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LOUISIANA.

MEMORIAL

ON THIS QUESTION—WHETHER IT BE ADVANTAGEOUS FOR FRANCE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF LOUISIANA?

"Presented to the French government by Mr. Livingston, the American minister at Paris."

TRANSLATED BY MR. NANCREDE.

THIS question presents itself in two points of view:—First, in the relation of commerce and manufactures: Secondly, in those of the positive or relative force of France.

Colonies do not excite interest for their own sake, but only as respects the influence they may have on a nation; and as one man alone is more useful by remaining at home, than two by removing at a distance, a wise nation does not seek to colonize, until she has a superabundance of population, which she cannot usefully employ in any other way.

Though very considerable, the population of France is very far from having reached the term which renders colonies necessary: Her soil, climate and local situation give her, as a commercial, and especially as a manufacturing nation, great advantages over all the nations of Europe. The spirit of invention, the taste and industry of its inhabitants, place her in the first rank. But those advantages are wonderfully abridged by the want of capitals sufficient to make use of them. A rival nation, greatly inferior in every one of these particulars, has, by the effect alone of an immense capital, obtained the superiority, not only in commerce, but also in manufactures; and these advantages, by increasing the national fortune, furnish it with the means of maintaining that very superiority.

Capitals increase the number of manufactures, by the introduction of machines, by the regular payment of workmen, by the reduction of the interest of money, and especially by the possession of new markets.

None but rich individuals can undertake those slow and expensive speculations, which often give the superiority to a manufacture. A poor merchant cannot undertake long voyages, returns from which are slow; they are reserved for the wealthy; who can give credits long enough to tempt foreign nations to give his articles the preference over those of other nations, which expect a quick return for their's. The want of capitals in France, is such, that no manufacturer has at his command a quantity of articles sufficient to answer the demands; & consequently no foreigner can be sure to obtain from his French correspondent wherewith to make his returns without retarding his vessel in port, or at least, without being obliged to take a considerable quantity of articles of inferior quality, picked up in a number of different manufactories; so that if he commits any fraud, no one can be charged with it. This renders the character of a manufacture of very little importance in the eyes of a French workman.

Hence when a foreign vessel, especially if owned at a great distance, sells her cargo in France, she is ordered to take nothing but wines or brandies, because they are the only articles which the owner is sure to procure in sufficient quantities, in the fixed time.

In England, on the contrary, he will find all sorts of goods, in one hour, from one manufacture, the reputation of which would suffer, if the whole supply were not of the same quality with the sample. This consideration will ever induce a foreigner to apply to an English, in preference to a French merchant, for a purchase of goods of the same kind. Hence cargoes are sold in France, and the proceeds carried to England, there to be sold for articles which France might supply, if her manufactures were rich enough to answer every demand, in a short time, without compelling the purchaser to have recourse to a great number of manufactures.

This inconveniency can only be removed by increasing the capitals of manufacturers. It would be too great a deviation from my subject, to point out the means of obtaining those capitals; but it is evident, that they must be considerably lessened by the forming of a navy, at the expence of manufactures, or by using the capitals of the nation in distant countries. It is beyond doubt, that capitals open new channels; for nothing is more natural for merchants whose capital is small, than to content themselves with acting the part of *brokers* or *commission-merchants*, to those who can supply them with goods on credit; and for this very reason, England lost nothing by the independence of America. Her immense capitals have created a monied dependence, which, in a commercial relation, replaced the supremacy she had lost in the government. The increase of capital in America, frees it in some degree from that dependency, and by furnishing her with the means of extending her commerce, and even to offer capitals to other nations, which know how to calculate the value of the markets which she offers to manufactures and to the luxury of Europe.

It will be readily granted, that colonies beyond the seas add nothing to the force of a nation; these are, on the contrary, weak points, which are guarded at a very great expence, both in men and money; especially if they be in hot and unhealthy climates.

The question, therefore, is reduced to this—*Has France a superfluity of men and money great enough to justify the settling of a new colony?*

Those which France already possesses in the West-Indies and at Cayenne, are more then sufficient for her wants, and even the wants of all Europe, if they were cultivated so as to produce all they are capable of. But how are they to be cultivated! Experience has proved that the inhabitants of hot climates never work from want: Force alone can supply the two great spurs to labor in northern climates, hunger and cold, which nature has placed in those severe climates. Hence slavery alone can fertilize those colonies, and slaves cannot be procured but at a great expence.

