were ever demanded by the British North American colonist; and this circumstance is brought forward as a proof of the inutility of colonies; and in corroboration of his assertion, that we do not require colonies as markets for our manufactures, the consumption of which will always be insured by their superiority and cheapness as compared with those of other nations. From hence the reviewer would infer that our trade with Canada and its surrounding provinces is no proof

of any advantage we derive from being in possession of these colonies ; that we should equally have the trade without any expense or inconvenience.

I confess, that although I agree in the premises, yet, that the inference I draw is very contrary to that of the reviewer. The additional demand for our manufactures in America is not the consequence of the separation of the United States from Great Britain, but the natural effect of that increased wealth and population which time has brought about. It appears to me that if, notwithstanding our separation; if, in spite of every endeavour to establish manufactures of their own ; if, in opposition to a hostile feeling which unfortunately at one time animated both the government and a great part of the people of America, the demand for our manufactures is still so great ; we may fairly suppose it would have been considerably

more extended had we continued subjects to the same king, and members of the same empire, closely connected by every tie of a public and private nature. These reflections, however, relate only to the quantity of our manufactures exported to America. The reviewer has omitted to state that the Americans send for the greatest part themselves, to the manifest advantage of their shipping interest; thus acquiring facilities towards the formation of a future navy. A British merchantman is seldom seen at New York. In this particular, it must at any rate be confessed we suffer by the separation of our ancient colonies. We have not only lost the commercial navy employed in that trade, but it is become available to feed a growing military navy on the other side of the Atlantic.

Upper Canada contains a population of about 160,000 souls, and has 44,000 men

enrolled and embodied as militia. This colony is, however, as yet in its infancy. The fertility of its soil, the mildness of its climate, and the luxuriance of its vegetation, must unquestionably render it, and with rapidity, a province of the greatest importance. The natural outlet for its products is evidently Montreal. Some assistance will be necessary from Great Britain, to enable this country to have a water communication from lake Ontario to Montreal, by which the dangers of the navigation of the St. Lawrence may be at all times avoided. The Upper Canadians are too poor to attempt an undertaking of this sort themselves; but which, if neglected or even postponed too long, will throw their trade into other channels. The province of New Brunswick is situated between Lower Canada and Nova Scotia. The settlements are principally confined to the banks of the St. John's river. The

population of New Brunswick is 70,000 souls; the militia 11,000. Nova Scotia is a most thriving province; and being the nearest and readiest point of communication for the British North American colonies with Great Britain, as also on account of the dock-yard, and the harbour of Halifax, is of the utmost consequence. It contains 86,000 inhabitants, and has 12,000 very respectable militia. Prince Edward's Island, within the Gulph of St. Lawrence and close to Nova Scotia, has a population of about 24,000 souls and 4,000 embodied militia.

From the foregoing statement, it appears that the five colonies of Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward's Island have an armed force of able-bodied militia, amounting to no less than 147,000 men. It would be insulting human nature to suppose the Americans are ever to take possession of these provinces without the consent of the

inhabitants. With the powerful assistance to be derived from such a body of armed men, whose numbers are moreover rapidly increasing, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we ever dream of evacuating them.

The dislike entertained by the Lower Canadians towards the Americans has already been explained. It is a national sentiment which will probably last for ages to come. The inhabitants of Upper Canada, of New Brunswick, and of Nova Scotia, have not the same hostile feeling towards the United States; but happy and contented under their own government, they are perfectly aware that, in leaving the protection of Great Britain, they would have nothing to gain and every thing to lose. Each province is governed by laws framed by its own parliament. They pay no taxes but of their own imposing, and expended under their own superintendance.

So far from there being any probability of his Majesty's North American provinces merging (as the reviewer predicts) in the American republic, the Americans are rather disposed to view their situation with envy; and many of the most intelligent amongst them have repeatedly declared that, had they been governed upon the same liberal and enlightened principles which have been adopted with respect to the provinces in question, they would never have left our side. It was the tempting but illusive idea of raising a direct revenue in America, which caused the loss of the colonies. Not contented with the daily golden egg, we lost our bird, like the boy in the fable, in consequence of our impatient greediness. May the experience of our fathers not be lost on their children!

In discussing the important question of the value of our colonies, I have endeavoured to avoid the pedantry and the

affectation of learning too usually mixed up in all our modern works on political economy. There are few questions (if deprived of the extraneous matter with which they have been surrounded, either by accident or design) which we could not decide for ourselves. It is the roughness of the husk which deters us from approaching the shell: remove that, and we can soon, in most cases, become masters of the nut.

THE END.

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