The Spanish part of Hispaniola was almost uncultivated for want of slaves. It is now possessed by France; and, to render it of advantage, it will be necessary to lay out immense capitals in slaves, in buildings, and in improvements of uncultivated lands. Others will be necessary to make up for the losses of the French part of that, not to mention the other islands. Where are those capitals to be found?—Men who travel into distant and unhealthy climates are seldom wealthy. Those riches must therefore be found in France, or in some other country that has a superfluity of capital. If they are found in France, it can only be, to a certain degree, at the expence of internal manufactures. It may, however, appear advantageous, in a national point of view, to encourage the use of the riches of France for that object; considering the extreme fertility of the French West Indies, and their present situation of culture, those funds will soon yield a profit. But as long as money will command so high an interest; so long as the interior of the republic shall offer monied men a source of speculations, and property shall lie in so few hands, it will be difficult to induce the majority of them to dispossess themselves of this capital to send it at a distance, and run the risk of the integrity of their agents, and all those whom recent examples have taught them to dread.

Foreign coin was formerly introduced into Frrace through the United Provinces; but the present state of the Batavian colonies, and the losses they have sustained by the war, leave but little hope, that much may be used in the restoring of the French colonies.

The United States possess considerable capitals in money, and productions necessary to the restoration of the islands. No great credit, in money, will probably be given to the planters; but with suitable encouragements, there is no doubt they will be able to obtain those productions which must, were it not for that circumstance, be paid for in cash, and the commercial speculations of the United States will extend to the French islands, when the public and private credit of France shall have been restored, and when experience shall have convinced the people how unwise it is to establish a revenue upon foreign trade, while it is in fact collected from their own citizens. At Hispaniola, a duty of 20 per cent is paid upon articles introduced by strangers. This duty is in fact paid by strangers, and it happens that fraud, and the bad administration of custom-houses, is, as usual, a source of vexation for foreign merchants. But it is the planter who furnishes the money, for this tax is always added to the price, and even an interest is advanced upon it as a compensation for the vexations which the captains experience in their commerce. What then is the effect of that operation, if not to take from the planter one-fourth part of the money which he had so much difficulty to get from France? Or otherwise to stop by that means, partly the re-establishment of the capitals which alone can render the islands finally productive? I say finally, for it is folly to believe that they will yield to France a compensation for her actual outsets, unless it be after a great many years. I will even say, that unless the ports of Hispaniola are open to every vessel loaded with articles of necessity, unless the inhabitants have the right of buying cheap and selling dear, by encouraging the rivalry between the sellers and purchasers, unless every sort of vexation is removed, and strangers receive every possible security for their capitals in the islands, ages will pass away before Hispaniola will cease draining France of its riches and strength without offering her any equivalent return.

It is, therefore, evident, that if France had no other possession beyond the seas, except her islands, it might easily employ all the capital of which she now can, and probably hereafter will be able to dispose in a long series of years.

But if to all this, we add the immense possessions in Guyanna, her productions, and the capitals necessary to carry the whole of it to its full value; if we add the settlements necessary to be made in India, if the design be to bring into the ports of France that variety of articles which invite exchanges, and give commerce its due activity, we shall find that one century at least will pass away before France may want possessions of that kind.

But as France has, like other countries, but a confined capital, the only question is, *where shall this capital be placed?* shall it be here? in the West-Indies? at Cayenne? in India, or at Louisiana? For it is obvious that what will be placed in one of those settlements will be at the expence of another; it is equally so, that the national expenditures will increase with her colonies; and that, in case of war, the points of attack and defence will be multiplied in the same ratio.

Able statesmen have questioned whether colonies were useful to a country situated like France; but my design is not to examine this theory. France has colonies; she has invited her citizens to go and carry their riches to them; honor requires that she keep and protect them; but she is under no obligation to create new ones; to multiply points of defence; to squander away the capitals she wants at home and abroad. How could the possession of Louisiana be useful to her? In the first place, its cultivation is to be carried on, as in all warm countries, by slaves; the capitals spent in buying them, or the slaves themselves, would have been carried to the islands, if this new channel had not opened. This rivalry will raise the price of slaves for the planters, and may thus much retard the settlement.

On their arrival at Louisiana, the slaves will be employed in the barren occupation of felling the large forests with which this immense country is covered, a labor but little suited to slaves, for it requires being long accustomed to the axe; and force and activity are seldom found in slaves. They must be clothed, fed and maintained during whole years before any profit can be derived from them. What I am about to relate may serve to determine that period. In the northern and middle states of America, the usual term of a quit rent lease in the new lands is ten years free from rent, and after this the lessee pays 12 bushels of wheat for every 100 acres forever. It is, therefore, obvious that the first ten years are considered as a time of expence, during which term the owner requires no payment. But in the southern states, new lands cannot even be given out on those terms, because the white planter sets a higher value on his labor, and the clearing of forests requires too great outsets for any one but the owner of the land.

Who then will cultivate Louisiana with slaves? Who is the citizen willing to bestow large capitals upon so precarious a property with the prospect of a distant return?

It may be asked, why does it not happen in the southern states? It is answered, first, because none are southerly enough to be wholly free from the colds of winter, which renders savage life very difficult to men, born in hot climates; and secondly, because the southern states, are mostly surrounded by the sea, and by mountains the whole population of which is white, and which cut off the communication between the slaves and the vast forests of the interior parts.

But let us suppose all these difficulties overcome, what commercial advantages can France derive from the settlement of this colony!—The productions of Louisiana being the same with those of the West-Indies, no advantage is to be reaped, for the islands, being well cultivated, will suffice for the wants of France, and even all Europe. The introduction of those from Louisiana, would only lessen the price without adding any thing to the value, and France would be obliged, to prevent the ruin of those who had employed their funds in the colonies, to imitate the Dutch, who destroy their spices and teas, when the quantity of these commodities in Europe is large enough to cause a depreciation of their value.

The productions of Louisiana, which do not grow in the West-Indies, are only lumber, and perhaps rice; but it is certain that those productions, considering the difficulty of procuring them in a hot and insalubrious climate, will not cover the outsets, or, at least, will not yield the same profits, as would be procured by raising them in the islands, in procuring the same or other and more valuable articles.

The proof of this is found in the United States. It is not from Georgia nor South-Carolina that the West-Indies are supplied with lumber, but chiefly from the northern states, where forests are more scarce and more valuable than in the south. The cause of this is, that the supplying of lumber, the mills necessary to prepare them for sale, all these are the work of free hands, which are satisfied with a moderate price.

I shall presume further to lay down, however paradoxical it may seem, that it is not advantageous for France to supply herself with lumber, even if she could procure it from Louisiana. I have two reasons to offer:—What lumber the northern states supply her colonies with, is paid for in molasses and fome rum. The first article costs the planter nothing, for, were it not for that, this would be an useless production of his sugar, and the second is but a very moderate expence for distillation. If it were consumed in America, molasses would be thrown away as useless, and this was the case when America was a British colony, because French commerce does not offer any other market for that commodity.

It may, therefore, be said, that the colonies have from the United States, *lumber for nothing*. Should, on the contrary, a settlement be formed in Louisiana for the supplying of that article, every expense and outset of this establishment, all the labor necessary to cut, saw, and transport it to the place where it is to be sold, would be a real loss for the nation, even admitting that the cutters and other men employed, should take, as payment, molasses and rum; because their labor would produce nothing to the nation.

But it is certain that Louisiana could not furnish a market for molasses or rum. It is only in New-England (northern states,) that those articles are consumed. The inhabitants of the south prefer ardent spirits, distilled from grain, apples, and peaches, to those distilled from molasses.

On the supposition, therefore, that the planters supply themselves with lumber in a French colony, exclusively at Louisiana, they would be forced to pay for it in money or objects of real value. If the right of supply is not exclusive, it is null, because the laborer of the southern climate cannot work as cheap as the robust son of the north.

It might be tho't that molasses would still find a market in New-England, though it were no longer the price of lumber. It would be an error. They have no other reason to take it, than its being offered them in exchange for an article for which they have few other markets. Let the colonies refuse lumber, from the north, spirits from grain, apples, &c. will immediately be substituted to those from sugar, because the price of rum would immediately be higher. Then it will be that every sort of commerce between them and the colonies will cease, unless it be for provisions, which they will necessarily require to be paid for in money, or in what will pass in foreign markets, for money.

The second reason why France ought not to get her lumber from Louisiana, even though she might do it, is, that, in case of war, supposing England should preserve her naval superiority, no sure calculations could be made upon receiving provisions; and they could not be supplied from the United States, for that commerce having been abandoned since the peace, those whom it then employed have sought other objects of industry; and saw-mills erected to prepare that lumber, are out of use, and will not easily be set up again, at the renewal of hostilities, so that the misfortunes which are the consequence of it would be doubly distressing to the colonies.

It is therefore very evident the colonizing of Louisiana would, in a commercial point of view, be very injurious to France, because it would employ capitals which would be more usefully employed in the other colonies; because those capitals would lie dormant for several years, and because admitting they should become productive for individuals, they would add nothing to the national mass, and would have no other effect than to lower the price of colonial produce, and lessen the profits of their labor.

It might however be thought that the possession of Louisiana would afford one more market to French manufactures, and thus compensate the expence of the nation for its settlement. This question deserves a particular examination, and the provisioning or the consumption of French manufactures may relate either to the free or bond population.

If it be the free class that is to be mustered by emigrants from France, it will be composed of that portion of the people, which not only could support themselves in France, but, besides, increase the national riches by their industry. For France is not overburthened by her population, and consequently every emigration will form a vacuum somewhere, or abandon some useful branch which will no longer be carried on. The emigrant carries away with him a portion of the general good, in the mass of the productive labor of the mother country; he also carries away with him a portion of the capital, for he never goes with empty hands, and, as I have already observed, ten years must pass away before his settlement produces beyond his first necessaries. He must, at the same time, live with the strictest economy, for having nothing to offer in exchange, he receives scarcely any thing from the mother country, and the nature of the southerly climates requires very few of the articles necessary in Europe. It is, therefore, beyond all doubt, that, as to the present emigrant, the few articles furnished him by French manufactures will not cover the loss which the nation will sustain of his own labor; besides, he will consume much less in America than he would in France, and, besides his labor, the manufacturer, who supplied his wants in both countries, will be a loser by his emigration.

Black population will still less contribute to the support of French manufactures, because their consumption in articles of dress is very small; and even in South Carolina it does not amount to more than forty livres a year for each negro. At Louisiana, where the winter is still less severe, it will be reduced in proportion; it will consist in cottons, principally worked in the country, and still more smuggled from the United States. But if the whole were brought from France, after deducting the raw materials which must be purchased, the whole profit of the French manufacturer will not amount to more than thirty livres for each negro, every year. Now, as each slave will cost the nation 1000 livres, and as this capital would have produced, in France, at least 10 per cent. in every other commerce or manufacture, the difference between 100 livres French produce, and 30 livres, produce of the Louisiana cloathing, gives the real loss to be sustained by France in the first ten years, during which they can only, as I have said before, supply their first wants, if so much; and as a certain number must die by the change of climate, and a number will run away, the real loss of France on every slave imported and employed in Louisiana must be 100 livres every year.

But if we add to this, the profit which this very slave could have furnished, if transported to the islands, (and it is certain that all the slaves carried to Louisiana are so many hands taken from the islands) we shall find that the actual loss of the nation, in the interruption of labor, will amount to upwards of 600 livres per annum; so that the first loss for the nation, in the introduction of 1000 slaves to Louisiana, will be 600,000 livres. It is true, that if peace continue, and if, in opposition to expectation, the colony should prosper, the rich planters will make a great consumption of French goods, but that of the slaves will ever be very small, or their labor without profit, because, as I have already observed, being employed to cultivate articles which the islands can more easily supply for every demand, and the sale of which is confined, by increasing the quantity, they will only lessen the prices of those commodities which it is essential for France to keep high, because she possesses the most fertile islands. I know there is an opinion entertained by many, viz. That French goods, in their way to the Mississippi, will find a market in the western part of the United States. The most complete ignorance of the navigation of that river could alone have given rise to such an opinion, which is likewise grounded on the ignorance of the wants of the inhabitants. It is certain that the wines of France are not fit for climates as hot as those they must cross before they arrive in the western states; that they are still less suited to the means and taste of the inhabitants, who are more accustomed to ther own liquors, such as cider, beer, whisky, and peach brandy, the latter, with time, becomes superior to the best French brandy; so that, instead of receiving those articles through Louisiana, they might themselves supply the colony with them. As to the articles of glass and earthen ware, they are made in every part of the western states, where the raw materials are every where found. The demands for China ware are small, but if they were large, French ware is too dear to hurt the sale of China.

Large iron works are also wrought on the spot, and English hard ware has so well-known a superiority over the French, that the latter would certainly remain unsold if both were exposed at market. The only articles which might perhaps be introduced into the country, would be silks, cambricks, and a few other articles of luxury. But even all these can never pass through the river Mississippi, the dangerous navigation of the Gulph, the long and expensive distance to go against the current, the large capitals of the English and American merchants at Philadelphia, and the great improvements which are made every day in the roads and inland navigation, will cause land carriage to be preferred as far as the Ohio, and other rivers, whence they are carried to the settlements, easily and cheaply. It is a well known fact, that dry goods have been carried from Philadelphia to N. Orleans by land, by that route in preference to sea carriage. It is, therefore, visionary to believe that goods from France will be carried that way; whilst the enterprizing English, who have the right of navigating that river, and the prejudices of the Americans in favor of their manufactures, never attempted to introduce their goods that way, because they well know that they are more easily brought by Philadelphia and Baltimore. But should France be desirous of introducing, that way, more bulky articles into the western states, and accustom the inhabitants to their wines and manufactures, it could only be *by putting N. Orleans into their hands, with the reserve, that it shall ever be a free port for French vessels and goods, without being subjected to any other duties than those paid by the Americans.* By this means the American merchants, settled at New Orleans, may be interested in their commerce; instead of going to England, their capitals will go to France; the latter will have all the advantages of a colony without the expence of supporting it, and the money, which American activity obtained from the Spaniards, would go to France; for England, which has not the same means and which pays higher duties, could not supply those goods at so low a rate.

But should France, on the other hand, resolve to keep the island, a great proportion of the capitals of the commerce of New-Orleans, which are especially in the hands of the English and Americans, will naturally take the course which the United States shall fix, and that must be a rival place of commerce with New Orleans, which being rid of the vexations consequent upon a military government, at a distance from the sovereign, will draw, in spite of all the disadvantages of its situation, the whole commerce of which the other is at this day the centre.

The boundaries established between Spain and the United States, and very lately between the English and Spanish possessions, have deprived the inhabitants of Louisiana of their share of the fur-trade, which it must be confessed was not, nor could ever be, very important, as the peltry of the south is of but little value, the few skins are of no importance to commerce, as may be seen in the tables of importation of New-Orleans. Goods are ever to be transported from the Mississippi in the United States that way.

In these considerations I have kept no account of the pains, expences, and loss of men, which are inseparable from new settlements in a marshy country, and a burning climate; the invasion of Indians; the insurrection of slaves; the insubordination of the troops; the abuses committed by officers, remote from the sovereign's vigilant eye. All these inconveniencies united, or only a few of them, are enough to stop an undertaking, and ruin a settlement. A very important observation is, however, to be made, and that is of some weight. Many of those who will carry their families to Louisiana, observing that the lands are as cheap on the American side, will prefer settling there, even in time of peace; some, because they will prefer the government of that country, others by caprice, others through spite, or to rid themselves from a military government, such as that of Louisiana must necessarily be. That wish must be general in the case of a war between France and England; for admitting that the latter maintains her naval superiority (as I have already proved in another place she must, unless France changes her commercial system in order to establish it upon more liberal principles) the mouth of the Mississippi will be blocked up, and the planters in the French colonies will be reduced to the greatest distress, while those of the United States will derive from the war the greatest benefit.

Then it will be that a great part of the capitals brought from France to Louisiana will pass into the United States, where are